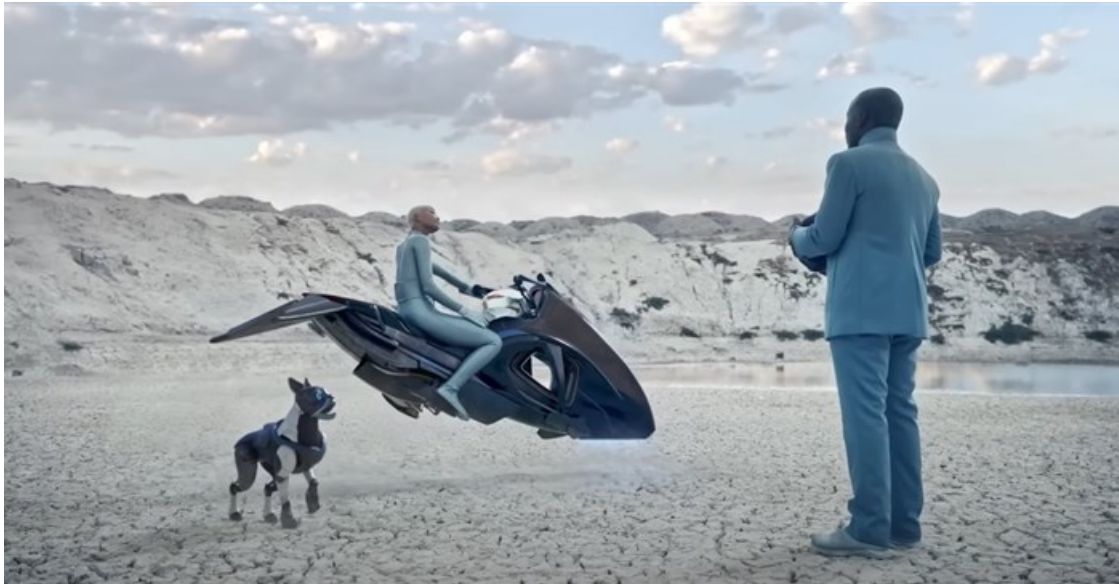


Tried and trusted tale

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

14 Jun 2022

Brand history: How Santam grew to providing cover for everything



There has been such an explosion of marketing – and the channels available to convey advertising – that at times, one feels overwhelmed.

In my case, it is difficult to remember ads that stood out. One which did, though, was from about 15 years ago for Santam insurance ... because it summed up what insurance is all about.

It featured the brand's then trademark umbrella with the Afrikaans words underneath: "Vermy Donderdag". The literal translation of that might be "avoid Thursday" – but also it could be interpreted as "avoid the storms". And that is exactly what insurance does – it helps protect you from the slings and arrows of outrageous fate.

Santam still remains true to that ideal, but its latest ad changes tack on to the tried and trusted brand history tale ... it's been done plenty of times by many brands, but it still works.

In this case, Santam tells its story from its earliest days, to emphasise not only that it has been around so long that it is part of the fabric of our society, but also to remind people subtly that they can be trusted.

Also, the ad basically says: we insure just about everything.

So we see how the business grew from providing cover for agricultural products, into houses, motor carriages and on into a wide diversity of business and private applications, from music production businesses to art.

What makes the ad so attractive is how well it has been made – and I must apologise here because I could not find out which agency or production house was responsible (perhaps they need to consider doing some marketing for themselves?)

It is entertaining because it unfolds like a historical movie, from the days of horses and carts, through the beginning of the automobile age, through to the psychedelic free love age of the '60s, the time of “mobile phones” which were more like bricks and on into the future. That time ahead is brought alive by clever graphics showing a digital dog and a hover-bike. All of which can be insured by Santam ... “for sure” as the future-sales guys assured the rider.

Apart from the entertainment value, the theme running through the ad is: we’ve been around for ages, we’re good at what we do and you can rely on us.

So, Orchids to Santam and all involved in putting this together. The big brand ads like this remind us that perhaps we are slowly returning to the normality that was there pre-Covid and pre-Putin’s insanity.

Undervalued PR basics

Public relations, as I often say to people from the sector when I do media training, is an incredibly important, but often neglected, part of the marketing mix. It is what the military would call a “force multiplier” for any marketing campaign – because it costs fractions of what conventional advertising would and gets exposure, therefore, for fractions of what it costs to reach a target audience.

Inasmuch as some brands undervalue PR, I am still amazed at how often I see, with the sector itself, people who lack the basic grounding in the craft. And, at its heart – apart from the ability to write cogent press releases (also pretty rare in this country) – is human relations.

As a PR person, you want to get your product some media air time... so try not to annoy the journalists you deal with. Lest this sound overly selfish (which it is, to be honest), I am still gobsmacked by how many local PRs don’t do the basics of relationship-building.



The importance being a PR all-rounder

Miranda Lusiba 9 Jun 2022



A PR-journo relationship is not plying hacks with booze and free trips, it is, especially in this day and age of overworked and understaffed newsrooms, providing them with decent material they can use.

It is also about connection and communication... and saying thanks goes a long way.

So, Webber Shandwick, when one of your people asks me to give them an opinion on a client campaign and I do so willingly (because it was a good campaign and I think the industry could use outside opinion more often), then it would be nice to get an acknowledgement, never mind a thank you.

So simple, so effective. And because you apparently don't know the value of simple human relations, you get an Onion. The next time you come calling, maybe I'll just spike the e-mails. I'm human, after all.

Your Onion, though, is not for annoying me. It's for failing to do the best for your client by building relationships on their behalf.

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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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