

Siyanga Madikizela is steering the VW brand in South Africa

By  Evan-Lee Courie

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Volkswagen is one of the many global brands that has entrenched itself deep within South African culture, claiming its cult status as the ultimate compact sports car since it landed on our shores in 1982. This October, Volkswagen South Africa will introduce its latest eighth generation of the iconic Golf GTI.



Siyanga Madikizela, public relations manager at Volkswagen South Africa

We catch up with Siyanga Madikizela, public relations manager at Volkswagen South Africa, to find out about the recent brand campaigns; how the brand has evolved and what's next for the VW brand.

■ **How would you define your brand?**

The Volkswagen brand is the People's Car. At Volkswagen we democratise mobility for the masses; from our humble beginnings with the Beetle, the family ties which was defined by the Kombi, to the exciting and fun-to-drive Golf and now electric mobility in the form of the all-electric ID.

■ **What does your job entail and what does your average workday look like these days?**

I handle PR for the Volkswagen brand and this essentially means that I ensure that Volkswagen is top of mind when it comes to South African consumers and we do this through strategic tailored communication working with key stakeholders in the automotive industry. A fun aspect of my job is that I have the responsibility of launching every new Volkswagen in South Africa to motoring and lifestyle journalists.

“ As a person who loves cars, having to experience every single car in the Volkswagen model range is incredibly thrilling. ”

■ **What excites you most about your role as PR Manager at VWSA?**

Volkswagen is the only vehicle brand with the word 'people' in its name and that has always resonated me. I love the dynamism of our brand as well as the exciting products that we manufacture that are defining the automotive industry every

single day.

How has VWSA evolved over the years?

The Volkswagen brand recently celebrated 70 years in South Africa and it has continued to evolve since the first Volkswagen rolled off the production line on 31 August 1951. Over the past seven decades, Volkswagen has emerged to be the most desirable volume brand and South Africa's leading passenger car brand.

Through our amazing range of products, we have sold over 4 million vehicles in South Africa. Volkswagen also exports the Polo and Polo GTI, which is built in our factory in Kariega in the Eastern Cape, to international markets. We are also the only manufacturer of the Polo GTI.

Through being committed to our fundamental values aligned with the People's Car we have continued to offer mobility solutions for our consumers. This strategy continues to expand and now also includes sub-Saharan Africa. In our market we launched the electric mobility pilot project which is a three-pronged approach which will see us launching electric vehicles in the future.

VWSA introduces its latest eighth generation of the iconic Golf GTI this October. Tell us about this marketing campaign.

The Golf GTI marketing campaign was launched in September with the aim of tapping into the GTI consumer's playfulness and competitive nature. The campaign involved downloading an App, playing the game, posting a time on the leader board to get free tickets to the launch events that take place around the country this October.



Volkswagen South Africa and agency partner Ogilvy Cape Town launch the new Golf GTI

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We know car meets are a regular occurrence in SA and we wanted to tour the launch events to where we know our consumers are. The events take place in parkades which will give off that authentic car meet feel.

