

Sneaking in some ambush tactics

By [Brendan Seery](#)

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The last-minute decision by the authorities in Qatar to ban the sale of alcohol in stadiums for the Fifa World Cup 2024 came as a shock to many.



One wag on Twitter even wondered whether English football fans travelling to Doha might even understand the game at all, given that they would be sober this time around...

While the sale ban will mean little in terms of revenue for beer sponsor Budweiser. Even at the hugely inflated prices which will be charged in Qatar in the limited places booze will be on sale, it was nevertheless a reminder of the gargantuan size of sports sponsorships the world over.

Fifa, in particular, is highly protective of the enormous revenue which flows from those brands which are official sponsors. Who can forget our own cops being used to arrest football fans from The Netherlands for wearing shirts in orange, which is the national colour? However, Fifa claimed that orange is also synonymous with Bavaria Beer, a competitor to the tournament's Budweiser official sponsor.

That sort of "ambush marketing" is dealt with harshly by Fifa and by many host governments. But, it doesn't seem that anyone who handles the Springboks sponsorships has thought too much about ambush advertising.

Had they done so, they might have put in place a stringent monitoring framework or a deal with broadcasters to vet ads to be flown during official national rugby matches.

The fact that they didn't was plain to see in the Bok vs Italy match on Saturday. Broadcaster DStv ran ads from official Bok sponsors like Spur and MTN...but also allowed Capitec to sneak in under the radar and ambush another official sponsor, FNB.



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Capitec's brief spot, during the halftime break, was a simple copy and its logo. I wondered what the point was spending so much money to have your logo on a rugby jersey. Crazy, was its conclusion. It did not mention FNB but, given that the big bank's logo was on the back of every Springbok's jersey, Capitec didn't have to.

Nor did it have to go further, because the implication was clear, wouldn't you rather have your bank spending money which directly benefits you, as a customer? Given that Capitec is a challenge brand in the banking space and undercuts the bigger places in areas like charge, the ambush spot was a brilliant piece of cheeky marketing.

I hope it doesn't get banned by our conservative ad regulator. For me, though, it fully deserves an Orchid.

I also love the way the University of the Western Cape (UWC) has combined internal and external marketing, along with entertainment and education, with a fair bit of emotion thrown in, in its recently launched UWC On Air channel on YouTube.

It is as professionally put together as anything you're like to see on local television and I think any tertiary institution anywhere would be proud to host such a channel. Call me biased but I think it works because there are real journos involved, who tell real stories... what is marketing, after all, if it is not telling stories – both to inform and to motivate your customers and potential customers?

So, Orchids to the whole UWC. You other varsities better pay attention.

The flip side of the coin is getting bombarded by "shotgun" press releases sent by people who haven't been journalists and don't know how the media works.

So, sorry for you, Irvine Partners, for sending out a release directed to the world and his or her dog. I know this is so because it had the standard “Good morning, I hope you are well” PR flannel, but with no name attached. Personal contact? Not so much.

Also, perhaps the best use for the press release would be as a treatment for insomnia, pitched on behalf of MFS Africa, a “digital payments hub in Africa”, it burred on and on in business-speak, about partnerships.

That is not a story, Irvine Partners, and someone from your firm should tell the client that. And if the client won’t listen, fire them. On the other hand, I don’t doubt there are probably plenty of stories lurking in and around the client. Just get yourself a journalist to find them...

For wasting my time – and that of scores of other hacks you sent the release to – Irvine Partners gets an Onion.

Got anything you'd like to say or got any great work I may not know about? Drop me a line at brendanjseery@gmail.com

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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