

# Age is just a number - and don't run your ads in bad neighbourhood

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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I must say that when I saw the shapely blonde woman running across my screen the other day, I looked twice. And I looked even closer when I saw the trim, fit body was topped by a 'mature' face and grey hair.

"It's about time," was my first thought.

You see, in this country, our ad cleverers – and many in the media business – are making the same mistakes in assuming that older people are irrelevant when it comes to selling things.

The truth is just the opposite. According to research company Nielsen, people over 50 account for 50 percent of all consumer spending in the United States. That same demographic controls more than 70 percent of the wealth in America. Yet, marketers and ad agencies target just 10 percent of their spend at this group.

Travel companies have known this for a long time: the old cliché of the "Love Boat" cruises has been overtaken by a new reality that older people are travelling more and spending what they have worked hard over decades to accumulate.

Interestingly, though, this latest TV ad featuring the attractive mature woman was not specifically aimed at older people, but was making a point about long life, using an older person.

Toyota is currently offering a special range of deals on services for older cars. And the way they and their ad agency, FCB Joburg, chose to get that message across was to show that with the proper care and attention, aged can be defied – both for humans and cars.

So, look after your body and you'll amaze the onlookers as you take to the streets for your regular run – and you'll amaze others when your car still looks like new (as does the Toyota Tazz in the ad, which has got to be almost 20 years old).

As someone who has always conscientiously looked after my cars, if not myself, the ad strikes a chord.

Nice way to make a marketing point and a nice way to remind everyone that age is just a number.

So, Orchids to Toyota and FCB Joburg.

I can't resist quoting that old saying about growing old: "A beautiful young person is an accident of nature; a beautiful old

person is a work of art...”



Screengrabs from the ad.

I was interested recently to see the row which followed the threatened and actual **withdrawal of [advertising from Google](#)** and its [platforms like YouTube](#). The vast majority of digital advertising these days is bought, and placed through what is called “programmatic buying” – where clever computers and their software decided on where your ad is going to have the best audience. The problem with that is that the bots go for eyeballs, not demographics or psychographics among your potential customers.

So some of the world’s biggest brands have found their ads airing on YouTube especially, alongside some very unsavoury sites. Case in point was a Toyota commercial, which ran alongside of an Isis beheading video.

Advertisers are demanding that Google clean up its act – but the problem will persist, and get worse, because the new god of marketing is “Adtech”.

Silly – even damaging – media placement was what happened a few times recently with TV ads for Emirates and for Air France. Both ads are attractive in that they show flying as being a pleasurable experience... and, of course, in advertising, rose-coloured spectacles are standard issue...

However, if you were Emirates or Air France, where is the last place you would like your ads placed on the DStv bouquet? You would think that basic media planning would try to avoid placing those ads in the breaks on programmes of *Air Crash Investigation*.

Yet that is precisely what happened. Either some dim computer programme decided that anything related to flying was an appropriate place to put the ads – or some dim human did.

In the case of Air France, there is the double danger of the ads running at the same time as the programme about the crash of their brand-new Airbus A330 into the Atlantic a few years ago. So far, that hasn’t happened, but if you are reading this, Air France, you may want to take a look.

The Onion, then, goes to whoever did the media planning for the airlines. But they each get half an Onion for allowing it to happen. You have to monitor where and when your advertising messages run, people.

**Thulani Sibeko, Group executive of group marketing, communications corporate affairs at Nedbank Limited**, has sent in the following:

I have read [your article](#) and would like to share some feedback for your consideration.

Nedbank's new brand commercial conceptualised and produced by Joe Public United, aims to introduce the bank's new positioning and payoff line, 'See Money Differently', by exposing people to the insight that money is neither good nor bad, it's what you as a consumer makes of it. In the right hands and when managed well, it can make a real and meaningful difference to the lives of people. The 'tale of a note', for this reason, had to expose consumers to relevant and insightful positive as well as negative uses of money.

The challenge with this direction was two-fold:

- 1) The bank didn't want to come across as judging South Africans, albeit still tapping into very relevant market insights.
- 2) The bank wanted to create a piece that would be relevant in South Africa and other African markets where Nedbank is present.

For this reason, the correct currency which is central to the idea, became an important creative choice. The South African Reserve Bank (SARB) prohibits the use of SA money denominations in advertising. Therefore, we created a fictitious note drawing inspiration from the SA currency and yet distinct from it, to honour the SARB regulations. Also, because the advert will be shown in other Nedbank markets like Swaziland and Namibia where the Rand is not the official currency, a neutral currency makes sense.

The commercial was actually shot on location in Los Angeles, with one scene picked up at The Rand Club in Johannesburg. The most fundamental reason for shooting abroad was to enable us to create a nondescript city in order to comment on both good and bad money behaviours, without being seen to be judging the South African public or organisations. It was a critical creative decision to have no reference of any local context for this reason.

We hope that the above provides clarity, and we would be more than happy to discuss further should you have any comments or questions.

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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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