

Audi and Ogilvy's AI-generated ad is a piece of art

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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The “next big thing” in marketing – after programmatic advertising and “influencers”, both of which consume billions and deliver little real benefit – is “Artificial Intelligence.”



Stunning ad

At the risk of being labelled a technophobe, I must say I am not convinced this will be the silver bullet for everything, as it is being touted at the moment.

Google's highly hyped Gemini AI system went spectacularly pear-shaped earlier this month, delivering bizarre images from Native American Vikings, to Black Roman senators, to a Black woman Pope. In an interesting variation of the old computer programming adage “garbage in, garbage out”, Google's *c/levers* got caught out by their own political correctness and desire not to offend – and ended up doing the very thing they wanted to avoid.

Gemini has taken some time out while they patch a few things (Beta version, anyone?) but Google's high-profile blaps has not been good for the AI community.

So, it was with a decent spoonful of pessimism that I went to look at Audi South Africa's new AI-generated ad, which calls itself a "curated collection inspired by Audi", pointing watchers from the art and design to Audi's own special edition collection.

And, frankly, it was stunning.

Allowing the AI to generate images on themes around Audi's design – and how cutting edge it is – local AI specialists Monkey Donkey (brief by Audi's long-time local agency, Ogilvy) put together a fascinating video which is as cutting edge, and edgy, as the products it is promoting.

Shot in a near monochrome way for most of the video, the execution is itself a piece of art.

It moves seamlessly from the beginning – a vision – through to elegance and ambition and on to merging style with cutting edge mobility.

Those phrases perfectly sum up Audi the brand and the way the video is produced echoes the understated elegance of the brand.

Call me impressed. There is a place for AI, after all. Although clearly the quality of the input from the Ogilvy experts and those at Monkey Donkey shows in the outputs.

Orchids all round – to Audi South Africa, Ogilvy SA and Monkey Donkey.

Crying wolf

South Africa is probably the only country in the world where a company which is doing badly in failing to produce quality products or services can turn around, with a straight face, and blame its customers.



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Brendan Seery 12 Mar 2024



Eskom ploughed that furrow first with its campaigns, at the height of load shedding, urging consumers to switch off appliances. Never mind that, in many cases, the appliances couldn't be switched off because they were already off, thanks to load shedding. It was a classic case of running salt in the wound of state-owned enterprise incompetence and corruption.

Now, it's the turn of Johannesburg Water which, like the boy crying wolf, is urging consumers to save water. So – wash your car on the grass, they say in social media posts, so the grass can also benefit. And, “use a glass of water to rinse when brush your teeth”

If you don't do this, the unspoken and ominous threat is, you'll soon have no water at all.

TOP 10 HIGH CONSUMING METERS

Meter Name	Area of Concern
SANDTON 1 & 2 METERS	ALEXANDER
YEOVILLE RESERVOIR	JOBURG CBD
FOREST HILL RESERVOIR	ROSETTENVILLE
MEADOWLANDS SYSTEM SUPPLY ZONE	
JABULANI RESERVOIR SUPPLY ZONE	
AEROTON TOWER	ORLANDO EAST
LENASIA RESERVOIR	INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS
ZONDI TOWER SUPPLY ZONE	
DOORKOP NORTH	DOORKOP, TSHEPISOHO, SLOVOVILLE, MATHOLESVILLE
PRESIDENT PARK	IVORY PARK, KAAIFONTEIN, EBONY PARK, COMMERCIA

Residents are requested to observe level-1 water restrictions which are implemented from 1 September to 31 March. These restrictions prohibit the use of hosepipes to water gardens, wash cars, clean driveways, as well as fill up swimming pools and water features between 06:00 and 18:00. Instead, the use of greywater is encouraged.

Here are simple water-saving habits to implement into your daily routine

- Do not leave taps dripping.
- Wash your car on the grass as this will water your lawn at the same time.
- Shorten your showering time.
- Use a glass of water to rinse when brushing your teeth.
- Reuse grey water to water your garden or pot plants.

This less than a week after the utility's operators “discovered” that a reason large parts of Joburg's suburbs ran dry was because someone had forgotten to open a pipeline valve. No, you absolutely cannot make up this stuff.

Then the mayor, Councillor Kabelo Gwamanda – who's an expert in looking gormless but little more than that – opined that the water situation in the city was “not a crisis...”

All the while the elephant in the dried-up reservoir is the fact that, for the past 30 years, nobody in the city's water utility has bothered repairing, replacing or maintaining water reticulation infrastructure, never mind expanding it to keep pace with the increase in population caused by accelerating urban drift. So, almost half the water pumped into the city's reservoirs goes to waste through burst pipes.

It's interesting to see a public campaign comparison between Johannesburg and Cape Town. The Mother City faced “Day Zero” some years ago and its marketing campaign – to get residents to use less water – did help push back the “Doomsday Clock”. The messaging focused on the reality that the water crisis facing Cape Town was natural and residents realised

they would have to pull together to avert a crisis.

In Johannesburg, however, our predicament is the fault of those who govern us, and not nature.

And now these people tell us it's our fault and expect us to comply. Good luck with that.

Rule Number one in any form of communication: Read the room. Johannesburg Water hasn't done that, so it gets an Onion (a desiccated, water-free one at that).

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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