

The **AVBOB** Poetry Project

AVBOB POETRY PROJECT

ENTRY TYPE: PRACTICES

CATEGORY: SPONSORSHIP

“AVBOB doesn’t sell death, but hope. And we’re sponsoring the Poetry Project out of our hearts, because poetry is a form of social conscience and because it’s a way for us to walk the talk of our slogan, ‘We’re here for you’, in a very unique way.”

— AVBOB CEO, Erik Rademan

OPENING STATEMENT

Sponsored by AVBOB, The AVBOB Poetry Project brings the comforting words of poets to people who so desperately need those words.

Through a nationwide competition, driven by PR, the project generates a bank of poetry which mourners can access via www.avbobpoetry.co.za as a value-added form of bereavement counselling.

As a national PR campaign, encouraging the submission of elegiac poetry in all 11 languages, The AVBOB Poetry Project yielded **20 774** entries over four months – to not only far exceed AVBOB's wildest expectations, but also to become the biggest homegrown competition of its kind ever in South Africa.

(97 words)

Project overview video: <https://youtu.be/BVorkpMnnys>

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY

It was the death of a two-year-old boy that led to a profound realisation. At his funeral, as his bereft grandfather delivered a eulogy, so great was his sorrow that all he could say was, "Tatta Kiewiet".

This inability of a heartbroken mourner to articulate himself, is something AVBOB sees daily.

The opportunity became clear for AVBOB to connect with its diverse target markets on an emotional level, by providing a powerful public service in the form of added value unlike any other. The answer: a bank of elegiac poetry in all 11 official languages, generated through PR and social media.

(100 words)

RESEARCH CONDUCTED

Upon identifying this seemingly obvious, yet potentially game-changing opportunity with powerful PR potential, we needed to research key issues.

Through interviews with AVBOB's CEO, marketing team and relevant internal AVBOB stakeholders, it was confirmed that the sad reality of mourners who are unable to articulate their emotions in their time of deepest sorrow, was something AVBOB is indeed exposed to daily.

Then, through simple desk research, it was confirmed that none of AVBOB's competitors have endeavoured to provide a sustainable solution to this same challenge, which, of course, their own clients also endure.

Crucially, we also needed to investigate the status of South African poetry as an art form to determine if there is enough interest and activity among aspiring poets – in all 11 languages – to justify sponsoring a competition of this scale, specifically considering the focus on elegiac poetry (poems about life and death). We interviewed acclaimed poets and language professors, many of whom were later appointed as editors on the project.

Moreover, we needed to research key cultural differences in poetry, e.g. the oral tradition of African poetry vis-à-vis the written tradition of English and Afrikaans poetry, to ensure that the competition was geared to be culturally inclusive.

(199 words)

PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN

Target markets

1. All South Africans (shape positive brand perception).
2. Aspiring and published poets, across all languages.

Overall desired objectives

1. Educate the market on AVBOB's differentiated offering (bereavement support through poetry).
2. Rekindle affinities with AVBOB through PR, using poetry as a vehicle.

Platforms

Niche community media; tier-one media across printed press, radio, TV, digital and social media.

Smart objectives

1. Reach all 11 official languages

- Planning:
 - Identified journalists from all languages to attend the press conference – arranged transport for key journalists from coastal regions.
 - Prepared custom press packs for extended media.
 - Built relationships with top poets to gain and leverage their support/influence.

SMART OBJECTIVE: Generate at least 50 poems from the smaller languages (e.g. Ndebele) and 500+ from the bigger languages (e.g. English, Zulu) by competition deadline (30 November 2017).

2. Entries: Generate at least 5 000 poems

- Planning:
 - To ramp up the interest, we pitched for budget from AVBOB to reward all approved poets with R300 per approved poem for the usage rights.
 - Digital and social media planning to drive traffic to the website.

SMART OBJECTIVE: Generate at least 3 000 registrations, and 5 000 entries, by 30 November with the hope of approving 10% (500).

3. To rekindle affinities with the target markets, our goal was to generate as much positive PR as possible.

- Planning:
 - Pre-empted content angles for ongoing PR opportunities. Built and maintained relationships with key media, intriguing them pre-launch and throughout the competition (see message themes under 'Execution').
 - Leveraged the broadcast of a poetry documentary to establish the sponsorship through a multi-sensory experience.

SMART OBJECTIVE: With a total PR cost to client of R392 857.15 ex VAT, and a social media cost of R151 431.43 ex VAT, our objective was to generate the following by December 2017:

- A minimum of at least 60 unique published pieces across platforms.
- Exposure in at least 20 tier-one media publications (all platforms).
- A minimum of R3 million in AVE.
- Positive engagement and social media sentiments about AVBOB.

EXECUTION

IMPLEMENTATION

Press conference

AVBOB's CEO made a personal address to the media, attracting over 30 journalists. Coenie de Villiers, because of his association with the arts, facilitated the event.

Press packs, containing a detailed press statement, images and video collateral (including documentary snippets), were provided. Press packs were delivered to the extended media.

An emotive video, explaining the inspiration and vision for the project, was played to the press, leaving them teary-eyed and inspired.

Competition opening & closing

The launch and closing included count-downs on social media, as well as a burst of PR exposure, e.g. over R1 million's coverage in the first two days.

Content management & creation

Bi-weekly brainstorming yielded intriguing content angles for PR and social media. As poems were entered, unique content angles arose, e.g. the first successful poem, the youngest entrant (10 years old), the oldest entrant (98 years), key milestones (1 000, 5 000 poems, etc.). We were never short of stories.

Gearing for better engagement

The website was geared to allow for constructive criticism from the editors (two-way communication portal). This translated into positive social media feedback.

Challenges & necessary adjustments

- Ndebele and Siswati yielded minimal entries, and so additional PR outreach was implemented.
- Because of the multilingual response, additional vernacular writing support was sourced to assist with the community management.
- Due to high entry volumes, the budget to pay approved poets needed to be increased. We motivated AVBOB's EXCO for an increase, and received a resounding "YES" because of the massive success of the project.
- Although we received great interest from the Xhosa community in the Eastern Cape, we learned, through numerous phone calls, that website access was a barrier for entry. We implemented activations and dedicated press coverage to announce an alternative entry method – physical drop-offs at local AVBOB branches.

(300 words)

EVALUATION/MEASUREMENT

With 20 774 poems entered, in all 11 official languages, the competition is the biggest of its kind ever to be executed in SA.

Project success (1 August – 30 November 2017)		
Description	Goal	Reached
Number of poems	5 000	20 774
Accepted poems	500	3 108
Poems entered on the last day (Insight: competition still gathering strength)	300	878
Number of participating languages	11	11
PR (1 August – 30 November 2017)		
Description	Goal	Reached
Number of published pieces	60	118
Total AVE (1:1 ration)	R3 million	R4.7 million ROI: 12:1
Tier-one media reached	20	50
Social media (Facebook) (1 August – 31 December 2017)		
Description	Goal	Reached
Page likes	10 000	20 563
Impressions	500 000	1 029 314
Engagement	12 000	22 400
Messages received	No benchmark	2 399
Website traffic, driving vernacular entries	No benchmark	2 591
Website (1 August – 16 December 2017)		
Description	Goal	Reached
Website registration	No benchmark	6 060
Website sessions	No benchmark	95 860
Page views	No benchmark	448 429
Users	No benchmark	41 442

**The project generated waves of positive social sentiments.
See clippings attached.**

Project overview video: <https://youtu.be/BVorkpMnnys>

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