

Shoprite lifts spirits

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Feel-good factor: Ad in stark contrast to doom and gloom in SA; Gumtree spot-on with entertaining offering about buying or selling a vehicle



Advertising often occupies the realms of dreams and fantasies – to better get people to take out their cash and live the life, or feel the feeling of being sold. The actual object purchased is often secondary.

When an advertiser offers a vision of Utopia, it is always far-fetched, and not based in reality.

Sadly, there is a feeling of Utopia in the latest flighting of a Shoprite Checkers ad. This place we see in the images – ordinary, hard-working South Africans who pack the shelves, drive the trucks, work the tills so that we can buy the necessities of life (and sometimes the treats) at a Shoprite store.

Why it seems like Utopia is that, burned into the national psyche, the image of big retailers like Shoprite is one of burning and destruction, following the orgy of looting in the attempted insurrection in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng last month.

But, the ad is also a social reality check. It reminds us that reality – that vision of Utopia – does exist and that we should not be blinded to the reality that the vast majority of South Africans just want to be left alone in peace to try to build themselves a better life.

And that is the message to the country from Shoprite, kicked off with the words of Nelson Mandela: “It is so easy to break down and destroy. The heroes are those who make peace and build.”

The ad then shows all those scenes of normal life but in the background the swelling and emotional strains of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. The words are translated in subtitles on the screen.

You cannot help but be moved – unless you are a rioter, I suppose.

The Shoprite message is: We are there for you. We are the ones who build – like you.

Other brands have done similar marketing promotions which, although they can be regarded, with a jaundiced eye, as being cheap capitalising on a tragedy, does an important job of helping restore national confidence.

These sorts of campaigns are important because the news feeds these days can be so overwhelmingly gloomy.

Orchid, then, to Shoprite.

Alleviating stress

Another typically South African situation, as portrayed in the latest ad for Gumtree and its car finance partner MFC (part of Nedbank, I believe), is the fraught process of selling or buying a vehicle.

When this is done privately, all sorts of fears emerge. Is this car legit? Has it got papers? Has it got rust issues or mechanical problems the owner is not telling me about? From the seller's side: How do I know this guy will come through with the money?

That is the stand-off position we see between a buyer and a seller, facing off across a parking lot with the car between them. They look like Wild West gunslingers about to draw.

Then, suddenly, they both “draw” their phones and get messages which show they can do the deal. The seller is informed the buyer has been approved for finance and the buyer, in turn, is informed that the car has been checked.

Gumtree has, in teaming up with MFC, taken the anxiety of buying and selling for those people who opt for the offer.

I guarantee anyone who is looking for a car or wants to move one along, will investigate the Gumtree/MFC offering.

That's good, Orchid-worthy advertising.

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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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