

NEWS RELEASE

Graduation 2024: UP Junior Marketer graduates with master's degree focused on Nando's 'loadshedding-stages' ad campaign



Kitching visits a local Nando's to experience the lovemark- brand.

Duané Kitching (24), a Junior Marketing Practitioner at the University of Pretoria (UP) and a recent UP Master of Commerce in Marketing Management graduate, scored her latest academic success with a research study examining the relationship between South African diners and restaurant group Nando's – with a particular focus on the chain's tongue-in-cheek, topical adverts related to loadshedding.

Her research examined how the 'lovemarks' marketing concept, which focuses on creating an emotional connection between a brand and its target market (or "getting your market to fall in love with your brand"), inspires consumers to generate word-of-mouth marketing for their favourite brands.

She asked consumers about the hugely popular #NandosBrightSides campaign, which made light of loadshedding by offering free side dishes – which varied in number according to the current stage of

loadshedding – with the purchase of a full chicken. So if South Africa was on stage two loadshedding, consumers could score two free sides. The campaign won numerous advertising accolades, including one for revenue-generation – it led to a 20% revenue increase and more than 45 158 meal orders.

“Marketers can learn from Nando’s advertising strategies,” Kitching says. “Brands need to keep up with trends to ensure they will remain on their consumers’ lips... Considering brand acceptance, brands must ensure advertising and marketing efforts resonate with the local culture and values of the target audience – a concept Nando’s clearly understands.”

Her research study, supervised by Professor Tania Maree, received 291 responses from South African customers on Facebook and Instagram, and the results reveal a lot about responses to humorous advertising, primarily that “when you love a brand, you will talk about it”. It also shows, however, that attitudes towards an advert do not have a significant and positive relationship with generating word-of-mouth. “So even if people love an advert, and laugh about it, they might not talk to others about the brand,” Kitching explains. “In this case, although South Africans loved the loadshedding stages gimmick and freebies, it became clear that they love the Nando’s brand even more than the specific ads and campaign, which contributes significantly to why Nando’s ads often generate so much positive word-of-mouth for the brand.”

Kitching’s findings add value because they expand the existing research on lovemarks, an under-explored concept in marketing.

Marketing UP

In Kitching’s own life, however, if there is one brand that is her personal lovemark, it’s the University of Pretoria. She’s completed all three of her degrees at UP (and has already applied for her fourth, a PhD!), and now works as a Junior Marketing Practitioner in the Marketing and Communications division, a promotion from her 2023 internship.

“UP is like a goldmine,” she says. “If you are enthusiastic, do your part and ask the questions, there are more than enough answers, more than enough support. You have to work hard, you have to put in the effort, but they are there to help.” She has certainly reaped the benefits, not only in terms of academic progression but by being in the top 15% of her peers and clinching membership of the Golden Key International Honour Society.

Kitching had UP in mind when she set her mind on tertiary education. “I knew this was the place for me. It was an emotional thing,” she says. “I never even applied anywhere else, and only went to UP’s open days.”

Another part of UP’s appeal for Kitching is its location. Having grown up in Heidelberg, about 50km south-east of Johannesburg, the big city of Pretoria was an attraction. “I love it here, more than I love the small-town mentality.”

She is proud to be the first in her family to graduate, with her younger brother soon to follow in her footsteps.

Another big attraction for her was the way UP portrays itself online, especially on Instagram. “They are interactive on social media platforms. I could see what’s happening at UP.”

Fast-forward a few years, and Kitching is now part of planning the university’s social media content, including adding to the hype around UP’s graduation ceremonies. Some of her ideas included inviting TuksFM to chat to the achievers and adding a red carpet to make the ceremony even more grandiose, all of which helps power the social media buzz.

Kitching sees herself as an enthusiastic person. “Enthusiastic marketer” is how she headlines her CV. When she says, “I always like to be involved,” she is not exaggerating. She throws herself passionately into everything

she tackles – at school she won awards for everything from public speaking to eisteddfods (competitive arts programmes) to sports like discus and shotput.

At UP, she worked on the PDBY student newspaper for four years, and (in what could possibly be a record) she was class representative for no less than seven courses during her studies.

She sees two possible scenarios for her future: She would love to be a lecturer and, with that in mind, has applied to do a PhD next year, although she’s still unsure about whether it’s the right time to further her studies. She also dreams of running her own marketing company.

“I am very open for what’s next,” she says.

All the evidence suggests the world is there for her taking!

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a Faculty of Veterinary Science, which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The [2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings](#) placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their [2024 World University Rankings \(WUR\)](#). UP was the only South African university featured in the [2023 World University Rankings for Innovation \(WURI\)](#), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

For more information, please go to www.up.ac.za