

Cheeky dog ad gives Cell C a leg up

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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At the risk of attracting ire from readers, I am going to stick my neck out and say the controversial new Cell C ad - apparently titled *Screwed* - is not only amusing but also works well from a marketing perspective...

The ad comes on the back of aggressive marketing by the network, including the launch of a unique contract "buy-out" offer a few weeks ago.

The point in the latest ad is something all South Africans can identify with - they are getting taken advantage of, as the ad copy says, but many people will agree the vulgarity "screwed" is appropriate.

Everyone is at it: retailers, etolls, Eskom... the list goes on and on. Everywhere Everyman goes, he finds an irritating dog grabbing his leg and, well, doing what randy dogs do, I suppose. Everybody who sees the ad will know exactly what Cell C is getting at.

And, the ad subtly, or not so subtly, says the same thing is occurring in the cellphone business. Cell C won't do that to you, is the promise. Which is what we see as the leg-rubbing dog trots away when he sees Everyman heading into a Cell C outlet.

The ad may be distasteful to some people, but I would suggest that they are not the target market. Those who are will certainly be able to identify with the middleclass feeling of being overwhelmed by everything out there which puts you down.

It is a risk strategy but, judging from the overwhelmingly positive comments I've heard from people I would consider for the target market - younger and not brand loyal, as well as irritated with South Africa's current state of affairs and in need of a laugh - it is hitting home in a marketing sense.

Of course, knowing that the advert was put together by 1886, an independent agency within the FCB South Africa partnership, where the unconventional Stu Stobbs is executive creative director - and knowing that Cell C is not afraid of taking risks - I am not surprised.



A screenshot from the ad

But, it works as attention-grabbing marketing, even more so because it is generating a storm of comment on social and other media... and that is the cherry on top of the adspend cake.

Orchids to Cell C and 1886.

I don't know who first told brands that intrusive SMS campaigns were a clever and cheap way of marketing. I get angry when these unsolicited messages pop into my phone inbox... and I actively make a point of avoiding those brands.

The latest one to join my blacklist is Wonga.com, the outfit which charges near-usurious rates for short-term loans. If you had the faintest clue about me, Wonga, you would know that I am so not your target market.

But clearly you don't - and you don't care. There must be hundreds of thousands of people out there who have similar feelings about SMS marketing, so a double Onion this week - to Wonga.com and to the SMS marketing industry generally.

I wonder if brands realise how much potential damage they are doing to themselves by using an intrusive mechanism like this?

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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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