

Awareness campaign tackles SA's problem of underage drinking

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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But an Onion goes to a Jaguar Land Rover spokesperson for an ill-conceived tweet.



Screen grab from the ad.

In France, so they say, binge drinking and alcoholism are much lower than they are in the UK (and that was before the Brits needed to drown their sorrows over Brexit).

One of the reasons, according to the experts, is that alcohol – and specifically wine – is an integral part of French life and culture... a culture to which children are introduced at a comparatively young age.



Aware.org launches multi-platform underage drinking campaign with Kabelo Mabalane

30 Aug 2019



The French allow children to sip small amounts of wine along with the rest of the family at lunch or supper and so the youngsters become used to it and do not abuse it.

However, the reality in many countries where there is a huge booze problem – South Africa, step forward, please – is that children are introduced to alcohol at an early age by adults, either deliberately or through lack of vigilance.

“ And, it goes without saying that those uncontrolled introductions are often the first step on a long, lonely road of alcoholism. Police minister Bheki Cele made it clear this week that booze is behind many of the most heinous crimes in South Africa – with rape and abuse of women and children at the top of that sordid list. ”

So, it is good to see the problem of children and booze being tackled by Aware.org, the Association for Alcohol Responsibility and Education. According to them, underage drinking is a “silent crisis”, and “one that is often subconsciously enabled by parents, older siblings, other family members and/or friends”.



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Jessica Tennant 24 Dec 2018



Many kids, says Aware.org, “cite their parents as the biggest influencers of their underage drinking”.

So, working with Riverbed creative agency, Aware.org put together a multi-platform campaign, linked to a [site](#) to accentuate with realistic vignettes how kids get their first taste of booze.



Riverbed's new Aware.org campaign draws attention to the real drinking age in South Africa

Riverbed 12 Sep 2019



It is quite frightening and something every adult should look at and take on board. And the message is stark: underage drinking has actually started a long time before others become aware of it.

This is public service advertising at its best. So Orchids to Aware.org, Riverbed agency and Kim Geldenhuys of 0307 Films.

One of the things you should never do, as a company spokesperson, is have a hissy-fit on Twitter.

If you are one of those under the impression that social media drives sales (as opposed to being a venue for people to vent their anger at your brand), then remember that when the vacuous twitterati start to get up your nose.

“ Sometimes, by having a go in public at critics (some of whom might be actual or potential customers), you can do more harm than good. That is something one Sam Mercer, spokesperson for the Jaguar Land Rover group, should perhaps bear in mind. ”

As the new Land Rover Defender was launched this week, any auto company frontman or woman worth their salt would have anticipated that the reaction would be polarising. That's because the original "Landie" has become an international icon as a "never say die" and "go anywhere" four-wheel-drive.

The new one looks much more suave, so much so that people are wondering whether it can fill the large shoes of its predecessor. All to be expected, of course... expect, apparently, by Mercer.



Jaguar Land Rover ends production of Defender model

1 Feb 2016



In a fit of pique, he tweeted: "Why we at JLR employ 000s of designers, engineers, product teams and marketers is beyond me when there's such a rich pool of talent on Twitter that could've designed and engineered it far better and still sell it for much less. Good to know for the future..."

“ Why we at JLR employ 000s of designers, engineers, product teams and marketers is beyond me when there's such a rich pool of talent on Twitter that could've designed and engineered it far better and still sell it for much less. Good to know for the future... 📱📱♂️📱 #NewDefender — Sam Mercer (@thesammercer) [September 11, 2019](#) ”

He got quite a bit of flak for that, not least for the "talking down" arrogance, which some blame for the fact that the new "Landie" has "gone soft".

Whatever the new vehicle is or isn't – and it will certainly be one of the most talked-about new vehicles for the past five years – Mercer shows himself as defensive, when he has no need to be.

So, he gets an Onion from me for missing the point that your Twitter account – especially when linked to your employer – is a reflection of your employee.

And JLR just looks a bit childish now.

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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