



EDITOR'S PICKS 7 OCTOBER 2021

Lost Roads /

Chevrolet

Automotive brand turns guerrillas into tour guides for Discovery Channel documentary that explores idyllic but off-limits region of Colombia

► <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcFq3hh7Ln8>

Caquetá borders the Colombian Amazon Rainforest and is one of the most biodiverse regions in Colombia. It's also a territory shrouded in mystery and apprehension as it was held by The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (known as the Farc, after the initials in Spanish) for decades, and was inextricably linked with the rebel group's record of violence and kidnappings.



The country's civil conflict may have come to an end when the Farc signed a peace accord with the government in November 2016, but Caquetá remained an area that locals and tourists avoided due to the history of bloodshed.

Working with Bogotá-based **Commonwealth/McCann Colombia**, **General Motors**-owned brand **Chevrolet** created a documentary called **Lost Roads** that followed former guerrillas, who were retrained as local guides as they showcased the region's natural wonder and beauty.

The production, made in partnership with **Discovery Channel** and fronted by investigative journalist Maria Alejandra Cardona, shows off Caquetá's lush natural habits and stunning waterfalls, while also revealing the stories of ex-guerrillas discovering a new lease of life in tourism, agriculture and sports.

The project was two years in the making and premiered on Discovery Channel in April across 14 Latin American countries. To drive attention to the film, the brand created micro pieces and mini spin-offs of the documentary that aired in its social media feeds.

Results / According to the agency, more than **23 million** people have viewed the film, while sales for the SUV line grew **47%** in Colombia in the three months following the documentary airing.

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Stay true / The history of Caquetá is compelling enough to drive interest in a documentary that opens it up for the first time, and Chevrolet is an especially fitting brand to bring that story to people's attention, not least with its off-road vehicles and 'Find New Roads' global positioning. The film also excels by focusing on not just the landscape, but on former guerrillas and their stories. Retraining ex-fighters as tourist guides is a powerful touch, reframing their role in a conflict in a more positive, hopeful light (incidentally, the ripples of the conflict are still being felt, as this [Atlantic](#) piece outlines). Chevrolet has deep roots in Colombia: its GM Colmotores assembly plant opened in 1956, and according to the brand, the plant has assembled more than 1 million vehicles and is the second biggest industrial company in the

country, generating about 1,300 direct and 16,000 indirect jobs. No doubt, this kind of local connection helped deliver a possibly contentious story with authenticity and understanding.

Find new roads / Chevrolet struck upon its 'Find New Roads' global positioning in 2013 to help its push to grow sales worldwide, enabling 'the whole company to rally around a consistent theme for the brand, and at the same time serve as an external message that works in all markets', Chevrolet's then vice president, US sales, service and global marketing Alan Batey said at the time. Speaking to Contagious about the campaign, Samuel Estrada, director regional CW/McCann South America West, said: 'Chevrolet has been in Colombia for 65 years now and it is a brand that has been always deeply close to the country and its development. Find New Roads for us is much more than a tagline or a slogan, it has been a purpose for the brand and we were always looking into ways of taking this purpose further, making it part of peoples lives!'

Lost Roads is a perfect evocation of this positioning, finding a uniquely local story to elevate Chevrolet's promise to 'find new roads', and delivering a compelling piece of branded content into the bargain. And given the automotive brand's consistent global positioning, the content could travel beyond its country of origin (it aired in 14 Latin American countries).

Striking the right tone / CW/McCann's Estrada said striking the right tone given the history of the region was key. 'We had to be absolutely sure that the tone was completely oriented towards showing what this territory was going through in this new phase, showing the new opportunities that were discovered after the agreements were in place. Telling human stories of new beginnings and staying far away from any political position. And we were always looking back on what we have done and making sure we stayed true to our goal.'

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