

Absa ad is on the money

By [Brendan Seery](#)

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An Onion to the painfully slow SA Post Office for its lightning-fast branded vehicle. I won't post it, because I doubt whether it would get there.



Screen grabs from the ad.

Brand advertising – especially when it is of the “go big, or go home” variety – tends to be upbeat and positive. And, when going for upbeat and positivity as your motif, there can be a tendency to chuck clichés at your executions... like cute kids or animals.

That's what Absa appears to be doing in its latest ad for its Corporate and Investment Banking (CIB) division.



ATL campaign for Absa CIB enhances 'Africanacity'

Mortimer Harvey 13 Sep 2018



One would have thought that hard-nosed investors or analysts would be captivated by numbers and projections, not by ‘cutesy’. But clearly Absa doesn't believe so, because the latest ad for the CIB business goes quite a way down the cliché route.

We see a curious young girl, apparently fascinated by light and energy and capturing it – dreaming big. She imagines things that will help save the continent, Africa, which is her home.

The voice-over speaks – in classic rose-tinted, hold-hands-and-sing-*Kumbaya* optimism – of what makes us here in Africa different from everyone else. This is the “bravery to imagine and the will to get things done”.



FCB Joburg distills essence of 'Africanacity' as it assists Absa relaunch in Africa

Nahana Communications Group 7 Aug 2018



That all adds up to Africanacity, Absa’s clever little word play which blends Africa and tenacity.

The problem, though, is this: Look around you. Do you see much in the way of the will to get things done? In Eskom? In state-owned enterprises? In municipalities?

Exactly.

I am also not quite sure what the brand message is in there for the money crunchers, which will persuade them to entrust their money to the bank.

However, if that all sounds like a build-up to handing out another Onion, let me disappoint you.

Despite all the flaws and questions it poses, this ad has a simple charm, which is infectious. I think a lot of that has to do with exactly that positivity, something which has been in short supply in South Africa for a long time.

There’s also an innocence about it all.

“ *But what saves the ad from middling is the superb production, the responsibility of director Dule of Chill Pill Films.*

The colours and the images throughout have a luminescent, almost dream-like quality. It's like being caught up in a fairy tale. ”

You watch it and wonder: Maybe, just maybe, the world could be like this one day...

Orchids to Absa, the ad agency Mortimer Harvey, as well as production companies Casta Diva Pictures and Chill Pill Films.

If you decide, as a brand, to go down the “mobile billboard” route and emblazon vehicles with your logos or your marketing messages, you need to be very, very careful.

Some brand managers have told me over the years that they are reluctant to see their branding used in taxi advertising. That’s because there is a very real danger, given the way that many taxi drivers behave, that your company will end up being associated, however unwittingly, with criminal behaviour.

However, when you are a collapsing and useless state-owned enterprise, you must be doubly careful that you don’t send out the ‘don’t-give-a-damn’ type messages to your customers.

So I was infuriated to see a SA Post Office-branded car at the airport the other day, when I got back from Europe.

“ To recap about this organisation: whereas Royal Mail in the UK promises that if you post a letter by 5pm, it will reach its destination anywhere in that country the next day, our equivalent’s actual performance ensures that, if you post a letter by June, it should get to the recipient by December. That is, if it is not opened to look for valuables to steal and then dumped in the nearest drain. ”

I bet none of you reading this has recently received a car licence renewal reminder by post, which arrived ahead of time. So, guess what sort of car the SA Post Office (SAPO) chose to brand? A bakkie? No. A Toyota Corolla? No. All too utilitarian.



#TriedAndTested: New Mini Cooper and Mini Cooper S

Ilse van den Berg 9 Jul 2018



This Sapo car was a Mini Cooper S, probably costing more than R300,000 when new and capable only of transporting driver and one passenger – at high speeds, naturally.

It provides a great juxtaposition for your brand: fast car and abysmally slow service.

An Onion for you. I won’t post it to you, because I doubt whether it would get there.

ABOUT BRENDAN SEERY

Brendan Seery has been in the news business for most of his life, covering coups, wars, famines - and some funny stories - across Africa. Brendan Seery's *Orchids and Onions* column ran each week in the *Saturday Star* in Johannesburg and the *Weekend Argus* in Cape Town.

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