

# Chicken a la King(sley) James: Nando's vs Santam

 By [Edward Fisher](#)

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If you read my previous contributor piece, "[On marketing and speed](#)", you may have started thinking about how the pace at which we operate influences our ability to retain important information. The Invisible Gorilla experiment sums up this premise quite succinctly. [video]



To recap: in short, our perception is often victim to 'black holes', so when we think we see the whole picture, we are only seeing parts. Our mind becomes so focused on one particular element, we overlook the changing nature of the environment that the object of our attention exists in. The latest Santam ad, put together by King James and starring Ben Kingsley, is a fine example of how we can be duped when information changes rapidly.

Fear not. This is not an article aimed at reiterating my original point - just one small element of it. Namely, that brands can fall victim to the same black holes in their strategy if they do not keep up with the pace at which their environments alter.

## **Worthwhile highlighting two brands**

It's worthwhile highlighting two brands that have not only made use of the 'black hole' theory in their advertising, but are awesome examples of how adaptability wins consumer interest and ultimately market share. They have avoided all the pitfalls of being overwhelmed by rapid change and have, instead, embraced change to become truly agile.

When it comes to playing the 'parody card', few can get it right like Nandos. From the "[Last Dictator Standing](#)" to "Julius Malema Demanding Change", Nandos has always been at the forefront (some may say abreast) of political satire. Even when it comes to flirting with that precarious line that demarcates competitive advertising (which, by the way, is illegal in South Africa), Nando's leads the race.

So when Nando's last week launched its parody of the latest Santam ad, (if you haven't seen it yet, it's well worth watching), it came as no surprise.

## **Parody of its own**

Nando's has always been agile and, as technology enhances the turnarounds on production time, it has become even better at flighting ads in the immediate wake of the people and events that it satirises. But here comes the real rub... (considering we are talking about Nando's, I feel obliged to mention the previous pun was wholly unintentional)... Santam today, Tuesday, 24 April 2012, has responded to Nando's parody with its own.

When was the last time you saw an insurance company make a parody?

Not only has it responded in lightning time, particularly for a large organisation, it has responded with something that is equally witty and even, some may say, honourable. In fact, its chosen tactic smacks of Yuppiechef's 'Woolworths Coup'\*, which resulted in [Yuppiechef holding for ransom](#) the Woolworth's Valentine's Day "Lovebirds" promotion URL in exchange for donations to a charity of Yuppiechef's choice.

## **Two incredible achievements in SA advertising**

In short, Santam's "Back at ya" ad is brilliant. Not only for its subtle and reflexive wit, but because it defines two incredible achievements in the history of South African advertising:

1. Large brands have entered into a running dialogue above the line, using the full-force of faster production times (no doubt made possible by better technology)
2. Competitive advertising does not spell slander and negativity

Both of the above can be attributed to technology opening up more domains for dialogue and allowing faster response times. Where before it may have taken a couple of months for an above-the-line response to be approved and created, it can now be done in a few days.

Perhaps [Auction Alliance](#) could have made use of the latter when the walls came down? Perhaps confident, swift messaging would have helped avoid some of the damage? Perhaps.

## **Real personality**

Furthermore, the Santam and Nando's dialogue proves that competitive advertising is not necessarily witless mud-slinging. Instead, it can be used to have fun, create interest and make brands achieve that elusive, priceless phenomenon - real personality.

Perhaps it's time that the powers that be reconsider their approach? Because, although competitive advertising may not necessarily be officially taking place above-the-line... it certainly is still taking place.

My feeling is that as technology develops (just look at social media), brands are going to have to be comfortable being picked apart and challenged - not only by their competitors but also the customers of their competitors - in real time.

So, if your brand is still avoiding embracing technology, or the exposure of social media, for fear of dissection and criticism, alas, your time is running out. This wave of rapid conversation shows no signs of receding; if Nandos and Santam are anything to go by, it's in full force.

## **Embrace the change**

It's time to embrace the scores of new opportunities technology affords us for dialogue in the public arena. Don't let your brand's strategy fall victim to black holes in perception because things are changing so fast. Instead, embrace the change and negate the chance of being labelled 'a chicken'.

\*[Yuppiechef holds Woolies Lovebird ransom](#)

## ABOUT EDWARD FISHER

Edward Fisher is a communication specialist at Colourworks Integrated Marketing ([www.colourworks.co.za](http://www.colourworks.co.za); @Colourworks\_CT; Facebook). He specialises in marketing strategy, as well as creative concept generation. Email him at [edward@colourworks.co.za](mailto:edward@colourworks.co.za).

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