

Siya and Rachel Kolisi make a dynamic duo in FNB ad

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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If you're going to use a celebrity - TV or sports star, for example - in your marketing, then at least try to have a relevant, and plausible, link between that person and your product.



Otherwise, as in the Budget Insurance ad featuring Springbok flyhalf Faf De Klerk, all you're doing is using an image – and in this case the image is of Faf in his trademark SA flag Speedo – to get people to look at your ad.

Authenticity

The best way to use a personality is to have that person say things relevant to your product or, even better, have that person be a user of your product and say something about it.

In the case of Bok captain Siya Kolisi – and his wife Rachel – they certainly appear to be First National Bank (FNB) customers... and they talk, simply and without being self-conscious, about how they manage money in their family lives.

FNB has done a number of short videos, which air on social media, Youtube as well as on conventional TV, of the Kolisis chatting about everything from the importance of saving to how to use the FNB app.

And that is where you can see the conversation is authentic: Siya admits – a bit sheepishly – that when he first starting earning a salary, he would send some money home but would also buy things for himself.

“She,” he says, indicating Rachel, “has helped me with that, you can do all that but you gotta plan for it..”

Wife knows best

In another execution, Rachel is the only one speaking – about monitoring finances going in and out through the app. Siya smiles... a man after my own heart because he allows his wife to keep an eye on the finances better than he ever could.

Siya and Rachel are the perfect foil for the ad’s punchline: Families need financial fitness.

Their relaxed manner means you feel you are sitting with them in their living room having a chat – and, the unwritten sentiment is: If they trust FNB, then it must be something worth looking at.

Orchids to the Kolisis and FNB for showing how to use celebrity to your brand’s advantage, without the tacky hard sell or the irrelevant posing...

Woolies, the ally

Some years ago now, a person I had known for a long time sat at our dinner table and said he had a confession to make: I’m gay, he said. I know. I’ve known for years and, in answer to his next question: It makes no difference ... you’re still the same person and you’ll still occupy the same place in my life.

Live and let live...

Which is by way of saying I am a bit perplexed about the raging row over the Woolworths decision to throw its weight behind Pride Month and so frankly ally itself with the LGBTQIA+ community.



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Firstly, I am not quite so sure that alphabet soup is actually a community in the sense they share the same values, because

it's become clear that the issue of trans-genderism is splitting many who once thought of themselves as comrades.

Be that as it may, I think it was courageous of Woolworths to take such a bold stand – encouraging people to be “allies” of the LGBTQIA+ community. I also like the way they explained their position on their website: “We want to live in a world with no marginalisation and where everyone feels a sense of belonging and no one is left behind. For this to happen, marginalised groups including the LGBTQIA+ community need support and allyship.”

Educate and persuade

It's courageous because there are inherent risks – as there always are when taking a stand on principle. And those risks include alienating some of your customers who feel your support for this sector is offensive.

You can say, as Woolies did, that the matter is not up for debate. And you can, as Woolies did, block those on Twitter who disagree with you.

Despite the fact that you, as a business, have every right to protect yourself against vile insults (and many of the commentators quickly let their homophobic racist, “one world government” agendas loose), you will always appear as if you are trying to silence debate.

At the heart of the discussion, though, is the question: Should a brand such as Woolworths, which is a department store, take a stand on an issue like this? There is a difference, remember, in enforcing company policies which outlaw discrimination against anyone regardless of who they are, and actually throwing your weight behind one group. As a few of the comment writers on Twitter pointed out: Are you going to appeal for allies for heterosexuals?



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A friend whose opinion I respect said this: “why are 'normal' people - as they call themselves - so threatened by this? what is it they fear will happen? if this is such a small minority, just ignore it.”

I am perturbed, too, by the number of people repeating arguments that come straight from Trumpists: “Go woke, go broke” is the one Helen Zille loves and that idea is what is behind a supposed consumer boycott of Woolworths.

It will be interesting to see how such a boycott affects the company, bearing in mind that, after a supposed consumer protest against Dischem for alleged anti-white racism last year, that company's profits to end of February 2023 were up R150m from the previous year.

As another aside, I find it bizarre that the people who want to “cancel” Woolworths are the one decrying the supposed rise of “cancel culture” alongside “wokeness”.

Overall, I think Woolworths deserves both an Orchid and an Onion. Orchids for bravery in tackling an important social question and Onion for its aggressive social media response...you could have used the opportunity to educate and persuade, but you looked close-minded.

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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