

Home truths win hearts, but snake oil and puffery get thumbs down

By  [Brendan Seery](#)

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The best advertising echoes a basic human truth - and instantly connects with us because we have experienced just that situation...

The basic human truth in our household is that I am not a sexist or a male chauvinist pig (well, not much, anyway) - but I am, like many men, lazy. If I can get away without helping around the house, then I will. The least I can do, after my wife has done the weekly shopping, is help unload the bags from the car, which I do, plodding along like a pack mule with multiple heavy bags in each hand. It is true, though, that she sometimes has to rouse me from whatever is occupying me (probably a car programme on DStv).



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The new TV ad for Renault's Duster SUV cuts right to the heart of our family shopping basic human truth, and I guess that many suburban families will identify with it.

We see the wife, superwoman, unloading many, many bags from the boot of the Duster (shows off the boot space) and then staggering into the lounge, trying to make her way further into the house to unpack the bags. But the obstacle in the way is the idle - and snoring - man of the house, who has his feet up, blocking her path.

Superwoman (read 'most suburban mothers, who have developed amazing coping mechanisms') does not shout and scream.

She remembers the Duster's athletic offroad ability (nicely showcased in a brief cutaway) and, with a short run, vaults over the sleeping Adonis.

The tagline, "It's time for tough", sums it all up perfectly - the struggles of the urban woman (who is the prime target as a potential Duster buyer) and the versatility of the Duster.

It's worthy of an Orchid. Well done, Renault, and your ad agency, Promise.

Market research is a key part of producing a healthy business plan and a healthy brand - so anything that devalues it is something to be worried about.

Research is about getting at the truth, or as close to it as possible, and it should therefore be scientific and impartial.

This week, e.tv engaged Black and White Research to put together a fascinating, real-time viewer reaction to President Jacob Zuma's State of the Nation address.

Selected "swing voters" in urban areas were given remote controls to record their reactions to statements made by the president. The popularity barometer could be seen in real time.

Broadcaster e.tv was correct to emphasise that the experiment should in no way be construed as reflecting the will of anything more than the sample group and should not be extrapolated to the rest of the country.

Well done to e.tv and to Black and White for saying this. It enables viewers to put things in perspective.

Not so the piece of puffery that appears each year in the *Sunday Times*, put together by Future Group publishing and sponsored by Standard Bank.

This purports to be "The People's Choice" when it comes to cars. Well, if fewer than 1,600 respondents to a nationwide internet survey (plugged consistently in the *Sunday Times* and Future Group titles) give their views, then the result is hardly the voice of the people.

More than that, one manufacturer, Kia, cleverly helped skew the results further by blasting out to its customers across social media. Hence, Kia was voted Number One.

Want to know how many people raised their hands for the Korean brand? Only 343. True story.

Whatever this is, it is not market research in any shape or form. It is simply advertising puffery, or advertorial as we call it in the trade.

No surprise that Kia had an advert in the supplement, as did Mercedes-Benz, Ford and Aston Martin, all of which "won" their categories.

Yet again, however, respected research house TNS lends its name to this snake oil.

Onions all around to all involved.

Oh - and if you are going to do advertorial (or as it's more cleverly called these days, "native advertising") please make sure you get the content right.

To include the rather large Toyota Fortuner in the "Compact SUVs" category is just silly.

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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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