

Leader in party flavours

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

7 Dec 2021

A beaut: Dramatic, colourful in monochrome world of whisky; Misguided and 'crass' PR messaging is enough to bring tears to the eyes.



For someone of Irish descent, I shock many people when I tell them I cannot stand whiskey (Irish) or whisky (Scottish).

Sadly, it tastes like soapy firewater to me and I cannot fathom the ecstasy people go into when merely sniffing a single malt.

To be honest, though, my distaste for Scotch in particular probably dates back to an especially lurid New Year's Eve when my girlfriend's brother-in-law – a Scot named Colin – and I stayed up to flatten a bottle and a whole packet of frankfurter sausages.

Bangers and mash, you might say.

I've never forgotten that hangover, nor been near whisky again.

My father, who was a barman, had a similarly anarchic approach to this booze, which was in short supply in sanctions-

strapped Rhodesia.

His mates brought him a bottle of Jameson's back from SA – and he promptly mixed it with Mazoe orange juice and lemonade. When they found out, they never brought him any booze again.

He also loved to mix drinks and browsing through a cocktail book that contained very specific directions on how to make them, an art that has only seen a resurgence in recent years.

I was reminded of that in the most recent ads for Scottish Leader whisky which, apparently, acknowledges that it may not be the choice of snobs, but it is for those who want to have a bit of fun.

The brand's bottom line in its marketing campaigns is that it is versatile and its world is not one of smokey fireplaces in stone cottages, next to rainy windswept lochs. This is a party Scotch.

And parties are the world of cocktails.

Scottish Leader's ads are dramatic and visually appealing pieces of work that are far beyond that near-monotone world of traditional Scotches.

The series is pitched around the idea of Dramatique, a piece of cocktail theatre focusing on the visceral themes of passion: Pride. Enigma. Revenge.

What really makes it is the imagery, which has a dreamlike quality that speaks to a super-charged imagination and subtly makes the point that Scottish Leader will set your cocktail imagination free to roam.

It's a visual feast, as well as a clever marketing strategy, so Orchids to Scottish Leader, agency Grey-WPP Liquid and Darling Films.

A PR mishap

Communication, especially when it is used for marketing purposes, can be somewhat of an art form at its highest level. Yet so many pieces of communication not only fail to achieve the heights but don't even get off the ground.

At the heart of such failures is the lack of understanding by the communicators – whether of the target markets they are addressing, the story they should be telling or the medium they are using.

Two examples popped up recently. The first came from a colleague who left journalism some years ago and is now involved in the communication business - hence I am honouring his request to remain nameless.

Despite the fact that in his entire career he had nothing whatsoever to do with fashion or beauty and despite the fact he hung up his journalism keyboard years ago, he received a breathless (aren't they all?) PR email from an outfit called tajeeli.com.

This lot, according to their own blurb, helps “educate beauty enthusiasts about cosmetic surgery and its alternatives”.

It then proceeded to outline why “South Africa’s fave make-up brand is Revlon”.

My colleague’s observation: “Why the *swear word* would I, a former journalist now operating in the shadows of the dark arts, receive an email like this?”

Exactly. Yet another example of a PR company needing to be taught the basics. Rule No 1: Understand your target market. Send your release to someone who might find it relevant.

My colleague went on to say to me: “I’m not so much *swear word* incandescent about receiving it as I am despondent about the level of cretinism and the *swear words* attitude of the sender and the fact that the client is paying through the nose for this kind of absolutely crass box-ticking.”

Couldn’t have put it better myself. Onion to tajeeli.com.

Communication failure

Then there was “clever” handling of Telkom’s social media.

On Twitter, another acquaintance had commented, for about the third time, about how he was getting nowhere with a complaint to Telkom. I chimed in with what I thought was a subtle but witty comment and moved on.

Half an hour later, I got a mail from the Telkom social media responders: Dear Brendan, Please DM with your details so we can address the problem.

No guys. Did no one explain to you how Twitter works and how to read tweets?

And I thought only the youngest, coolest and most tech-savvy people were to be found on brand social media teams.

Onion to Telkom – please train your people better.

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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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