

The boozy road not taken... and lies, damned lies and surveys

By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Hangovers, they say, are God's way of telling you to lay off the booze. And, anyone who has had one will know the "why did I do it?" feeling of remorse.



Screengrab from the ad.

Alcohol has changed so many lives in so many ways – yet humankind still seems to love the bottle. Trying to get people to approach alcohol in a more sensible way – to save our country the billions it costs us annually, in everything from car accidents and domestic violence to the effects of foetal alcohol syndrome – is clearly not a message which is getting through.

The new campaign along these lines from non-profit organisation [Aware.org](#), (Association for Alcohol Responsibility and Education) takes a different angle. Different in the sense that it doesn't wag fingers or show images (however censored) of bodies and the sort of carnage boozing can cause.



Aware.org launches responsible drinking campaign

Danette Breitenbach 1 Jun 2018



It's all about "the road not taken"...and in this case, the road not taken is the easy one to booze addiction.

So we see the same man in two different scenarios, but at the same time, thanks to the use of clever image effects. A man able to look at himself from outside.

And what he sees is not good: from life and soul of the party which the booze triggers; to fighting, insulting and being thrown out of the club by the bouncers. It's a clear look at the sleazy side of what "just a little drink..." can turn into.

We then see him heading home – in a taxi, not driving himself in his inebriated state.

He arrives at his house to a warm and stable family home-loving wife and, asleep in her bedroom, their beautiful daughter. There is contest as to which is the more appealing road taken.

The punchline – Drink like there is a tomorrow – is apt, and memorable.

Orchids to Aware.org, ad agency Riverbed and director Gordon Lindsay of Braille Films for your message of hope out of despair.



Riverbed celebrates 10 years of greatness

Riverbed 9 Jun 2017



Best way to hoodwink a journalist? Send them a press release based on a "survey".

That sounds like science and very few journalists will question you, as a clever PR company, if you do that. Even better, use percentages – because you know they won't have a clue.

That's exactly what an outfit called the deVere Group did last week...and they reeled in the suckers. The company bills itself as "an international financial services organisation", which should have been the first red flag, because it is a commonly used vague, meaningless generalisation, but which sounds professional.

The company's release said it had done a "survey" among "high-net-worth individuals" (rich people, to you and me) about their "exposure to cryptocurrencies". Hardly an unbiased piece of research, given that deVere is in that very business.

The survey included at least 600 of these people spread across South Africa, the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, the UAE, Qatar, Switzerland, Hong Kong, Spain, France, and Germany (all solid blue chip nations, at least in common perception).

And, according to the survey "findings", these people were besotted with cryptocurrencies, to the extent that they believe these are "the future of money". (Another lovely, meaningless cliché: What money? Where? How?)

But the best part of the release was the bit which eluded journalists: that which said "more than a third" of these people (34%, 35%, 99%, who knows?) said they "either have exposure to cryptocurrencies, or they intend investing by the end of 2018".

Cue gasps of amazement among journalists and among the numerically illiterate who read it and rushed off to have a look at BitCoin.



The year the bitcoin craze reached Wall Street

Luc Olinga 19 Dec 2017



Here's the proper way of looking at this rubbish. Even by their own figures, at least two-thirds (or just over, using a similar logic to them), DO NOT own cryptocurrencies, nor do they have any intention of investing in them by the end of this year.

That means, in reality, that high net worth individuals actually don't believe in cryptocurrencies...

While the press release may have achieved its aim of getting coverage and in gulling the gullible, ultimately this sort of bullshit damages both the integrity of the PR industry (not exactly at an all-time high considering the shenanigans of Bell Pottinger) but also makes it guilty of distributing fake news.

That will rebound both on a PR company and on a client.

So, today's fake news Orchid goes to deVere...

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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