

Case of a can can-do

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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Savanna: courting customers to forget the bottle is a winner; Defy, on the other hand, loses a loyal one with their cheap Russian parts.



Sourced from [YouTube](#)

When life gives you lemons, you make lemonade. When life gives you apples and you turn them into cider - and then throws you a curveball by squeezing the supply of glass for the bottles you put your brew in, what do you do?

Well, if you're Savanna Cider – and trying to cope with a demand which has doubled in the past year alone – you think quickly and can it. But can it in the sense of putting it in a can, rather than cancelling it altogether.

And to get the message across, Savanna and its ad agency, Grey/WPP Liquid, put the brand “on trial”. The People vs Savanna sought to have the cider cancelled because fans were getting frustrated about not being able to get their hands on it.

It's a clever little skit with a few little side quips and the casting and acting are pretty good, too, for something which is a commercial.

In the end, the Savanna “defence attorney” asks the court’s indulgence to admit “new evidence”... the new 300ml can of

Savanna.

It's a nice bit of fun and in keeping with the brand's persona – that it doesn't take itself too seriously (although the marketing and advertising it does are both seriously effective) – and also gets across the message that consumers must not despair that they won't be able to enjoy the brews because of supply chain problems.

So, Orchids to Savanna and to Grey/WPP Liquid, as well as production agency Seven Films for bringing it all together so professionally.

It's also a small reminder about the idea that when the going gets tough, the tough get going... and it didn't get much tougher than the chaos wrought worldwide by Covid. Well done on the bounce back.

What happened to quality?

One of the truisms of advertising and marketing is that the two cheapest forms of promotion are good customer service and a quality product.

If consumers get those – sometimes good customer service can even make up for product deficiencies – then they will come back... and you can use your precious marketing budget on “conquests” of those who aren't currently your customers.

Faith in the quality of a product is why I keep coming back.

We've got two Subarus at home and, up to now, we had believed in Defy for household appliances. Our first was a chest freezer bought back in the '80s to go with my wife's old Kelvinator fridge (passed down from her mother, who bought it in 1956 or so). That lasted more than 30 years until struck by lightning and even then it was fixable.

When it finally gave up the ghost about a year ago, we replaced it with another Defy. We also have a Defy washing machine. So when we remodelled the kitchen four years ago, we went for a “fency” silver coloured fridge with its clever electronic panel on the front.

In the past two months, that appliance has been collected on five occasions by three different repairers and only the last one was able to say what was going on.

And his story was horrifying.

The fridge, he said was cheap rubbish imported from Russia. The steel used in the pipes rusts. The brown dust we saw on occasion being blown through the vents was powdered rust. In four years, in Gauteng!



The people vs Savanna Premium Cider in #CancelCourt - you won't believe what happens next...

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Even worse, he said we wouldn't be much better off getting another brand. There is no longer a fridge manufacturing capacity in this country and all of them are imported. Most are of this dreadful quality because South Africans won't pay for quality. Our fridge could not even be sold in Europe because of its poor quality materials (the technician also noted that the paint on these Defy fridges doesn't even have an undercoat).

An equivalent fridge built to European standards in France would cost the equivalent of R23,000.

So that is what globalisation gets you... along with capital flight out of the manufacturing sector in SA.

So Defy and the rest of the companies doing this sort of thing get Onions from me for cynical advertising. Clearly, a long-term customer relationship is not something that is valued in our modern world.

I also wonder if there is obsolescence built into products these days.

I once told the people at Subaru I wouldn't be buying another one of their cars. Horrified, they asked why. Because there's nothing wrong with the existing one, I replied. Later we did get another car – a Subaru.

People asked me why I didn't trade in the old one... because I would not have got anything near its value to me. And there was nothing wrong with it.

So, Defy, that is how you build a long-term relationship. You probably don't care that you've lost me.

But it is sad.

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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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