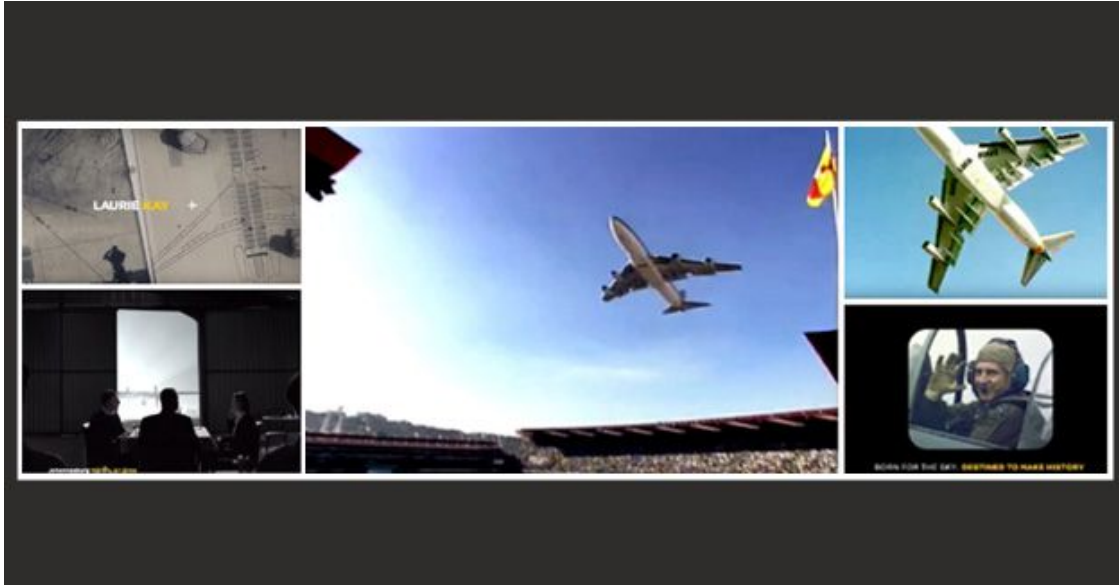


Fly, the beloved country... high above the "vapour research"

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

26 Jun 2018

These days, when you leave the toxic atmosphere of Twitter (and I am forced to lurk there as part of my job as a newsman), you feel as though you should have a chemical decontamination shower, so vile is some of the anger and hatred.



Screengrabs from the ad.

There seem to be so many on this social media channel who believe that the whole "Miracle" of 1994 and the idea of the "Rainbow Nation" was all a lie. Further, Nelson Mandela was a sell-out because he bowed down to white people and "Big Business"...

Exposed to so much of this line of reasoning does make me acknowledge that perhaps we (all of us) were too naïve in our acceptance that 300 years of history could be re-written by one man and one election.

When I look back on those times, I sometimes cringe to see the sentiments – the lofty but unrealistic ones – being expressed by people. It's rather like looking back at the 70s and platform shoes ... "What were they thinking?"

And nothing sums up that rose-tinted era quite as much as the triumph in the World Cup Rugby final at Ellis Park Stadium

in Johannesburg in 1995, where Joel Stransky's sublime drop-goal made us World Champions, triumphing 15-12 over the All Blacks.

There was Madiba, Francois Pienaar and the Webb Ellis Trophy. There were the strains of "Shosholoza" echoing around the stadium, as well as those of the strange, new, hybrid national anthem.

Then there were the multi-coloured, joyful crowds in the streets afterwards, all overwhelmingly proud to be South Africans, united by a pride which went beyond skin colour.

But it was the goose bump-inducing flight by a massive South African Airways Boeing 747 jumbo jet, low over Ellis Park, which announced the world we were a "can do" nation. Nobody else had done – or possibly even could do – such a daring, and potentially disastrous, piece of stunt flying.

The man flying the plane was veteran SAA pilot Laurie Kay and, as people close to him said later, it was as though his whole life in planes – from passenger jets to aerobatic prop-driven craft – was leading up to this.



When we come together, we can amaze the world

TBWAIHuntLascaris 5 Jun 2018



MTN's new "Sounds the Call" ad wonderfully evokes those times, with a clever blend of actual footage, set-up scenes using actors and some computer-manipulated imagery to pay tribute to Laurie Kay – who passed away some years ago – but also to rekindle national pride.

As a sponsor of the Springboks, the cell provider has, like fellow sponsor FNB, focused on the intangibles of emotion to underline its contribution to nation-building.

Now, I suppose one could be cynical about this sort of patriotism, but it works for me. It's a reminder of what we once were and, through rose-tinted optimism glasses, what we might be again...

So Orchids to MTN, ad agency TBWA and Darling Films.

Research Rubbish – Chapter 2

A few weeks ago, I got a breathless release from Reputation Matters, a PR outfit in Tshwane, about how that city had been “voted” best African capital in terms of “sustainability”.

According to Reputation Matters, the firm had surveyed “15 African capitals” ahead of Sustainability Week held in Pretoria. When pressed by my cynical questions (because I am very wary of “vapour” research), Reputation Matters provided the list of these 15 African capitals.

The list has shrunk to just 14 places – including Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and Rustenburg, *nogal*. There – now you know... Rustenburg is an African capital city.

Even worse was to come, though.

Reputation Matters said it had 76 responses to its survey, 80% of which came from South African cities, with Cape Town topping the list at 43%, followed by Tshwane at 27% and Joburg at 8%.

If that's a survey, then I'm a rabbi...

A research expert friend of mine (in my survey of experts across the continent – if you can do it, so can I) shook her head in disbelief (at least that's what it felt like down the email line).

Her company does serious research and, without quantifying who was asked what, invoking “African capitals” when there were more responses from SA cities, as well as the absence of judging criteria, was, in her view, not proper research. Nor was it well-written, “even as a media release...” she wrote.

That last comment sums up how professionals in business – and note, not just cynical old journalists – take with a pinch of salt this sort of fantasy.

Sadly, there are many in the media industry who will look at this as genuine, simply because it is flagged as “research” or a “survey”.



#OrchidsandOnions: The boozy road not taken... and lies, damned lies and surveys

Brendan Seery 19 Jun 2018



So to Reputation Matters, the second of our Fake News Onions (the first was last week). One day someone will see through the nonsense... and how sustainable will you then be?

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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