

Ford burns the rubber as it sets the imagination on fire

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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The digital marketing clevers will tell you that the holy grail of brand building in the age of the internet is to get your videos to "go viral".

In other words, people love them so much they pass them along to their friends and web acquaintances. A good viral video should be entertaining, preferably humorous and should show something new and different... and useful.

One of the new series of ads done for Ford's Truck Month campaign, which plays on the company's "Ford Tough" slogan, seems to be doing pretty well in the viral sense.

My colleague, Paballo Thekiso, saw it before me and passed it along with the comment: "Have you seen this ad?" And, when I checked out his posted link on YouTube, I saw the clip had thousands of hits.

So, what was it all about? There is the normal dorky oke who is the star of Ford's other ads in the series.

This time, though, his very South African masculinity is threatened because... he can't start the braai fire. His last match fails.

Cue, the helpful Ford ghost voice. Then, in detail, it shows how to make a flame when you don't have matches. Take a small, AAA battery, a piece of aluminium foil... and, of course, some tinder items which will catch alight.



Screenshot from the ad.

Then take the thin strip of foil and connect each end of it to the positive and negative terminals on the battery, causing a short.

Even with the puny 1.5 volts, the foil soon erupts into flame. What a cool idea! That's what I thought when I saw it and what thousands of others will think as they share it with their friends.

And, if they watch the whole thing, they'll discover that Ford has a range of special offers on its "trucks" (bakkies to you and me). Clever marketing, Ford. Clever marketing always gets an Orchid.

So, well done. Interestingly, the ad is also being screened on TV – a case of Ford not putting all its eggs into the (patchy) internet basket. Okay – pick up an additional Orchid for that very practical "boots and braces" approach, Ford.

Staying with cars, I saw some interesting things in this year's Le Mans 24-hour race. It was probably the most exciting finish in the 90- plus-years of the event. Toyota's hybrid racer looked like a certainty for the crown, but slowed and stopped with three minutes to go, letting Porsche zip through.

Commentators said it was even more exciting than the fictional movie *Le Mans*, which featured Steve McQueen back in the 1970s. Brilliant drama – a pity, then, that none of our TV big names, SABC, e.tv or DSTV paid any attention to the final result in their news. But that lack of sporting news sense – most carried the Formula One – is not what gets the Onion, though.

During the ad breaks on DSTV's coverage of Le Mans (fine stuff, but why ignore it on the news services?), we were treated to a Porsche commercial which could have come straight out of the 1960s.

I did a double-take when I saw it. A lovely red, drop-top Porsche Boxster with a male model behind the wheel and a gorgeous woman acting the role of "seat cover". Sexy, but simpering, she glances at him with one of those meaningful looks and says: "Again..."

Or as the Captain & Tennille sang back in the cheesy disco era: "*Do That To Me One More Time*"... because, of course, "once is never enough with a man like you". So the hero fires up the Boxster and they fly up the mountain... to watch the sunset again. She looks at him and smiles her alluring smile. My Hero.

Seriously? The ad says one thing: Get a Porsche and get laid. That may have truth in it but is this sleazy message any way to market a fine automotive product?

I would buy a Porsche for the drive – and not the way it makes me succeed with the opposite sex.

Granted, the woman is no teen – so the hero is not a “blesser” – but how often have we seen old men (with money) accompanied by much younger women? This ad just feeds straight into a cliché.

Let's not even get started on the fact that women also drive – they don't just sit, passively, as adoring objects in the passenger seat. Would you have done this ad, Porsche, with a “cougar” in the driver's seat and a simpering “toy boy” next to her?

I think not. If you want a performance drive, get a Porsche. If you want to perform, get Viagra.

For turning cutting-edge technology into marketing sexism, Porsche, you get an Onion. Maybe you can put it in the cabinet alongside the Le Mans trophy.

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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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