

VW moves with the times

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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Polo: Ad creates fantasy world complete with avatars, game.



If you were to ask young – and a few not-so-young – people in South Africa which car they would choose if they could realistically own or aspire to own it one day, and outside the realms of fantasy, the overwhelming favourite would be the VW Polo.

Don't believe me? Go and chat to a few young people...

I like the Polo for its typical German thoughtfulness in design and engineering execution... but I am beyond the age where I would consider the car as an essential fashion or lifestyle accessory.

I have the ability to move on and surrender the things of youth, etc, etc.

A lot of the success of the Polo – initially at least – had to do with the 'halo effect' of its big brother, the Golf GTI, which defined the category 'hot hatch' from its fifth iteration onwards and is still the car for those whose veins flow with petrol, not blood...



Volkswagen launches NFT brand campaign

Ogilvy South Africa 22 Mar 2022



Yet, Volkswagen's marketing and advertising have been shaping the Polo into a real market player of its own – understandable, considering the process differential with the Golf.

And, unashamedly, that target market is young and funky.

Which certainly is not me. But, though I am not the consumer in VW's sights, I never forget that Rule Number One in advertising, as it is in journalism, is: you are not the target market.

In the case of the latest Polo campaign, centred around the theme "Game On", what I am seeing is some very clever marketing and admaking.

Yet, when I first saw the ad over the weekend, I was unaware that there is an even more clever thread to it, in what could be an innovative, albeit risky, way to do cutting-edge advertising.

That lack of awareness wasn't helped by the fact the PR people from the producers of the ad only dropped the release on the day they launched the campaign. That should have irritated me – but, in hindsight, it worked well because I was able to view "Game On" in both of its different personae. Or, maybe I should call them avatars, seeing as they form the core of the piece.

In some of the most inviting computer graphics and animations I've seen in a while, the ad is like being pitched head-first into a computer game. Everything is fantastical. There are strange creatures and cars, all racing through a strange universe (they called it Mzansiverse) to be the winner, collecting tokens, dodging hazards...

In other words, apart from the brilliant colours and vivid soundtrack, just another way of looking at life in modern-day Jozi. And you can see many of the city's landmarks in the piece, too.

What the ad does do, is showcase the Polo, its funky new UI (user interface), which is called IQ.Drive, and the sense of adventure you feel just getting behind the wheel. For that alone, the ad gets an Orchid, but, as they say, there is more.

This, claims the PR-speak, is SA's first NFT (non-fungible token) brand campaign. NFTs, if you have had your head under

a rock since the beginning of the year, are the latest craze in cyberspace – prettier, more inviting forms of bitcoin, if you will.

To be honest, I don't quite get the idea of something intangible like an NFT (it's in cyberspace, after all) can have some of the outrageous values which have been achieved worldwide in the past few months.



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Hidden within the Polo ad were lots of these NFTs, which could be found and 'owned' and then traded on the OpenSea platform. Polo fans could “level up” and win a host of prizes. It will be interesting to see how things turned out, once the numbers are in.

Though it's not aimed at me, I recognise yet another in a long, long line of VW commercials that are spot-on in terms of their target market. One of the best aspects of this long relationship between VW and its agency partner, Ogilvy Cape Town, is that it produces distinctly South African ads, not anodyne voice-overs of European or American ones.

That shows in how Jozi is lovingly showcased by Sam Coleman of Patriot Films and how the digital magic is spun by Polycat. It's as good as any you'll see anywhere else in the world.

In handing out Orchids to all concerned, know: you made me smile and proud that the SA ad industry is still able to punch well above its weight.

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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