

Switch Energy Drink switches things up

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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I doubt there are many other countries in the world - even those who famously praise their own sense of humour - which could turn a national tragedy into a funny gag and then turn that into a marketing pitch.



Tough get going

When the going gets tough, the tough get going, I suppose...And the going certainly gets tough in South Africa.

There can be few more torturous experiences, in a country where those are the default daily way of life, than going to the Department of Home Affairs to renew your passport or your ID.

I know there have been some attempts to streamline the system – and that you can even go through your bank (at least if you're born here – don't try that if you're a naturalised citizen and want to renew your passport). But mention Home Affairs to anyone and they will immediately conjure up a mental image of a queue moving at glacial speed, unhelpful employees who give the lie to both parts of their job purpose as "civil servants" ...and, of course, that reliable passion killer: "Sorry, the system is down..."

Yet Switch energy drink has turned that into a marketing opportunity, putting out the message that this is the energy concoction that will fortify you to deal with anything life in SA throws at you...including the DHA.



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We see a man trying to renew his ID and he is put through the paces – photo, proof of residence, copy of photo, etc etc. The process takes so long that he has his next birthday – which requires starting the whole rigmarole again. And then another wait long enough for him to grow a beard.

When he finally gets back to the woman who has been torturing him, she says (you guessed it): Sorry, system is offline. Come back tomorrow.

Taking a swig of his Switch drink, he smiles and says: See you tomorrow. Now if it were only that simple to put our civil service inefficiency behind us.

Still, the ad does propose that Switch is the way to cope with those situations where you need that sort of extra strength. And if you smile, if not laugh, during the ad, well then, the message has got through.

And you've showed you're a South African. What doesn't kill amuses, apparently...

Orchid to Switch. Long may you and others like you continue to lampoon our lazy and incompetent overlords ... although soon, this might be regarded as a threat to state security.

Local accents

So, our minister of youth, women and those with disabilities, the anti-smoking superhero Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, believes that the Brics (Brazil, India, China, Russia and South Africa) bloc will be a way to “accelerate the downfall of an unjust imperialist world order.”

Given this country's fascination with everything from the West – and especially its bling – she and the other ANC zealots living in the past of the Cold War and the Soviet state have a mountain to climb to change the perceptions of people.

And, in the minds of some mindless advertisers, the perception is that the best way to sell your products is to do it with a

fake American accent.

The latest brand guilty of that is Homemark, promoting various home appliances with fake male and female Yank accents. Why do you need to do this? Do you think this is the *Days of Our Lives*? There is nothing wrong with local accents...and by using South African voices, you emphasise that you are South African and one of us.

As it is, Homemark, you are as fake as Hollywood and you get an Onion for being part of the shallow thinkers who believe the Stars and Stripes make everything better.

I hope I didn't just get myself on to Dlamini-Zuma's Christmas card list.

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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