

Food Lovers Market - a brand of sincerity

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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I find it a bit bizarre, to be honest, when I see a company boasting that it was "established in 1993". C'mon I want to say, that was only yesterday. Er, actually, it was 30 years ago and that's a long time to keep any business going.



It's even more remarkable if it is a business which has grown by leaps and bounds – because that tells you something about customer loyalty. And also, noteworthy if the company is still in the hands of the people, or family, which set it up, because so often these days, business founders cut and run and take their loot as soon as a big conglomerate shows up, cheque in hand.

For all of those reasons, I was attracted to the TV ad celebrating 30 years in business for the Food Lover's Market group.

A family place

Brian and Mike Coppin began the business in Cape Town in 1993, as Fruit & Veg City. The brothers were hands on with the first store, being involved in painting and shop fitting and setting up their at the time unique offering of huge displays of fruit and veg. A bit like a market, for those who've even been down to a municipal one to witness farmers bring in their fresh produce before the crack of dawn.

The image of freshness, coupled with the sense that this was a “family place around the corner”, where you would be treated as more than just a member of the queue at the till, has been maintained to this day, even though the brand has now become Food Lover’s Market (a little subtle move upmarket, perhaps?).

The initial operation had six employees, some of whom are still employed in the business... but it has now grown into an enterprise with 17,000 employees, whom the group refers to as “team members”.

The ad captures all of the positives of the brand over the years, linking vignettes from the beginning (using actors) to the present day, when the family is present and welcoming customers as they’ve always done.



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It’s simple but it does have that elusive sincerity which is missing in so many brands and so much advertising today.

So, a 30-year-anniversary Orchid to Food Lover’s Market.

Badly executed marketing

Many people have made bundles of money (those in the media being the first in line) because of the egos of our politicians and those ANC apparatchiks who run our state-owned enterprises.

It was that cynicism born of experience which drew me to a huge, full-page advert in the *Sunday Times* this past weekend. It wasn’t marked as an ad, nor was there any indication that it was advertorial, but its layout and the bizarre content made it quite clear that this was not the output of the *Sunday Times* editorial team.

That said, though, it was difficult to fathom the point of the piece, which was billed as a “Q & A – Doctor Kgaogelo Legodi”, who was once Nelson Mandela’s eye specialist and was, we were told in the gushing piece, elected as president of the World Ophthalmology Congress in 2020. The article, which stopped just short of deifying the man, included a number of his other awards and achievements, dating back a decade or more.

Q&A – Doctor Kgaogelo Edward Legodi

President of African Ophthalmology Council

A practitioner understands the importance of focusing on what he is passionate about and proficient in. And for Dr Kgaogelo Edward Legodi, his primary focus is improving the health of his collective.

There is passion, and he has dedicated his life and career to his craft. When he is not managing and overseeing his passion project, Mphahlele Eye Clinic, he is working at Mediforum in Pretoria and was at Oudtshoorn Hospital in Johannesburg. He also operated in a national specialist unit at the Military Hospital and was engaged with national work at the South African Medical Association (SAMA), teaching, and training other specialists. Next to his practice, he is involved locally in improving the ophthalmology service offering in South Africa and the role of the continent. He is the former President of the Ophthalmology Society of South Africa (OSSA) and was the World Ophthalmology Congress President in 2020. He is a member of the South African Veterinary Society (SAVetSoc), South African Medical Association (SAMA), and African Council of the College of Medicine in SA (ACCMSA).

Continuing the Legacy of Service

Born in Accoragalla in Gauteng, Legodi was educated in Grahamstown before embarking on his tertiary studies at the Nelson Mandela Medical School of South Africa. On completion of his studies, he was recruited as a medical officer in Grahamstown. He worked at a rural hospital in Grahamstown where he undertook his internship and gained valuable experience. From there he moved to Ventnor Hospital, and despite a few challenges that came with the remote area, he continued to serve his community as the Nelson Mandela Medical School at the University of Zululand. In 1999 to 2003, he then qualified to be one of the very few black eye specialists (ophthalmologists) in South Africa.

As he embarked on his career, Legodi always had a dream of building a specialist eye hospital – a project which he and his wife (a fellow doctor) passionately believed in.

His dream of becoming an eye specialist and building an eye hospital stemmed from a vivid experience of observing his grandfather, a priest, who always had dreams of Legodi becoming a doctor. In addition to this, he was one of the leaders of the People's School of the Blind and Deaf and was involved in the Mphahlele Project and the school for the blind. Legodi also grew up with his beloved grandmother who was dealing with the consequent health challenges that

came with the condition – one of which was having one blind eye. As a result, when the grandfather had lost his sight, he was blind. He was blind and his wife, who was blind, was blind. He was blind and his wife, who was blind, was blind. He was blind and his wife, who was blind, was blind.

Delivering the Gift of Sight

As an eye specialist, Legodi qualified from University under the tutelage of Professor Ann Peters who taught him how to operate on the retina. He now specialises in cataract and vitreous surgery with the most common ailments being cataracts.

