

# The message behind ads

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

2 Oct 2018

What does it mean to be a man? Most of us, a new Carling ad says, learned the wrong way, from our fathers, about being bold, brave and strong.



Screen grabs from the ad.

A few months ago, I gave an Orchid to Carling Black Label beer for its riveting “Champion Man” activation, which saw the topic of women and child abuse put out, front and centre, at a packed football stadium.



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There was a little nag in the back of my head about how long this campaign would be sustained and whether it was authentic.

After all, beer – and all booze – is the single biggest trigger for gender- and related violence.

The latest step in the campaign shows not only that the brand is committed to owning the debate about male violence, but that it is also making ads that go beyond mere marketing (even cause-related marketing) and into the realm of serious social discussion.

The latest ad poses the question: What does it mean to be a man? Most of us, it says, learned the wrong way, from our fathers, about being bold, brave and strong. In most cases, these attributes become shortcuts to aggression, violence and intolerance.



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And, there, in a nutshell, is the explanation for a lot which is wrong with our society.

Spinning the images back the way they came from enables us to then see what this “unwound” state becomes and what the “right” message is about being a man. Being bold is standing up for what is right; being brave is being true to yourself and it’s what you do with your strength that makes you strong.

The punch line is: change is long overdue. While I suppose one could also read between the lines (given that the final scenes take place in a pub) that the change referred to is about switching beer brands, I still think the ad is powerful and thought-provoking.

And, to my mind, this is how powerful brands can be catalysts for change. So an Orchid to Carling Black Label.

I was about to jump in with another Orchid for a King Price insurance video ad, which is gaining traction virally at the moment.

Then I got a note from Hector Elliott in the Western Cape government, commenting on the Onion I gave last week to Tonneau King for their ad. It featured a braai on the back of a moving bakkie, which raised all sorts of issues about road safety.

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Hector – whose administration has been running a strong, and striking series of campaigns on road safety – wrote:

“ Top of mind for me is a case from last December in Onrus. Eight-year-old boy on back of the bakkie. Just happened not to be holding on when his uncle pulled off. Middle of the day, no alcohol involved, no speed, no cellphones. But the little boy falls off bakkie, and dies as a result. ”

Good point, Hector. But then he went on to comment on the new King Price “braai” video.

It shows a man stopped by a traffic cop and the expected negotiation about a “bri..., bri...” We all know where this is heading, right? Then it becomes “braai”, and two traffic cops and motorist enjoy themselves at the side of the road.

Hector called the ad “horrendous,” because: “nothing undermines road safety like stereotyping traffic police”.

That certainly made me sit up and think. I agree and I disagree, Hector.

And in this (Gauteng) part of the world at least, our cops are not known for being over-zealous in keeping our roads safe... other than when they can rake in money for their greedy municipal bosses from speed cameras on clear straight stretches of road.

Or from pocketing a little “cool drink” money from a law-breaker.

I’m still hovering between Orchid and Onion for King Price.

But what do you think?

## 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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