

The power of emotional advertising

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Some of the most memorable advertising produced anywhere in the world is for cars. That's not because the human race is dominated by petrolheads - just the opposite in fact.



One of the toughest marketing sells in any product category is to sell a performance car to someone who is a fan of one of your rivals. Very seldom does it happen that any car fanatic will be tempted away from his or her favourite brand by advertising, so brands which try that route often waste their money.

On the other hand, cars are bought by ordinary people...and they become part of the lives of those ordinary people. They provide transport, sure, but they also provide a means to make memories. And, many are the car companies who have learned, the hard way, that you mess with a family favourite at your peril.

When you have taken the decision to stop production of a car which has become an icon, you've got to be especially clever in how you spin it... and how you take the fans with you, in anticipation - rather than disappointment and anger.

That's exactly what Ford UK has done with a charming video to mark the "death" of the hugely well-liked Fiesta.

In line with the way the world is changing, Ford UK has recognised two things: that small, petrol-powered hatchbacks are

yesterday's automotive news. Families these days want SUVs and the world is moving toward electric vehicles.

Ford's video is narrated by Grandad, as he reads to his grandson the story of *My Little Family Car*. From the child's storybook intro, we see the various iterations of the car, which debuted in 1976 and was Ford's first mass-production front-wheel-drive car and went on to become the global giant's third-best seller in history.

It wasn't a big car, it wasn't a fancy car, the story goes, but it was a car for the people. It became part of the family

Grandad says it sometimes went fast (as in the successful rally cars) and sometimes it went slow (as when Mum fetched the kids). But, "It always, always went..."

But one day it didn't. Not because it wouldn't. Not because it couldn't. But, says grandad, because its job was done.

They both say "thank you little car" and then "Goodnight Fiesta", where the final scene is the old parked next to the new, which is plugged in. It's the future.



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What a wonderful, and emotional way to gently say out with the old and in with the new.

I may be a bit sentimental. Over the years, our family has made many emotional bonds with cars. And Ford has been one of the brands which is part of our family history – from my mother's speed demon days in her brother's Ford V8, to my first car (a Cortina GT), my sister's first (an Escort 1300 Super) to the Fiesta we got for my daughter as a student car; right up to the newer Fiesta she now drives – and the most recent addition, the Kuga bought by my son and his wife.

I make no apologies for sending the Orchid this week to Ford UK – this is going viral and we all know the Internet is no respecter of international boundaries. This is great advertising because it helps solidify the bond between the customer and the product. Make a strong emotional connection with your customer – and back that up with a reliable product – and the chances are good you'll have them for life.

Well done, Ford.



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While the e-tolls debacle showed the power of protest (after the longest consumer boycott in South African history), it was also a case study of how not to market a sensitive or possibly controversial product.

I have no idea which agencies advised the SA National Roads Agency (Sanral), but hopefully, they would have advised then CEO, the arrogant Nazir Alli, to go easy and gently...you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar, they should have told him. He would have ignored them anyway and in his know-it-all way, tried to force the projects down the throats of Gauteng motorists.

What you should have realised, Sanral and Alli, was that you were effectively proposing double taxation by getting people to pay again for road infrastructure they have already paid for through taxes.

What you should have done, slowly and years ahead of time, was to prepare people for what was coming by telling them South Africa was going to be on the international stage at World Cup 2010 and we should show everyone how we can be a First World nation.



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Then, you should have gradually revealed to people that it would be their patriotic duty to fund these roads.... but with such low charges, they would barely notice. Putting up toll gantries and levying huge fees was not the way. Had you suggested to the public that a Gauteng-only fuel levy of 30 cents per litre would cover the costs, most people would have gone along with it. And, you would have paid off the roads by the end of 2020.

The lesson in the e-toll fiasco is that even governments have to market themselves to their citizens – and that marketing should not consist of running puff-piece adverts with photos of ministers. Engage marketing professionals to advise you – and we have plenty of them in this country.

To agencies pitching for government business – tell them straight. If you don't chase the bucks, you could find yourself associated with any failures your client is involved in.

In the meantime, Sanral, you get the Onion for arrogance.

Got anything you'd like to say or got any great work I may not know about? Drop me a line at brendanjseery@gmail.com

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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