

Let's not even talk about the illegal billboards adjacent to the highways. I am not always a friend of Sanral, but I believe they are in the right when fighting these people in court.

However, I do acknowledge there are times when billboards work.

And the recipe for billboard advertising success is twofold: simplicity and clean striking design; and placement.

As a car fan (and the target market, obviously) I could not help but get smacked right in the mug by Ford's striking billboard at the OR Tambo International Airport.

It's simple: featuring five of Ford's top sporty vehicles against the headline: "Announcing Ford's Starting Five", under which is the strapline: "Proud sponsor of the NBA" (National Basketball Association).

At first it might seem strange that Ford is using a South African billboard to promote its association with US basketball - but when you realise how big a sport it is in this country, and of how many fans there are here, it starts to make more sense.

The design makes clever use of Ford's signature colour of blue - and it has always been a theory of mine that blue is a colour that works very well over a distance.

We see that when we use photos which are dominantly blue on our newspaper front pages - they stand out. All the cars are in blue, too.

The copy and design are simple but get across the message that Ford is an athletic brand.

So an Orchid to Ford.

There were some teaser ads running on DSTV this week, warning us of the arrival of Twisp, whatever that may be - no clue in the teasers, though.

All was revealed towards the end of the week when we discovered that Twisp is an electronic cigarette. The ad is prefaced by a quasi-health warning (à la cigarette packs) to the effect that it has been scientifically proven that electronic fags are 95 percent less harmful than ordinary ones.

At least they didn't try to convince us they are harmless...

What annoyed me about the ad was the choice of sexy models who, frankly, looked ridiculous brandishing the silver twisps like they were some kind of designer label status symbol.

It's been a long time since anybody believed smoking was sexy.

And I'll bet those people - who look very fit and healthy - don't smoke either.

Remember: cigarettes are the only product which, if taken as directed, will kill you.

And, by your own admission, electronic cigarettes might just take 20 times longer to do so. But Twisp gets an Onion because the attempt to make this addiction look sexy falls flat.

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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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