

# Canine Cuisine 'barks' at competitor in new ad

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Advertising in South Africa is, sadly, a protected industry... and by that, I mean that advertising agencies and their clients are protected from having to defend themselves against competitive campaigns because brands are not permitted to make direct comparisons with their rivals.



Thus, dog food brand Canine Cuisine could not come out directly and say that its competitor, Pedigree, was discontinuing its Dry Dog Food range.

## Cheeky advertising

Solution: make a cheeky, challenger brand ad which relies on humour to make a subtle point that dog owners should start looking elsewhere for their pets' nutrition needs.

We see a cute, lively little dog nosing around the Dry Dog Food Department, as it looks abandoned. No food, no people, just the signs of an evacuation...and not a very organised one at that.

Inspiration strikers the doggie hero and he paws the lift button and goes to Canine Cuisine, where he is greeted with a whole new life – one of pampering, from facials to manicures to the much-desired meal of Canine Cuisine’s dry dog food.

The punchline: “Whether your dog has a pedigree or not, make the smart choice and switch to Canine Cuisine...”

It’s cheeky and makes the point – and it has been racking up millions of views on Tiktok, which confirms my belief that, apart from porn, the best way to get clicks for your videos online is to throw in cute animals...

Orchis to Canine Cuisine and its agency, Retroviral.

## Blowing smoke

The innocence in that ad is balanced by the cynicism in what I think is one of the most misleading campaigns around at the moment... and what makes it even more repugnant is that fact that this is only the beginning, because there is big money behind this and a lot is at stake.

I speak of the so-called “Smoke Free” campaigns which are being aired on a variety of platforms – the latest was a recent full-page ad in the *Sunday Times* – and which purportedly want to alert citizens in South Africa that the government is about to ride roughshod over their rights.

Specifically, the campaign claims, the government wishes to remove an individual’s freedom of choice by restricting their rights to consumer “alternative tobacco products”.



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Brendan Seery 2 May 2023



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Interestingly, the *Sunday Times* ad, which contained no clear indication of who paid for it, cited the example of Sweden, where tobacco smoking has been reduced drastically because of that government’s supposedly “enlightened” attitude towards the other methods punted by the tobacco industry. However, the “evidence” cited in the ad is from an organisation called “Smokefree Sweden”, which is nothing but a tobacco industry front.

It would perhaps surprise many to hear that this campaign – which ostensibly wants people to give up smoking cigarettes and other tobacco products – is actually funded by the tobacco giants.

Just to remind you, this is the industry which wrote the playbook for misinformation campaigns as a way to shield its repugnant products. In the 1960s and 1970s, especially, as people began to realise that, if consumed in the recommended

way, tobacco is the only product which will kill you, the companies began pumping out a tsunami of misinformation, aimed at casting doubt on the science and playing up the supposed removal of freedom of choice.

As cigarette sales have been declining for decades, the tobacco industry has expertly pivoted to preserve its multibillion profit lines.

## Dishonest media coverage

So, it has targeted young people as new smokers and has also, significantly, been promoting alternative smoking products – such as heated tobacco, e-cigarettes and vaping – as the “healthy” alternative to tobacco consumption.

The tobacco lobby has tried – through bought, earned and dishonest media coverage – to play down scientific suggestions that the chemicals in these alternatives are also potentially very harmful.

Much of the tobacco lobby’s disinformation machinery pretends to be impartial – as in calling itself “consumer rights” lobbyists, or as scientists or doctors concerned about public health. But, even cursory examination of some of its campaign platforms show up the sleight of hand.

Unsmoke South Africa is one such bogus website and campaign, funded by tobacco giant Philip Morris South Africa.

Its messaging is seemingly on point when it comes to reducing smoking of tobacco products. So: If you don’t smoke, don’t start. If you do smoke, quit and if you don’t quit, change. And it is on the latter that the majority of the focus is.

The message is clear: You don’t have to stop smoking to get healthy, you can switch to vaping and other alternative products and be fine. Yet, in 15 messages – true stories, they claim – of people and tobacco, 11 are from people who changed to vaping, while just four are from people who quit completely. That’s fair, isn’t it?

Interestingly, these campaigns are ratcheting up at home while in places like Australia, the government is about to ban vaping completely because it is so alarmed at the uptake in children and young people.

To Philip Morris and the others who peddle this potentially harmful disinformation, you get a smelly Onion and the wish from me that the government outlaws all this nonsense.

## 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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