

The Boswell family's multi-generational journey with Ford SA

I've always been a bit wary about brands that claim they are “purpose-driven” and who regularly polish their halo because they are, apparently, making the world “a better place” (somebody has probably trademarked that already).

 By [Brendan Seery](#) 25 Mar 2024



That sort of attitude, when it comes to the environment, often results in “greenwashing”, where companies try to convince consumers that their products are safe and even beneficial for Mother Earth, whereas in reality, they may be anything but.

When it comes to Corporate Social Investment (CSI), some companies go further than paying lip service and genuinely put their money where their mouths are when it comes to beneficial environmental programmes.

Ford SA showcases its community-building

Ford South Africa has been doing this for a long time with its Ford Wildlife Foundation, which contributes to more than 25 research and conservation projects around the country.

But, there is another, more subtle form of corporate social responsibility. One that encompasses building and sustaining a business, offering ordinary people the chance to build better lives for themselves.



DIGITAL

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Multinationals like Ford are critical to the economic well-being of this country. And while we often see ministers looking over their factories in South Africa, we don't usually get a chance to see their community building in action.

That's why it was refreshing to see Ford SA's tribute to one of the multi-generational families whose lives have been changed by working for the company.

The Boswell family, from Gqeberha, started their journey with Ford in the 1940s, as Graham Boswell recounts in the video

Boswell began his career at Ford in 1972, following his dad, who worked there for about 30 years. He recently retired after 47 years of service and as the narrator, describes how his brother, son and even granddaughter, have found a place at Ford's operations in the city.

One of the Boswells, thanking Ford, remarks "If it wasn't for Ford, I don't know where we would have ended up."

Will this ad make me buy a Ford? I don't suppose it would be the primary driver, but if I were buying the Blue Oval, I would be comforted knowing that it is a solid corporate citizen.

I think, also, that the ad should be required viewing for some of those people in government who don't understand that companies like Ford are the geese which lay the golden eggs in our economy – the exports, the taxes, the jobs.

It is subtle brand building, but good brand building nevertheless and Ford gets an Orchid for the concept and execution.

KFC celebrates International Women's Day

Even more subtle, but just as effective, is a campaign which goes further than merely associating a brand with a notable event – it leaves behind an informative and educational legacy. Such was the recent idea from KFC to celebrate International Women's Day.

Plenty of brands jump on this bandwagon every year, suddenly getting in touch with their feminist side, whereas throughout the rest of the year, they couldn't care less.

KFC, which has been in business in Africa for 52 years (something I didn't know) and is represented in 22 countries on the continent, decided to honour the women of the continent – many of whom still struggle and are still regarded as second-class citizens – by recording women's firsts.

In doing so, the campaign educated and informed people about the achievements of women in Africa, thereby taking a step towards breaking down those psychological barriers between countries, which still exist.

Would it sell more KFC products? As with Ford, I don't think you could make a direct correlation. But the campaign positions KFC as a good corporate citizen, and as a major player in Africa.

And, as with Ford, that's great brand image building. So, it's an Orchid for KFC and KAmuses, its PR agency.

Cheryl Alberton goes back to the '70s

Radio seems to be the medium where you find some of the most cringe-worthy advertising in South Africa. I don't know why it is. Maybe it's the anonymity the copywriters feel, secure in the knowledge that, in the "theatre of the mind", no one can see you.

Every time I hear the ad for Chery Alberton, it grates. That's because I can imagine the copywriters wracking their brains come up with something to sell the Chinese brand:

"Cherry? How about, you know tjerrie – as in a chick – and then we voice it with a Cape Flats accent?"
"Ja, ek sê, that sounds kif..."



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Brendan Seery 8 Nov 2023

I don't think that, for the sake of making a pun on the word Chery, you should drag your brand back into the 1970s. What are you going to offer the clients on their Tiggo 8 Pro? "Go Faster" stripes? Green nylon "grass" on the dashboard? Pity cars don't have radio aerials these days, otherwise, you could offer an orange to put on it.

This is a 21st-century brand that has been making inroads in our market and doesn't need to get customers looking for it with silly little jokes about finding "tjerries in Alberton".

This is lazy, potentially damaging, creative work, so it gets an Onion.

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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