

A new generation of advertising

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

29 Aug 2022

As a brand, BMW has always been associated with excitement and with luxury and refinement. No surprise, then, that it is classified as "aspirational".



With the passage of time, the BMW mystique has deepened, despite the fact that, even allowing for inflation, its cars and SUVs have moved more upmarket and further out of reach of ordinary mortals.

Maybe because of that, having a BMW is still one of South Africa's most potent status symbols. For many, it is the ultimate signal: I have arrived.

Interestingly, for many years, BMW took a lot of flak because its ads, in a country like South Africa, seemed to carefully avoid using Black people. The response was a convenient "well, we don't recognise race or colour..." In many cases that was true, because the cars and the clever way they were portrayed often made the driver superfluous.

Think about the classic Beemer ads for a moment. “Beats the Benz” – which had one of the shortest TV runs in the history of advertising (because BMW knew its rival, Mercedes-Benz would complain about it supposedly breaching our strict rules on comparative advertising) – was all about the car (a Five Series) and its dynamics.

The ad which revealed that the entire range came with power steering as standard (right from the humble 318i), didn’t feature a human at all. It featured a mouse twirling a BMW steering wheel back and forth, to the strains of classical music.

Of course, the product (that all-important part of the marketing mix) has done a lot of the communicating, but still, the lack of Black people in BMW ads – at least up until recently – hasn’t hurt BMW’s credibility or desirability in that sector of the market.

Now, though, it appears as BMW has realised that the future is Black, just as much as it may be electric.



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And the latest “Generation Joy” campaign plugs perfectly into the hip and happening vibe of the moment.

It’s colourful and the script is well-written.

Lines like: “Are we our ancestors’ wildest dreams or are we realising our own?” and “Are we re-writing the rules or are we re-making our world?” speak to the new generation’s ambitions but at the same time their thirst for relevance.

BMW, the ad says, in showing its fast and furious side, as well as its sustainable nature, can answer all of the conundrums for you.

I like the fresh new direction BMW has taken – and I really like that they’re now doing locally produced ad as opposed to importing anodyne, faceless ones from abroad.

An Orchid to BMW.

Coming across confusion

Still on the subject of cars, I wonder sometimes how an ad which makes no sense logically or linguistically manages to make it out into the open.

One such was a social media plug for the upcoming Toyota Corolla Cross tarted-up GR Racing version, produced not by

the brand itself (whose ads have set the benchmark for years in the local auto sector) but by one of its franchises.

Someone at Rand Stadium Toyota thought to perhaps put out a “teaser” by saying “There’s a new GR on the horizon and it bares a cross!”



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Bares? Or bears? The latter makes sense because we all have our crosses to bear. I’ve never heard of a cross being “bared” – that is, exposed.

Maybe they want to say that the GR will expose Corolla Cross – but it still doesn’t make sense logically.

If they meant “bear”, it’s even worse, because bearing a cross comes directly from the Crucifixion on Calvary story and implies an immense burden. None of these is the way I would portray an exciting new car.

So, Rand Stadium Toyota, you get this week’s Onion for confusion. That’s your cross to bear.

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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