

Chicken Licken hits the spot

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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I must say that, funny as Nando's ads are, they might well have lost their place as South Africa's funniest fast-food brand to Chicken Licken.



Not only that, but it seems – judging from the growth of Chicken Licken outlets and, anecdotally, the traction the brand has on social media – that Chicken Licken’s marketing is hitting the spot.

Special offer

Chicken Licken has positioned itself on the wacky end of the humorous marketing spectrum – but at the same time, the company’s ads have always adhered to the time-honoured principle of “call to action” by pushing a special offer at an attractive price.

All those targets are hit spot on in the latest Chicken Licken ad for its “Easy bucks” popcorn chicken special.

The premise of the creative idea is that such a small amount for such a substantial meal is “unbelievable”...but it’s also true.

So, we see two guys struggling along in their overloaded, clapped out bakkie. Sitting between them – believe it or not, hah hah – is a massive brown bear. The driver turns to his companion to ask: Is it just me or is there a bear sitting here holding an EasyBucks popcorn chicken shaker from Chicken Licken for only 30 bucks?”

Unbelievable but true

His mate, after glancing at the bear, is more surprised by the price of the popcorn chicken, checking repeatedly that he is hearing correctly.

Then to emphasise the point, the bakkie is blasted skywards, as if by the popping of some subterranean popcorn. The popcorn chicken the bear is holding flies upwards from the shaker in slow-motion.

The punchline is simple: It’s unbelievable...but true. The ad clip has been posted on social media with the statement: “Here’s an ad you probably won’t believe. But it’s true.”

It’s a great way to grab attention on a platform where many users have a short attention span.

Funny, simple yet effective as a retail ad, too. So, another Orchid to Chicken Licken and to its long-time partner agency, Joe Public.

Shameless plug

Not all marketing is about advertising. Sometimes it’s about more subtle brand building and brand awareness... and that’s where a public relations agency comes in. A good agency will help a brand tell its story without having to spend advertising money to do so.

Many PR agencies have cottoned on to the realisation that, in these days of shrinking newsrooms, there is a huge opportunity for getting a client what is called “earned media” In other words, the press release or opinion piece is good enough to stand on its own as editorial content, without the media demanding money to run it.



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The trick, though, is to write such releases so that they are genuinely news-worthy and are not an obvious plug for the

client. This, I will acknowledge, is not always easy to do because PR clients often have outsized egos which, coupled with a lack of insight about how the media actually works, can be a lethal combination.

The best PR people will identify those areas in which the brand genuinely has something of interest to say and will, in the best-case scenario, then go on to position the brand as an expert whose opinion and insight is of value to readers or viewers.

Cardinal Sin Number1 in compiling content like this – especially if it ends up before an old-school cynical news editor – is to try to turn it into an ad or shameless plug for a brand. The brand should merely be the facilitator or provider of facts.

No shame in just buying ad space

That's because people are not stupid. As a PR friend of mine – who has had good success in placing just such “earned media” pieces – puts it: Offer assistance and people will love you for it. Be seen to be profiting from it and they're going to hate you.

That clearly is not something that Tinkwe PR agency in Cape Town is aware of, judging by its recent release for Versofy Solar, which would have been spiked in any newsroom I know.

Why? Well because it started off by saying it would answer the most common questions about solar power – something which is on the minds of many these days – but then degenerated into a shameless ad for the company.

In the 750-word release, the company's name was mentioned eight times, as were details of its offers. If you want an ad, buy it.

It's a lost opportunity which, no doubt, some other solar company might well take up effectively because it – and its PR company – understands that this sort of brand building has to be subtle.

Onions to Versofy Solar and Tinkwe. And, to other PR agencies out there thinking of do something similar: Look and learn.

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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