There are damaged lenses caused by ageing, trauma, or diabetes. As a condition, cataracts are treatable and can be removed and replaced with a new intraocular lens (IOL). Another common ailment is glaucoma, which is a high build-up of pressure in the eye, and while this can't be treated, it can be controlled. Another focus of the Mphahlele Eye Centre is laser treatment for clients if they are eligible for an operation.

Furthering his cause of delivering the gift of sight, he is the President of the Ophthalmology Society of South Africa (OSSA). Legodi has been instrumental in engaging with government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to look at providing accessible eye care to the previously underserved. In the past, ophthalmology in South Africa used to work with NGOs, international non-profits, that bring people together to fight avoidable blindness. Challenging their medical personnel who are fully equipped with finances, they fly all over the world to relieve the burden of eye diseases. While unfortunately they have closed their offices in South Africa, they are still operational and now aim to move forward with relevant NGOs and give the initiative the attention it deserves.

Award-winning Ophthalmologist

It is uncommon for a black person to specialise in ophthalmology and Legodi was the first black doctor to qualify as an eye specialist in South Africa. Dr Kgaogelo was the first black eye specialist who qualified in 1998 so for those to only be six who qualified thereafter in an entire decade is telling that it wasn't an easy feat.

Because of his experience and knowledge, Legodi has held numerous leadership positions.

He was fortunate enough to be the first black President of the Society of Eyes in 2013, where he



Dr Kgaogelo Edward Legodi: Delivering the Gift of Sight with Passion and Excellence

was inaugurated by the former President and Deputy President of the country, the Honourable Kgama Mofokeng. He was also elected to be an Executive Director and Vice President of the International Council of Ophthalmology (ICO) which is the mother body of all the ophthalmology societies in the world. In addition to this, he was an Executive Director of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) – which was an incredible accomplishment, with him being the first African to hold that post. During his time at the AAO, he initiated to distribute books to the continent was started – the Basic Science of Ophthalmology textbooks were made available across the continent to students who needed to study for their exams.

In 2018, Dr Kgaogelo Edward Legodi was presented with the Nelson Mandela Award by former President Jacob Zuma for being one of the eye physicians

- who took care of Tshona Mphahlele (former President Nelson Mandela)
- Dr Kgaogelo Edward Legodi was honoured by the Deputy Prime Minister of Swaziland in 2013 for his work and achievements
- He received recognition from the military health services led by General Dabula as one of their own in recognition of the work done
- Dr Kgaogelo Edward Legodi is also the first African to be the President of the World Ophthalmology Congress (WOC)
- which was held virtually in 2020

Partnering with the SANCB and Serving the Continent

In 2020, the South Africa National Convention Bureau (SANCB), together with Saa Ntshona, collaborated on the World Ophthalmology Congress for their 2020 event and the partnership yielded great results. One of the proposed projects that was birthed from the Congress was working with NGOs that would train ophthalmologists in Africa. This came from a realisation that the state of health services and facilities in many African countries was not up to standard – so it is imperative to have opportunities that empower these young doctors who will ultimately service the continent in the most incredible way.

As a continent, the lack of skills, resources, teaching, and equipment means medical service providers are unable to meet the demand for assistance. There is a need to train more ophthalmologists as currently there are not enough to meet the need in South Africa. In addition, there is a need for governments to manage hospitals efficiently so that these institutions can assist the vulnerable and the poor who rely on these services.

I have huge admiration and respect for women: firstly my mother inspired me to do my best and be the best version of myself; my wife, Tshona is an amazing wife, mother, physician and businesswoman and last, but certainly not the least, I received my qualifications under the tutelage of women. As a result, they are my inspiration, and with my surgical and leadership skills, I can make an impact on the lives of patients, their families and my community at large.

Arrive Inspired, Leave Contented.



MEET
SOUTH
AFRICA

South Africa
NATIONAL CONVENTION BUREAU

Never mind that the whole article contained not a single question or answer and you have to wonder about the editorial competence of those PR flacks who put the nonsense together.

But what really intrigued me was: What the hell was this all about? A praise song to Dr Legodi, complete with a massive, ego-stroking portrait which would not be out of place in any government minister's communications?

I still don't know, because the entire piece – at the minimum, three years out of date – looked to be produced by the SA National Convention Bureau, which is an arm of SA Tourism and which claims to provide "information and assistance, giving neutral advice on all aspects of hosting and organising any business event in South Africa.

Even then, the full page piece – which differed from the SA Tourism website, which calls the body the Conventions (plural)

Bureau – still was not making a pitch for convention business, although the body did organise the conference at which Dr Legodi triumphed in 2020.

It was muddled, badly executed marketing which seemed nothing more than a huge ego stroke for Dr Legodi... not that he needed it because his accolades speak for themselves.

Why then?

This being SA Tourism – they who wanted to blow R1bn of our money on a highly dubious sponsorship of English football club Tottenham Hotspur – I bet it is another excuse to liberate taxpayer money and steer it in the direction of those who might “deserve” it.

This rubbish is a shocking waste of money and something that perhaps should be looked into.

It gets an Onion from me.

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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