

Liberating ad drives home achievements of the ANC



By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Brand reputations are often said to be fragile things and it is true that some well-known names have never regained ground they lost when a crisis dented their images.

However, the long-lived brands have their history and their reputational DNA to fall back on should something go wrong.

Look at Toyota and Volkswagen, for instance. Both have been hit with issues over the past few years – Toyota with safety and VW with the diesel emissions cheating scandal. Yet, with decades of great, reliable cars and tens of millions of satisfied customers around the world, they are weathering the storms well.

A political brand like the ANC, which is 104 years old, has an enviable political DNA to marshal when things start threatening to go pear-shaped and when competitors are scratching at the door.

However, it still needs shrewd marketing and production genius to put together something which diverts the attention of voters away from the current “creeping coup” (or genuine state capture) being undertaken by No 1 and his cronies.

It is quite fortunate, then, that the ANC has an agency like Ogilvy Joburg, with Bouffant Films director Thabang Moleya, to help revive that proud image and heritage.

The commercial, “Remember where we started”, talks about what has happened since 1994, when all of the people of the country could vote for the first time.

Remember how Gogo could pack away the candles because she now had electricity? Remember driving on a new tarred road in your township? Remember getting a government bursary? Remember women getting equal opportunities at last?

Then, remember those who brought us here: the ANC’s pantheon of true liberation heroes, led by the statesman and former president Nelson Mandela.

There is, interestingly, a brief glimpse of an election poster featuring President Jacob Zuma but it is so fleeting you almost miss him. Deliberate? I wonder...

It all adds up to slick, professional, reputation-burnishing marketing communication and gets a well-deserved Orchid from me.

I do need to state, for those reading the poison keyboard emails, this does not mean I support the ANC. It means their campaign ad is good.

It was also interesting to see the numbers of black creatives – copywriters and art directors as well as executive creative director – involved in this. That's why the commercial has the gritty feel of South African reality.



Screenshot from the ad.

And that's something we should see more of. There is a fascinating TV programme, *MythBusters*, which uses science – and more than a little dramatic show-boating – to prove, or disprove, common myths. They blow things up, crash cars, create enormous structures and do serious amounts of harm to very lifelike human dummies.

But, entertaining though it is, it uses facts and observations to draw its conclusions. So it was somewhat ironic to see one of the show's presenters, Grant Imahara, featuring in an ad for Caltex Techron fuel, which plays fast and loose with facts and strays into the world of silly science.

The only redeeming piece of the ad is the fact that, clearly, it is not South African-made. Yet, given that many South Africans only have a nodding acquaintance with numbers and science and are, therefore, often the victims of pseudo-scientific snakeoil salesmen, it is pretty cynical of Caltex to allow this ad to run.

We see Imahara surrounded by a group of people as he practically demonstrates what happens to a car where Caltex with Techron is not used.

He calls on a beefy bystander to push the car. Of course, it does not move a millimetre. Which is already strange, because even with the strongest handbrake in the world and even with a vehicle in gear, there will be some sort of reaction to the action of trying to push it; even if it just rocks on its suspension.

Imahara then goes on to explain that is because there is friction in the engine. Adding Techron eliminates friction to the extent that pushing the car is a one finger-only mission. The car is on some sort of frictionless pads – that much is obvious.

However, what is not as obvious is the silly science behind the basic premise.

In reality, an engine which spins easily – and a car which can therefore be pushed easily, is a sign of huge wear and low compression. These are bad things in an engine, Grant. High compression – and resistance to pushing or turning – is a good thing in an engine.

I would be very worried that a company selling me a clever technical solution would take such liberties with technical reality.

So, an Onion for Caltex and for Imahara, for lending his name to such nonsense. You're busted!

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