

Brands can certainly take a page or two from the Ford Kuga saga

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Silence can be a good response up until it comes back to bite you in the a** because your silence is much louder than what your initial response could have been.

FORD SA, has for a while now, been in the mouths of many consumers and media publications for the Family Kuga SUVs that have burst into flames across the different parts of the country.

It goes without saying that this matter should be and needs to be dealt with the outmost of sensitivity, especially where lives have been lost.



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The unfortunate part, however, is that FORD was a bit too late in its response and could have managed the situation it finds itself in. This from my professional opinion could have been much more smooth and seamless than the reactionary approach they seem to have taken over the last week; and not really addressing the core issue at hand the 4500 consumers have brought to the fore.

As has been pointed out by fellow brand professionals and experts, the approach should have been one that acknowledges

the faults, recall of the vehicles in question and making the process easier for the customers to return and seek recourse.

For years, the brand has been trusted for their tough and resilient product, but this turnout will impact negatively on them and will certainly have ramifications both in the short and long term for the brand. Sales is the most obvious area we start thinking about but there are more emotive areas that need to be considered like the loyalty and trust of the brand.

So what are some of the lessons brands can take from this case study and how can they ensure that they do not find themselves in the same conundrum:

1. Silence is not always gold or the best answer to a dire situation like this. Ford should have been prompt in its approach and contacted all their Kuga SUV owners first to ensure none of this turned around to blow up in their face. When brands are faced with such a tough matter, their response needs to match the urgency it comes with.
2. Consumers are an integral part of the success or downfall of a brand. An understanding of this would have meant that FORD's turnaround time and recourse measures would have been more holistic and prompter.
3. People, Product and Profit. This is a key marketing principle that every brand needs to constantly be reminded of, your people/consumer always come first and should always be the corner stone of your business. The product you put out to the market should be one that is sound, trial and tested to ensure that it delivers to an experience and expectation that has been put out there. And this will ultimately lead to the profits you yearn to see.
4. Trust and loyalty take years to build and minutes to break. There are many brands that put out the same product but what makes consumers loyal to one is the heart and soul that delivers an emotional connection and experience. One that says, you have come to the right brand and will never be disappointed!
5. Reigniting brand love is not always easy to build. When you have an opportunity to please and delight, take it and run with it!

It will be interesting to see where the FORD SA brand finds itself over the next couple of months with all the commotion around it now.

Moreover, it will be imperative that brands alike take from FORD SA's chapter and not commit the same mistakes in this lifetime.

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