

Get intrigued by spuds

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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Campaign: Potatoes are healthy for people and the economy; Mahindra CEO no guppy when it comes to swimming with the marketing sharks.



Source: www.unsplash.com

When we were kids, my sister and I were the unpaid labourers of my father's 'farm', the half-acre or so where he would go back to his roots on the farm in Ireland.

One of the first crops he made us look after was potatoes – not at all surprising for an Irishman who loved his 'spuds'.

Despite the fact I discovered that in the soil of Africa you find things like cutworms, which can turn a potato underground into mush, I am still partial to potatoes to this day.

As chips, roasted, mashed or in potato salad, potatoes are my go-to form of starch. I love pasta, too, and would hate to choose between the two; but give me either of them over rice any day.

I was reminded of this with a simple TV ad for Potatoes South Africa – yes, there really is such an organisation and, no, I hadn't heard of it until then.

“ And you thought [#amazambane](#) had no television commercial? Halala potato industry. Making sure South Africans are served with fresh, quality potatoes beke le beke!!![#ClasssicGoodnessUnleashed#AlwaysFresh#AlwaysInSeason](#) [pic.twitter.com/0LRBGiC9v1](#)— Potatoes South Africa (@potatoes_za) [September 20, 2021](#) ”

We see the route from field to table – via the retail network – of potatoes. And it reminds us not only of the intrinsic value of the vegetable as a health food (as long as you don't overdo the fried part, that is) and the importance of crops like this to the health of South African people, but of agriculture to the health of the economy in general.

Watching the ad, I was intrigued enough to search out the organisation's website – [www.potatoes.co.za](#), along with a subsidiary site, [www.potatonation.co.za](#).

Both are great marketers for potatoes and the organisation's Facebook site (where you'll find a lot more cooks than you will on Twitter) is also a great showcase for the product.

It's a well-round marketing effort and a way to get consumers to remember potatoes in their lives ... not that many South Africans do without them, though.

Orchids to all involved in the Potatoes South Africa effort.

CEO's on Twitter

It's interesting to see a chief executive who gets his hands dirty marketing his company's brands, although, in a good way, because often those from the management suite (especially those trained as bean counters) like to interfere in marketing because they think they know better.

A local CEO who has just the right deft touch on adding his flair to a marketing message is Rajesh Gupta (no, not from those Guptas), who is the boss man at Mahindra South Africa.

A recent tweet from him on Twitter jumped out at me because it was a cut above a blatant “Buy this! Buy this!” raw, hard sell.

Gupta, whose Twitter handle is the slightly amusing @rguppy01, wrote: “The best way to experience the Karoo is by travelling its back roads and spending time savouring the vast open spaces, the indigo blue dome of the sky and the distinctive landscapes that merge into the shimmering horizon. Stop your car anywhere in the #Karoo.”

“ *“The best way to experience the Karoo is by travelling its back roads and spending time savouring the vast open spaces, the indigo blue dome of the sky and the distinctive landscapes that merge into the shimmering horizon. Stop your car anywhere in the #Karoo”*Something's coming [https://t.co/COjdSFEAe8](#) — Rajesh Gupta (@rguppy01) [September 22, 2021](#) ”

It's poetic; although maybe it's because I'm headed to the Karoo shortly on a trip. It's also a teaser for a teaser, which looks to be an upcoming launch of a new version of one of Mahindra's tough bakkies or SUVs.

With Gupta's tweet, I can almost smell the braai smoke as it swirls around a Mahindra, with the stars perforating the deep night sky.

An Orchid for Rajesh Gupta and Mahindra. I am awaiting the reveal.

An Onion for the Minister of Transport

Less palatable is the blatant misuse of taxpayer resources by Transport Minister Fikile Mbalula in putting out an ad for the department, crowing about how wonderful our road system is and the way it gets developed and repaired.

I was going to say something like... With all due respect, minister.

However, I have little of that for him after he blatantly accused my newspaper, *The Citizen*, of lying when it reported accurately on him saying the ANC would spend “not more than R50m” on the upcoming local government election campaign.

That was cheap politics and so is this piss-poor attempt to use your department to campaign for the ANC, Mr Minister.

You deserve a far more negative response from taxpayers than just my Onion.

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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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