

Getting lost in translation is one thing, but using someone else's incorrect, and dangerous, garbage is something totally different

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

24 Apr 2018

I am not always convinced that a brand which makes arbitrary funny gags as "content" - which is light on, or even missing, a marketing message - is doing the right thing. A brand exists to sell its product or service, not to entertain.



Screengrabs from the ad.

Having said that, though, the most memorable ads are the ones which not only make you smile or laugh, but which also have a strong link to the brand.

So I am a bit torn about the latest ad for King Price insurance, which was put up on their Facebook page and, thanks to assiduous marketing and social media plugging, has "gone viral". I am conflicted because it is indeed funny – and very South African – but there is no obvious link to an insurance product.

King Price maintains that the link is that, in the ad, something major gets "lost in translation", much as insurance companies and their customers often don't communicate clearly enough.

That "lost in translation" joke apparently is an adaptation of a joke told by the father of Bennie Fourie. Fourie junior styles

himself as a “writer/actor/film-maker” and he has set up a production/company/agency with the like-minded and experienced Bouwer Bosch. Their company, Freckle, came up with the concept and made it a production reality.

What we see is an ordinary day on the “*plaas*”. A worker is toting a bale of hay around when he hears seductive music coming from one of the barns.

He peeps around the door and is shocked to see the “boer” almost “making love” to a very old, and very battered, tractor. It’s all swoons and gyrations and pouting of lips. (In that sense, it reminds me very much of “Boet” from the old Castrol “Can of the Best” ads from back in the day.)

When the boer realises he is being watched, he ruefully explains (in Afrikaans) that he has been having some problems in the “love department” and that the *Engelse dokter* in the *dorp* had recommended that he “do something sexy to attract her”... and that gets lost in translation to end up as “do something sexy to a tractor...”

It’s a bit corny, but you can’t help but smile. And we certainly need things to cheer us up in this current South African reality. It’s difficult to think badly about someone, or something, which has made you smile.

An organisation branded “Arrive Alive” would surely not be careless or cavalier when it comes to road safety... that’s what you would think, anyway.

Yet, it has just made itself guilty of the same unthinking, and reckless social media sharing, which has got many into trouble. More than that, though, it is guilty of posting something potentially dangerous.

This piece of “fake news” tweeted by Arrive Alive came from roadsafety.co.za.

It posed the legitimate question about what you would do if you discovered you were running out of fuel on the highway.

But – and this is a huge but – the material used in answer to that question was a heap of rubbish, which appears to have originated in America and then been put into an amateurish graphic in the Philippines. I am not kidding...

There are plenty of Americanisms – references to “gas”, “miles”, “mph” (miles per hour, if you can remember that far back or were not around in the 1970s, when South Africa switched to the Metric system) – as well as mixed-up tenses (a common Americanism) but also just plain bad writing.

Example: “If this unfortunately happens to you, have a presence of mind”.

Then there is also a silly reference to being able to download an app, which will enable you to have fuel delivered. In South Africa?

But the worst, and most dangerous, piece of this idiocy is the recommendation that, as soon as you see you are about to run out of fuel, “Get into the right lane immediately...”

That’s fine in the US, where they drive on the right and the right-hand lane is the slow lane. In this country, it is the opposite. Getting into the fast lane and slowing down to save fuel, will almost certainly help you “Arrive Not Alive”.



[click to enlarge](#)

This is a warning to all those people responsible for a brand’s social media: get your facts right. Just because someone else posted it, doesn’t mean it’s either correct or appropriate.

An Onion to roadsafety.co.za, as well as to Arrive Alive. Remove this rubbish as soon as possible from the information superhighway.

Something like this does get people talking and, when it goes viral, then a brand gets to far more places. So that’s clever marketing. An Orchid for King Price and for Freckle.

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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