

# Tapping into SA's pride

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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*Savanna: Brand brings humour, 'decolonises' technology; South African advertising creativity back on the international stage*



The past two years have been disruptive – and not in that clichéd advertising and marketing way – but, even so, I have a perception that South African advertising creativity is not getting the recognition it once did.

It was good to see, then, Grey Africa and WPP-Liquid being recognised at the 2021 Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, receiving two Bronze Lions for use of mobile and for digital craft.

The campaign was “Decolonise Autocorrect” on behalf of Savanna cider, which also recently received two Mobile Merits at the One Show and a Silver Clio in the Digital/Mobile – Emerging Technologies category.

The idea was simple, yet went “viral” in the best possible way – getting huge exposure on social as well as conventional media. Autocorrect on a computer or mobile device is a function which does not take into account our multiplicity of local languages and frustrates and angers many users when it tries to correct their use of a local word or phrase.

What Grey did was compile lists of the most common phrases in our languages and then make them available to people to download and insert them as part of their device’s dictionary, meaning they would not be corrected.

A little stab for cultural independence which tapped into South African pride, the campaign not only got talked about, it positioned Savanna not only as the brand which brings you humour in its ads, but which is prepared to take on the struggle to “decolonise” technology.

Orchids for Savanna and Grey and WPP-Liquid.

## **More accolades for South Africa**

Another international recognition of top-class work was the Sabre EMEA award to the Kagiso Trust as Innovator of the Year: Brand.

Kagiso Trust also won a Certificate of Excellence for best in “social good, public service and activism”, as well as certificates of excellence for “Media Relations” and “Public Education” for their #KagisoRadioTeachers campaign.

The Sabre Awards recognises superior achievement in branding and reputation in North America, Europe, Middle East and Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. So, it’s a significant award for the Trust.

Because it also shows the value of professional PR and marketing – even when the client is a non-government organisation doing good works and not a “product” – Kagiso and its advisors, like the redoubtable Keri-Ann Stanton, get Orchids from me.

## Brand damaging marketing

Less savoury – and incredibly brand-damaging – have been two instances this week of companies letting themselves – and their brands – get used by the Covid-19 denialists. This is serious, because if your company is connected with messaging like this – including the anti-vaccination propaganda – you are hindering efforts to beat Covid. And that is not good.

Most blatant was San-i-tizeZA, a company that makes and sells sanitary products to medical establishments. How on earth, then, would a company like this erect a prominent (and also illegal) billboard in Cape Town, proclaiming: “In Gates you Trust? In God we Trust. No ‘vaccine’ for us.”

This is tinfoil-hat propaganda of the worst type because it will cost lives through vaccine hesitancy. I wouldn’t buy from this company if this is its shockingly awful attitude to the biggest global health crisis in history. It goes without saying they get an Onion.

Similarly, medical group Discovery took a pasting this week on social media for hosting podcasts from well-known Covid deniers. One denier has alleged that less than 10,000 people would die in SA from Covid, then that the second wave would never come and called one of our foremost and globally respected experts a threat to the country.

Although the Discovery podcasts were discontinued last year, according to Discovery, the company still left a lot of the denialist and antivaxx content up on its site. This was a bizarre contrast to the excellent, science-based briefing by chief executive Dr Ryan Noach a few weeks ago, which unequivocally supported vaccines.

When you are in the business of health and science-based responses to a pandemic, why would you allow this lunatic fringe propaganda to damage your brand, Discovery? You need to look at your digital marketing and communication strategy.

Damage is already done – and shooting yourself in the foot will always get you an Onion.

## 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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