

Unity against Covid-19

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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There's nothing like a good crisis to bring out the best in brands ... and a number of our household name companies stepped up this week to throw their weight behind President Cyril Ramaphosa's plea for people to stay at home.

Most of the good ads I've seen stick to the message and only subtly push their brands in the background.

However, SA Tourism – which kicked off a major campaign recently to boost local tourism by locals, just as the coronavirus hit – went a bit further to actually tell people that, when it's all over (and it will be) then people should get back to travelling around this wonderful country.

Even though it is more product-orientated than some of the others, it deserves an Orchid for that long-term, look-beyond-the-current gloom optimism. And, I reckon plenty of South Africans will be wanting to get away from it all later ... if they haven't been totally knocked on their backsides financially, that is.

Another ad looking to the time when the doors open again is, not surprisingly, Nando's. Founder Robbie Brozin voiced a poignant message about the temporary closure of shops. He said the Nando's flame would have, for the time being anyway, remain with us, not with them.

He also quoted from the old Bob Dylan song *Forever Young*:

“ May God bless and keep you always

May your wishes all come true

May you always do for others and let others do for you

May you build a ladder to the stars and climb on every rung'

And may you stay forever young... ”

Vintage Nando's. Another Orchid for them.

Toyota South Africa and its agency, FCB Joburg, also put together a quick “stay at home” message by compiling a montage of impressive footage of their vehicles being driven, followed by scenes of car keys being put on tables. And, of course, you'll be back to driving sooner than you think – and in a Toyota.

Not much more is necessary. Another Toyota Orchid.

Finally, for this first round of Covid-19 Orchids is Pick n Pay, whose agency King James Group Africa, put together, in record time, a group of well-known South African singers to do a piece urging people not to panic buy and “don't be that guy”... All the musicians were recorded on video chat on Skype, emphasizing the need for isolation.

In a rare show of commercial solidarity, the social media team at Woolworths acknowledged the brilliance of the idea.

Let's hope that this spirit of unity in the face of a common enemy and the messages of national solidarity live on once the country emerges from the shadow of coronavirus. While the impact of Covid-19 may be immense, the damage which will be done to our already struggling economy means most of these giant brands may very well have to adjust their products and business models to a radically different business and consumer landscape in the next 12 months.

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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