

Nandos' brand impostors - fowl play?

By [Dr Kay Brügge](#)

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In the recent Nandos TV ad, a number of 'brand impostors' admirably discuss Nandos' trade secrets. The ad is at pains to introduce anomalies in the appearance of competitor brand characters such as KFC's "Colonel".

The obvious intention is not to break competitive advertising rules, but also to sustain the "Wandos" theme.

Yet, enough of the identity of the 'real' brands is revealed so as not to create any doubts as to their origin and to carry the meaning of the ad.

The ad succeeds in conveying the notion that, in view of faux competitors finding it necessary to do 'reverse engineering' on and aspire to, Nandos products, that their own (meaning that of the 'real' competition) is essentially second-rate. This message is reinforced by the highly unlikely scenario that competitors do so jointly - indicating their 'desperation' to get behind Nandos' success. The advertisement is even more adept at portraying the fish fast-food industry and the main proponent, 'Something Fishy', as a non-contender (the plastic fish remains mute).

However, using faux representations of well-known brand 'characters' potentially remains a double-edged sword. The anomalies in their appearance notwithstanding, these 'characters' (notably KFC's "Colonel") are instantaneously recognisable, by virtue of having been deeply etched into the viewer's minds through sheer repetition (a hallmark of KFC TV ads).

Every single representation, whether 'fake' or real, progressively strengthens the image and brand (even though the anomalies are recognised and probably seen as humorous).

In contrast to this 'first-order' visual and here-and-now brand character representation of the 'competition', the ad attempts to promote Nandos' through *narrative* - a second position is portrayed, i.e. how Nandos may be perceived through the competitors' eyes.

The Nandos brand is portrayed by default (or defowed) and reconstructed through 'myth-making' (the faux competition bases their information on hearsay even though they inevitably have to be accurate so as not to distort Nandos' success recipe).

It becomes a matter of whether stronger associations/loyalty will result through portrayal of the concrete (faux brand characters) or what is abstract, ambiguous and shrouded in some mystery (the story of Nandos as related by the faux competitors). The relative resonance this creates is likely to depend on the profile (including sense of humour; appreciation

for the abstract vs. concrete, etc) of the consumer, vis-a-vis Nandos attempting to position itself.

A definite plus of the advertisement is that it remains open-ended - a chapter in an ongoing saga of a wicked competitor, "Wandos". It remains to be seen whether the reverence for Nandos, once-removed, will position it ahead of the 'real' competition. Whilst the ad clearly belongs to Nandos, KFC's "Colonel" is particularly prominent (despite anomalies), something Nandos lacks by virtue of only having the fairly generic 'cock'.

Lessons for the advertising agency: (1) Scoring points by using Indians with idiosyncratic speech patterns is becoming tenuous and lacks originality, and all; and (2) creating advertising platforms for the competition (albeit intended as faux) without truly putting them down, remains a gamble.

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