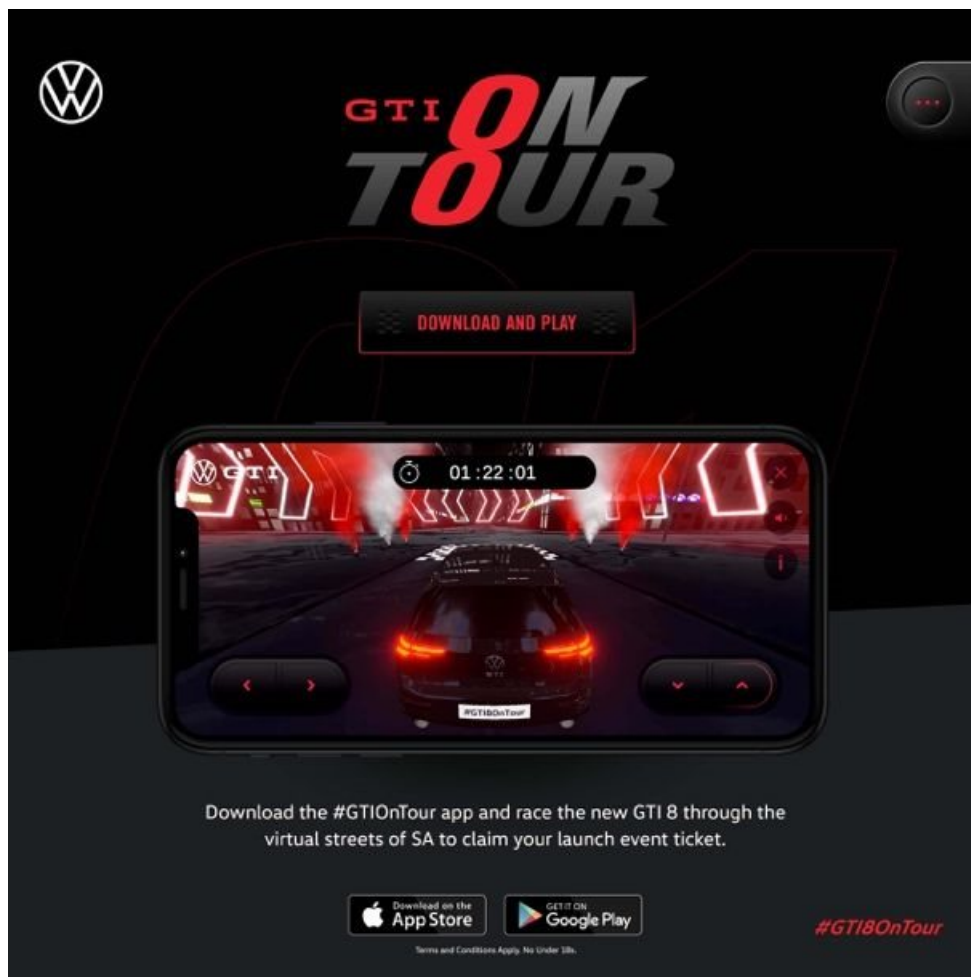
The 'GTI on 8 Tour' tour kicked off in Cape Town on 2 October and then moves to Durban on 9 October with the last leg in Johannesburg on 16 October.

■ ***In addition to showcasing the Golf 8 GTI across the country, an app has been developed. Can you talk about this app? Who was involved? Was it specifically for this launch? What is the goal of the app?***

The Golf GTI app was developed specifically for the launch, taking into account the competitive spirit of Golf GTI drivers. Once the app is downloaded, consumers get to customise their GTI and then go on to race in different challenges each week. Consumers times are posted on the leader board for ultimate bragging rights. The game is a driver or entry mechanism to attend the launch events. Once you post a time you automatically qualify for a free ticket.

■ ***Are there hopes that this new interactive way will boost car sales?***

In 2020, the Golf GTI was the best-selling derivative in the A Hatch segment, so we are confident that this will continue to be the case. The app is a fun way of introducing our consumers to the all-new Golf 8 GTI ahead of them physically being able to experience the car.



■ **How has Covid-19 impacted VW South Africa?**

Covid-19 has impacted all industries and the automotive industry was not spared. Like many industries in South Africa in March 2020, we were not permitted to trade and it has taken a concerted team effort to start the recovery process.

Another challenge on top of the Covid-19 pandemic that is affecting the automotive industry as a whole is the global shortage of semi-conductor chips which are need in the manufacturing process for our vehicles. We are grateful to our customers who have continued to support our brand and ensure that we are still passenger market leader and that the Polo Vivo and the Polo are the country's best-selling passenger cars.

■ **Have you been behind the wheel of the all new Golf 8 GTI? What are thoughts and feelings?**

Yes I have. I drove the Golf GTI before media launch in August and it was so memorable getting to experience the legendary hot hatch on the scenic Chapman's Peak Drive in Cape Town. It is a truly exhilarating, and giggle-inducing drive which is complimented by a futuristic and digital interior that has minimal buttons – basically a tech lover's dream. The Golf GTI is a comfortable, fun and exciting hatch to drive.

The perfect combination for me is the King's Red metallic exterior colour matched with the 19-inch Adelaide alloy wheels, a panoramic sunroof as well as the Harmon Kardon sound system.

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