

'Ford For South Africa' campaign focuses on its proud heritage, investment and commitment

 By [Naresh Maharaj](#)

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Neale Hill, managing director of Ford Motor Company South Africa (FMCSA), reflects on the car manufacturer's proud heritage in South Africa.



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Ford Motor Company South Africa (FMCSA) has revealed its exceptional legacy and its determination to create a brighter future for the country. Ford has played an instrumental role in the South African automotive sector for over 96 years, and remains one of the country's largest vehicle manufacturers.

According to Neale Hill, managing director of Ford Motor Company South Africa (FMCSA), the manufacturer is dedicated to creating empowerment, community upliftment, economic growth, sustainability – and producing world-class products for South Africa and around the globe. That proud heritage spans more than 96 years.

Ford has launched an inspiring and emotive brand campaign, dubbed 'Ford For South Africa', that tells the unique story of the company's esteemed history and its unwavering commitment to the country.

We find out more from Hill...

 ***Ford has created quite a stir with its latest advertising campaign. Can you tell us more a bit about it?***

Yes, of course. 'Ford For South Africa' is an inspiring and emotive brand campaign that tells the unique story of the company's esteemed history and its unwavering commitment to the country. To us, it really resonates with Heritage Month, and with the need for optimism and a new sense of purpose as the nation emerges from lockdown and as we begin an economic recovery.

■ ***For anyone who hasn't seen the campaign yet, give us a quick description?***

It's really a series quick cameos of Ford's heritage and commitment, but it's compelling and emotional, and it's been really well-received.

■ ***What do you hope the campaign will achieve?***

The campaign is unique opportunity to showcase how Ford is 'for' so many things in South Africa, and has become an integral part of our everyday lives and lifestyles.

“ Ford is 'for' many things: creating jobs, boosting the economy, supporting worthy causes, investing in the youth, protecting our country's wildlife, and the list goes on. Sharing these stories in a more deliberate way has the power to build a positive brand affinity and reputation, and defined our approach to this new campaign. ”

We wanted to celebrate the positive commitment Ford has made to the community and culture of our country by showing the brand's empathy and goodwill in a way that feels genuine, iconic and, most importantly, unmistakably Ford. This shows that Ford is, and always has been, FOR South Africa.

It's not easy condensing a remarkable 96-year history and everything that Ford does into 30 seconds, while touching on all the key pillars: a remarkable history, a long line of iconic products, continued investment in manufacturing, as well as empowering people and communities, and protecting the environment. But it works.

■ ***A devil's advocate might argue that the campaign says what any brand wants to say, that it's responsible, cares about people and the environment, and so on***

That's true enough, but it's also true that Ford has shown real commitment to this country. Our local production started nearly a century ago, in a converted sheep shed in Port Elizabeth, assembling Model-T Fords. It was the first Ford assembly operation outside North America. Since then, we've continued to invest and expand, and our business – and the country – has benefited.

FMCSA is committed to the upliftment and development of its workforce. The company also has a strong history of giving back to the community and continues this tradition with various outreach initiatives supporting corporate citizenship, volunteering and local sustainability.

■ ***Could you elaborate more?***

FMCSA directly employs approximately 4,300 people in South Africa, and indirectly about 52,000 jobs are created within the value chain. Ford's cumulative investment in its South African operations between 2008 and 2018 was over R11 billion.

Our export operations contribute to 1% of GDP. Ford is one of the country's top vehicle exporters and the leader in the pick-up segment, with the locally assembled Ranger exported to more than 100 global markets in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Ford SA is also a significant supplier of other components to Ford manufacturing plants internationally. This includes a contract to supply more than 1.8 million catalytic converters annually for 25 international Ford customer plants, as well as after market and local customers. In the last 25 years Ford SA has produced nearly 37 million catalytic converters.

■ ***In South Africa, we often think of ourselves as a small economic player, and obviously Covid-19 has taken a massive toll. How does Ford in SA compare to its international peers?***

We're very proud of how we compare. Within Ford, we compete with other plants for manufacturing business. South Africa competed with Thailand and South America to manufacture vehicles for the Mexican market. Only if our cost per unit is better will we get that piece of business, and we've certainly been able to compete with our peers.

And that's why the Ford For SA campaign is important and timely. It's crucial for us to not only show what Ford does locally, but also why the company does it. This is particularly pertinent at a time when everybody is worried and uncertain about the future. We hope to reassure people that one of the country's oldest and leading manufacturers is here to stay, is investing in the future, has dedicated itself to help the country grow economically, and is determined to alleviate some of the social challenges that we face.

Listen to the full interview below.

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