

# Out of the 'ordinary'

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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*Dove campaign: acceptance by a woman of herself and her body; Billboards for new lifestyle estate are both illegal and dangerous...*

I was wondering aloud last week at the amazing fact that the Miss South Africa competition is still going.

In the age of Covid-19 and lockdowns, never mind political correctness and the awareness of gender issues, this apparently sexist artifact from the mid-20th century is still grabbing (some) audience eyeballs.

No matter how much they try to couch the ethos of the competition in doing good work (it used to be working for “world peace”) the competition is, essentially, still a meat market, where the winner’s looks are what get her the coveted crown. Tell me I’m wrong on that. How many Plain Janes have you seen standing in front of the cameras, in nondescript frocks, describing how they help starving children? Exactly.

Back in the days when men were men and dominated the ad and marketing industries (okay – they still do), the ideal of beauty, and the beauty ideal, was used to flog everything from cars to washing powder. But where it was exceptionally well-used was in the beauty sector.

The rationale, I supposed, was that if you used Lux beauty soap, you, too, could look like Miss World and cover your beautiful calves with moisturising foam as you luxuriated in your bath.

Times have certainly changed... and that’s no bad thing. Don’t get me wrong – I am no feminist but I was raised in a family of strong women and learned – the hard way on some occasions – that women deserve respect. (Again, I am not really good at this, although I know I should be...)

Dove

89%

of women in South Africa  
would recommend  
Dove antiperspirant\*

\*Survey conducted with 232 women in South Africa in 2020

The advertisement features a large, bold statistic '89%' in blue, with the Dove logo in the top left. Below the statistic, the text reads 'of women in South Africa would recommend Dove antiperspirant\*'. A small footnote at the bottom left states '\*Survey conducted with 232 women in South Africa in 2020'. On the right side, there is a collage of numerous small, square photographs of diverse women of various ages and ethnicities, some holding Dove products, arranged in a staggered, overlapping fashion.

When it comes to the realisation that real women are the ones buying its products, Dove (maker of soaps, deodorants and other beauty products) was one of the first to take advantage and use “ordinary” people in its ads, as opposed to those from a modelling agency.

As a brand, Dove championed what I suppose is a “new form of beauty”, where ideal figures are less important than energy, joy and an acceptance by a woman of herself and her body.

If you had tried to use models like this years ago, you would have been laughed out of your ad agency. But, now, it works. And even though these people are “ordinary” (and ordinary women, as opposed to Miss South Africas) they can see themselves replicated in those images, and they are also attractive.

The latest anti-perspirant deodorant ad features four different women, the sort you’d see on the street every day, talking, in real-world terms, about how they love Dove deodorant. And, unlike some of the wooden “people on the street” you see occasionally in local ads, these women don’t need scripts. They’re relaxed and they believe in the product ... whether or not they are being paid to say so is irrelevant.

The reason the ad works so well is that these are the opinions of people just like you, not a babe-like object mouthing lines.

Great advertising, Dove – and you get a beautiful Orchid from me. Less clever, I have to say, was using the results of a survey of just 232 women to proclaim loudly, that “89% of South African women would recommend Dove anti-perspirant”.

Err, no. The opinions of 206 do not represent the views of South African women...

There is a legal term, which one hears occasionally in the courts, which refers to the court "taking judicial notice" of something. This is where an event, a trend or action has not been referred to directly in a court action, but which the presiding officer will be aware of and, therefore, can take "judicial notice" of it in weighing up a judgment.

I took judicial notice this week of a blatant disregard for the laws of the country by whoever is marketing the Lion Pride Lifestyle Estate, which is between Cosmo City and the N14 highway, just outside Joburg.

Way out on the N14, leading to the offramp which takes you to Randburg, the company has erected garish yellow signs promoting the development, on both sides of the carriageway.

This is illegal. Plain and simple. It is as illegal as the rest of its posters which are plastered all over the road median in Malibongwe Drive.

The dodgy outside advertising business has long since got out of hand in Johannesburg – and estate agents are some of the worst in ignoring municipal bylaws and defacing streets ... so I am not surprised this comes from a property development.

The reason, though, that I would take judicial notice of this sort of behaviour, is because it would lead me to ask quite legitimate questions about the business ethics of the people behind the development.

If you are prepared to blatantly defy the law (and you cannot use ignorance as an excuse) in erecting your signage in places which are not only illegal but also dangerous, because they take drivers' eyes off the road ... then I wonder about the rest of your business.

If you defy bylaws on outdoor advertising, how do I know you have all the proper permissions for electricity and water at the development (and it is not unknown for some developments to steal electricity from the City)?

How do I know I can trust you in any financial dealings?

Ethics doesn't only apply to one part of a business – it must apply to all.

So, Lion Pride Lifestyle Estate, you get an Onion for behaviour which is not only illegal but also has the potential to scare away moral, and cautious, buyers.

## 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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