

Real appeal for real people is how Kia's Sportage rolls... but who let Sanral's strange Valentine's Day road map out in public?

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Advertising has sometimes been described as the art of enticing people into buying things they don't need and they can't afford. In the car business, especially, it is often dreams which are being sold... sadly, those sort of dreams which can get people into big financial trouble eventually.

So, many car brands sell their products with an aspirational spin: Imagine yourself in this gorgeous drop top sports car, cruising the French Riviera... or you could buy its 1.2 hatchback cousin and look just as sexy in the Joburg CBD. Yes, well... a lot of buyers do fall for that guff and get a car which is either hugely expensive or hugely impractical – or both.



Screengrabs from the ads.

I'd love to drive a Ferrari. I'd love to be able to say I dated Jennifer Aniston. But, in the end I've done better: my Subaru will go places a Ferrari won't and I guarantee you that my wife is a way better cook than Jennifer Aniston.

Real life, in other words, is a lot different from the French Riviera.

So I always like it when a brand makes an ad which resonates with ordinary people – and by ordinary people I mean South

Africans, not some clean airbrushed, smooth Mid-Atlantic creatures...

And I really like the latest ads for Kia's Sportage SUV, because they are set smack bang in the middle of Middle Class, Middle-of-the-Road South Africa (where most of you reading this reside).

There are two different executions, featuring Family Tshabalala and Family Harrison. They both are plagued by the usual troubles of suburban life and a drive beside the Mediterranean is as far from their minds as a trip to the moon.

For the Tshabalalas, it is the chaos of a normal school morning with long-suffering Mom trying to hold everything together, as daughter, son and hubby inhabit their own little worlds. The taste of reality is sharp: the girl, on her phone, mutters to her mother "You can't not care. It's your job!" Now what parent hasn't heard that from cheeky offspring?

The Sportage, with its features, solves some of the problems, neatly, including keyless entry (because Dad always forgets where he's put his keys) and a convenient cordless charging point (because Dad always mislays his phone charger...)

The Harrisons' house is another aspect of urban chaos as they pile into the Sportage to go to a fancy dress party, Dad dressed as a pirate and Mom as a fried egg. The clever husband, never missing an opportunity to be clever at the expense of the woman he married (and, gents, why do we never learn the lessons of this silly behaviour?) makes the comment that the round, yolk-like bump on her tummy "looks real..."

She glares at him: "Maybe it is..."

It takes a while to sink in (he is a man after all) and he mutters "What do you mean?" as they pull out of the driveway while a text box remarks that the Sportage offers "Extra space".

Both ads are clever, and funny and resonate with the target audience – families – because they are so spot on. This is a car you could see yourself and your family in, for a host of reasons.

And the bow on the show is a call-to-action offer: From R4,999 a month.

Great ads and great marketing. So a well-deserved Orchid for Kia.

I'm no great fan of the SA National Roads Agency (Sanral) – but I do appreciate they have a challenging job to do keeping this country moving. Things have also got a lot better since the Ducker-and-Diver-in-Chief, Nazir Alli, left the CEO position.

However, I still shake my head at Sanral's marketing, the latest example of which was their strange attempt to take advantage of Valentine's Day and promote the idea of "Love" and "Roads" as being compatible.

Fair enough, as a concept. But, what on earth were they trying to say with their Twitter illustration?

“ *Every relationship is a long distance relationship. We get you there, SANRAL [#BeyondRoads](#).*

pic.twitter.com/mqLoZzJ6il— SANRAL (@SANRAL_za) [February 14, 2018](#) ”

It featured a road map of South Africa, festooned with little hearts... because we so love our roads.

So why was the entire length of the N2 highway – from Cape Town to Ermelo in Mpumalanga – done in red while all the other highways were done in blue (which is the colour normally associated with national roads)?

There was nothing in the graphic which gave a clue.

Was it a warning (avoid this road because we haven't put enough tolls on it yet)? Was it a new highway into the heart of Zuma-stan, a secessionist state started by you-know-who? Was it meant to represent red ink, as in the money Sanral loses (via e-tolls)?

I cannot believe this was actually allowed out in public.

If you're an organisation which is built on accuracy (as the civil engineering sector should be) then you should not deal in ambiguity or, in this case, downright silliness.

To do so will always get you a fat, smelly, (Red) Onion.

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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