

## There's no quitting for Ryobi

It's interesting to ponder the images or the word associations a brand can conjure up in your mind. If those associations are positive - Toyotas don't break, for example - then that's because of two things: intrinsic brand quality and excellent marketing communication.

 By [Brendan Seery](#) 17 Mar 2020



I am the last person you would consider as a DIY guy. Till the day she died, my mother used to remind people, scathingly, that I couldn't even change an electrical plug. I could, but never bothered to let on – because I would have ended up doing that sort of maintenance work at home. (My father never did and my mother always said he was “useless with his hands” ... but perhaps he and I had perfected chore avoidance.)

However, if you say the name Ryobi to me, I will tell you it is a brand I trust. I don't know why – I don't even have a power drill in the house. I think my brother-in-law (he is good with his hands) does and I suppose, over the years I've picked up from somewhere that their products are the equal, or better than, those produced by companies like Black and Decker.

I was reminded of this – and my mother's own DIY efforts – when looking at agency Retroactive's case study on their campaign for Ryobi power tools. The study focuses on a series of ads, media interactions and social media executions – which delivered not only massive awareness but actually translated into impressive, and sustained, sales results – featuring motorbike rider and Dakar Rally entrant Kirsten Landman.

According to the agency, Ryobi decided to take a different tack when marketing its range of power tools at

other products because research has shown that women have a huge influence in the purchase of DIY products.

So, they chose to sponsor Landman, because her gritty, courageous life story fits perfectly with the brand's tagline that it produces power tools "that won't quit".

The ad is simultaneously a great story of fortitude and a perfect positioning for a never-say-die brand. In her own words, Landman goes through all the times "they told me I couldn't..."

She couldn't ride an offroad bike. So she did. She couldn't race. So she did – and won. After a serious crash in an event in Botswana, they told her she would never race again. But she did. And she won.

Then they told her she'd never make it to the start of the gruelling Dakar Rally, widely regarded as the toughest offroad race in the world. But she did – and that in itself was a triumph.

The ad's also a message to young girls (and boys): live your dreams. Don't let anyone tell you you can't. It's the sort of positive message we need to see more of.

Orchids to Ryobi and Retroactive ... and the biggest one to Kirsten for dismantling stereotypes.

I am indebted to Andrew Fraser, one of the people I follow on Twitter, for pointing out that, in this time of coronavirus, it is vital that communicators release accurate, appropriate information.

He posted a pic of a graphic prepared by the health department of tips on staying safe and avoiding infection.

He described it as "an example of really poor government communications. I can only guess that it was created without oversight of medical professionals".

Fraser pointed out that the advice about not sharing food and utensils, while useful in a general sense, did not relate to the Covid-19 virus and how it is transmitted.

"Covid-19 is a virus, not a bacterium. The Department of Health should know better than this," he said.

However, the last piece of advice in the poster – to seek treatment after listing symptoms, which "literally cover millions of different diseases without highlighting the likelihood of those symptoms for Covid-19 – is dangerous, especially if you recommend contacting health professionals for any of them.

That could, obviously, overload a system which is going to be under huge pressure when the cases start mounting.

The biggest problem about coronavirus is the conflicting information which has been emerging ... and even from medical professionals.



MEDIA

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Some have said it is unlikely to have much impact on the vast majority of the population while others have noted that when it hits its stride, hospitals will be overwhelmed and many will die.

Fraser makes excellent points about the importance, in any field in which public communication is required, to get the copy double-checked by experts.

## 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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