

How publicity is like a safari - what clients need to understand

 By [Claire Densham](#)

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While on a game drive one rainy morning outside Oudtshoorn, I realised there are striking similarities between the pursuit of game and the pursuit of publicity.



Image credit: Hu Chen on Unsplash

Firstly, nothing is guaranteed. You might see game, you might not. You might have travelled thousands of miles and spent thousands of Rands on your safari, but seeing game is not guaranteed. We've all been on those game drives where all you see is springbok. And you know things are really getting boring when the game ranger starts pointing out the birds and the interesting vegetation.



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It's a safari out there

Publicity is like that too. You might have spent thousands of Rands worth of senior personnel's time compiling an article – and it might get published and it might not. You want it published in the heavy hitters like the weekly and daily financial media. But if they aren't biting, you have to start settling for the lesser publications – in other words, you start focusing on the birds and the vegetation.

Secondly, game drives are alluring not only because they offer the potential for big rewards – unexpectedly running into a herd of elephants or seeing a cheetah chase down a zebra – but they're also exciting because of the element of danger. When you come around a corner and see a lion, it's exciting – and scary. Will he be nice? Or will he jump into your 4x4 and get nasty? Will that rhino continue to stand there placidly or will he suddenly decide he doesn't like the look of you and charge? You never know.



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The same is true for publicity. When you enter the realm of the public domain, anything can happen. When you hand over your carefully-crafted PR statement, the wolves of journalism can tear it to pieces. Or they can play nice. The important thing to realise is that as with wild animals, their agendas and your agendas rarely coincide. What makes wild animals so exciting is their unpredictability and the fact that they can't be tamed. The same is true for journalists. A tame journalist is not of much value to readers.

Into the wild

But what about relationships? You know how they say that a wild animal is never truly domesticated? The same holds true for journalists. They can be your best friends, but if a story looks juicy, they won't care how many lunches you've bought them or how well you know them. Suddenly, their hunting instinct kicks in – and they're off and running, thrashing through the bushes and knocking over all your sacred cows in pursuit of their prey. That's just the nature of the beast.



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Finally, as with publicity, even if you don't see game, you still have to pay for the game drive. Effort has been expended, petrol used, drinks and snacks provided and consumed. Game rangers need their salary. With publicity, you still have to pay your PR consultant even if your story doesn't get printed.



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But, if you do come around a corner on a game drive and suddenly see a lioness nursing her cubs, then all the waiting and seeing nothing has been totally worth it. And if your press release suddenly turns into a cover story, you jump for joy, sing and dance. Then, the next day, you go back to watching and waiting, putting out feelers and braving rejection from time-stretched journalists.

ABOUT CLAIRE DENSHAM

About Claire Densham Communications Established 1 February 2007, Claire Densham Communications is a niche PR consultancy focused on providing PR and strategy services primarily to the financial services and related industries. With over 20 years' experience, its founder Claire Densham spent 10 of those in the financial services industry where she was Head of Corporate Communications for Nedcor Investment Bank, part of the Nedcor Group.

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