

Doing a slider into number one spot

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Doing a Slider into number one spot; About time the Advertising Regulatory Board is reined in by the High Court in Joburg...



I think it is fair to argue that Chicken Licken has usurped Nando's as the brand which best uses humour as a marketing tool.

It's been doing better and better funny – and sometimes off-the-wall – ads for about a decade now.

And, under its newest ad agency, Joe Public, the gags are taking us back to the glory days of South African advertising when brands and agencies were more daring.

The last really big-buck Chicken Licken campaign by Joe Public was sadly pulled after the Advertising Regulatory Board decided it was the keeper of culture and defender of the easily offended.

That, thank goodness, is unlikely to happen to the latest Chicken Licken ad.

The ad involving 'The Hoff' is a spoof of the highly popular (and equally highly cheesy – at least from the perspective of the

21st century) TV series *Knight Rider*. He played Michael Knight, who sallied forth on his magnificent steed, Kitt (which stood for Knight Industries Two Thousand) to fight bad guys. Kitt was a tricked-out black Pontiac Transam and blessed with a sassy electronic artificial intelligence, the perfect foil to Michael, whose main purpose really, was to look pretty.

In the Chicken Licken ad, we see an amazingly accurate duplicate of Kitt cruising the township streets of Mzansi with its pilot, Michael Nyathi (geddit?).

The scenes – including the ludicrous flying manoeuvre pulled off by Kitt at the push of the ‘Turbo Boost’ button – come straight from the TV series playbook, with a unique SA twist.

I quite like the scene where Kitt ‘races’ a Lamborghini after stopping at the traffic light to challenge the smooth white dude in the Italian stallion with a street-smart “Let’s go, cheeseboy...”

The ad finishes at a Chicken Licken outlet, where Michael Nyathi zips off to get the latest bargain ‘slider’ meal. As he does so, The Hoff comes through on the communication screen, so happy to have tracked Kitt down at last. The call is quickly terminated by the car, which clearly much prefers Michael Nyathi – and Chicken Licken.

The kicker is to pull a rhyme together with Night Rider, Night Slider – with a price. It’s a giggle, it’s clever and it remembers to do the basics – put in a price so people get tempted.

Orchids to Chicken Licken and to Joe Public, as well as to director Mfundo Mkhize from Ola Films.

This week, there was an important judgment handed down by the High Court in Johannesburg which effectively declared parts of the Advertising Regulatory Board’s (ARB) processes in adjudicating ads to be unconstitutional.

In essence, the court ruled that the ARB had no jurisdiction over brands which were not members – and therefore could not ‘ban’ advertising by ordering media houses not to run such ads.

In this case, it was Bliss, a household cleaner manufacturer. Bliss challenged a ruling in favour of multinational giant Colgate-Palmolive, which had complained Bliss product names were so similar to theirs that, effectively, Bliss was profiting from their advertising goodwill.

This is not the first such ‘passing off’ case decided by the ARB. I think these issues are principles of intellectual property and should be settled in a court of law, not an advertising watchdog hearing.

There is no doubt the ARB performs a valuable public service when it looks at false claims in advertising. However, it sometimes arrogates to itself the position of guardian of public morals and bends way too easily to minuscule amounts of complaints.

The Chicken Licken ad was, effectively, accused by one person of being racist. And that was enough to get it banned and see millions of rands poured down the drain.

That is not right. So, an Orchid to Bliss for standing up and saying: this is not right.

Let's hope this is the inspiration for a total relook at the ARB so that it is more reflective of what real people think.

And here's hoping we do away with the de facto ban on comparative advertising, too.

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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