

# Long live the new king

 By [Brendan Seery](#)

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There seems to be a new Nando's in town - or at least a wannabe Nando's. I'm not talking about flame-grilled chicken icons, though Nando's is in that particular area. The fast food group has for going on two decades now, been king of the heap when it comes to producing funny, gag-filled advertising.



Now, though, there is another would-be King... King Price Insurance. The comparatively new insurance business decided it would try to occupy the commanding heights of comedy in the marketing battlefield and has already produced a few humorous ads, which have picked up Orchids from me.

Its latest is one bang up to date, in the middle of the coronavirus. Putting together any marketing which tries to get a laugh out of this awful financial and health crisis we are involved in takes some guts. It also takes some sophistication and finesse to ensure it doesn't backfire into tastelessness and hurt the brand.

But I think King Price has got it spot on with this one, because it zooms in, with uncanny accuracy, on the sometimes 'I-don't-give-a-damn' attitude of some South Africans.

So, we see a blonde in an open-top sports car (so far so on-message for suburban spoiled brat) arriving at a roadblock, where the cop goes through the routine, and the funny one-liners flow.

He takes her temperature. "You're very hot," he says.

"I know, but I'm married," she responds.

"You're 38," the cop tries to tell her after looking at his temperature 'gun'.

"I'm not 38!" She responds with indignation. "I'm only 30! And not a single grey hair!"

Then he asks her: "Permit."

"I want a permit, but all the hairdressers are closed, mos..."

Then she says "Can I go now?" not waiting for an answer before driving off.

The King Price punchline then arrives: when nothing out there makes sense, we do. Then comes a nice little touch, to keep you chuckling even after the sales pitch. The cop points the 'gun' at his own head, looks at the reading and then smiles smugly: "Still cool..."

There might still be a debate about whether entertaining people with humour actually makes them buy your product and I reckon the jury's still out on that one. However, if you are entertained – and heaven knows we need to be in these trying times – you probably feel positive about the brand responsible, and that's the first marketing foot in your door.

So, another Orchid to King Price.

The coronavirus global catastrophe has seen millions of people fighting with travel companies large and small to get back advance payments made for anything from air tickets to car hire to accommodation. In many cases – particularly with airlines – there are sad tales. We've got your money, but we're broke, so guess what?

From a personal perspective, we feared we would be in that same boat (or should that be cramped economy class). We had planned a UK trip, which should have started next week. First company to contact us – unasked – was Argus Car Hire in England. They notified us that the full amount we had paid for the car hire would be refunded within 20 working days, and it was. So guess where we'll be going if we can ever rebook that holiday?

Then, the host from the Airbnb property in Hampshire where we had planned to stay three nights contacted us to find out what our plans were. She told us we should contact Airbnb directly for a refund. This I did and – brace yourselves if you're used to South African customer service – within 24 hours, the money was back.

On the other hand, Virgin Atlantic, the company owned by one of the world's richest men, Sir Richard Branson, won't give

us back our money at all. They eventually cancelled our Joburg-London flight and generously allowed us to rebook without penalties until the end of November. After that, we should expect to pay more to change our tickets. That, by the way, is illegal in terms of European consumer protection law – but, hey! Brexit!

We don't have an option with the airline, because we don't want to throw away R27,000.

But if we do fly again with Virgin, it may well be the last time we do. However, Argus Car Hire and Airbnb will definitely see our business again.

While Virgin gets a consumer relationship marketing Onion, Argus and Airbnb pick up well-deserved Orchids.

## 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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