Case Study

2019 EFFIE AWARDS UNITED KINGDOM GOLD WINNER

“HATERS GONNA HATE, USE THEM AS BAIT. KFC’S NEW FRIES CAMPAIGN, 2018”

By daring to promote people’s negative tweets about KFC’s old fries, we created a media first that turned our haters into hypers.

To help smooth the introduction of KFC’s new fries we used Twitter to reposition KFC’s old ones as something that needed fixing.

This risky strategy paved the way for the new fries campaign, heralding them as the saviour to the problem, whilst giving us maximum attention along the way. This in turn bolstered brand perceptions and grew penetration for the business.
Executive Summary

The Challenge
Improve the taste scores for KFC’s new fries to help reposition the brand from ‘Fast Food’ to ‘Fast Good’.

The Insight
Loyal KFC fans could not appreciate the taste of KFC’s new fries whilst still pining after the old ones.

The Idea
To tackle loss aversion and champion the benefits of KFC’s new fries, we acknowledged the failings of the old fries.

Bringing the Idea to Life
In a media first, we promoted negative tweets about KFC’s old fries, before introducing the new fries as the saviour.

The Results
A buzzworthy campaign that improved the taste scores of KFC’s new fries, driving more people into restaurant.

Effie Awards Category Context
By daring to promote people’s negative tweets about KFC’s old fries, we created a media first that turned our haters into hypers.
To help smooth the introduction of KFC’s new fries we used Twitter to reposition KFC’s old ones as something that needed fixing. An approach that we were strongly advised against.
This risky strategy paved the way for the new fries campaign, heralding them as the saviour to the problem, whilst giving us maximum attention along the way. This in turn bolstered brand perceptions and grew penetration for the business.
State of the Marketplace & Brand’s Business

Restaurants in the UK were all moving away from the old and negative perceptions of fast food. From food that was deemed as not ‘real’ but processed and tasteless, towards a position of ‘fast good’ where quality, taste and trustworthiness for the brand were paramount[1].

A big barrier to this were KFC’s fries. Their most commonly served product was also their most complained about. A third of all complaints were about their fries and this was affecting people’s overall perception of the brand. Described as ‘soggy’ and ‘bland’, their fries were dragging the whole brand down. What’s more, these haters were pretty vocal on Twitter, the main channel they used to vent.

KFC had developed a better chip that was scoring well in research. Yet it was underperforming in test restaurants with KFC’s loyal fans, who were used to the old fries.[2]

KFC had a conundrum. Existing customers didn’t want the new product, but potential customers preferred it. It was a battle of new and old, the safe status quo against the riskier option with greater long-term potential.

Commercial realities meant KFC couldn’t rely on its existing customers to survive. It had to attract new/lighter users to help drive penetration. To do this, they had to tackle their most unpopular product, finding a way to win over the haters on all sides.

The challenge was how to do this with minimal budget.

The total media budget was only £205K for a month-long campaign, with a total SOV of just 6% for that period. For context, their main competitors, McDonalds, spend roughly 8 times that amount with a SOV of 47% (see chart 1).[3]

**CHART 1: NEILSEN SOV MEDIA DATA SHOWING A KFC SOV OF JUST 6% AT THE LAUNCH OF THE CAMPAIGN**
Audience

Our first audience was our existing customers who were currently suffering from loss aversion with the change to the new fries. We needed to persuade them that the current fries were not good enough, and that our new fries were better.

Our second audience were new or light users to the brand who simply needed to be made aware that KFC had a better chip on offer in order to encourage them into restaurant.

Getting both of these audiences on our side was crucial for boosting penetration for the business.

The secondary audience was the media generally. With such small budgets for such a mammoth task, we needed to create buzz, social conversations and PR coverage to broaden out our reach beyond the broadcast media we could afford.

Objectives & KPI’s

To increase penetration for the brand and in turn, grow sales, we too had to move from ‘fast food’ to ‘fast good’ where quality, taste and trustworthiness were paramount.

It meant we needed to create campaign that repositioned KFC’s new, tastier fries as the saviour to their soggy predecessors. With the hope of creating a halo effect to boost KFC’s brand perceptions towards ‘fast good’.

With a small budget, this campaign needed to punch above its weight via buzz.

KPIs:

1. Uplift in positive buzz as show by YouGov tracking [4]
2. YouGov ad awareness above 2017 average (22.3) at launch of the campaign
3. Prompted awareness of the new fries to reach 50% [5] (This would mean a 26% increase from the most recent test in 2017)
4. Improved taste scores for those aware of the campaign [6]
5. Uplift in Q4 Fast Good brand scores vs Q4 2017 scores: Quality food, Relevance, Generosity, Trustworthiness [7]
6. Increase in penetration from pre to post campaign versus the same period in 2017 [8]

Sourcing:

1 KFC UK Brand positioning Project - Collider, 2016
2 KFC Fries Migration Buyer Response Survey, Jan 2017 to Dec 2018
3 Neilsen Media Data 2018
4 YouGov Brand Index KFC report 2018
5-6 KFC Fries Migration Buyer Response Survey, Jan 2017 to Dec 2018
7 Decode Tracking presentation Q4 2018
8 Kantar WorldPanel KFC Tracking Q3 & Q4 2018

Insight

To boost the perception of the new fries we started on the most obvious path. Creating messaging that talked to how much better they were than the old fries.

Yet negative verbatim taken from restaurants was proving that this approach wasn’t working. Loyal fans were still angry about the swap.

Superiority alone wasn’t cutting it, so we had to think again.
We realised we had a loss aversion problem. It wasn’t that people didn’t like our new fries, it was that they didn’t like the idea of losing the old ones.

It meant that talking to the benefits of the new fries alone would not cut it. In order to tackle loss aversion, we had to acknowledge the failings of the old fries.

To pave the way for the new fries to be seen as the saviour of ‘soggy’ we had to actively tell people that our old fries were bad.

**The Big Idea**

To tackle loss aversion and help champion the benefits of KFC’s new fries, acknowledge the failings of the old ones.

**Bringing the Idea to Life**

What was the best way to acknowledge the failings of our old fries in an attention-grabbing way?

Enlist the help of our very own KFC Twitter trollers of course.

**Promoting our failings:**

In a counterintuitive and provocative move that couldn’t help but catch people’s attention, KFC promoted the negative tweets of our fries’ haters.

This was not only a media first, but a move that Twitter itself had strongly recommended against.

Our campaign began by actively promoting a few choice words from our haters on Twitter. Including the popular and credible influencer with a big following @upgrade_music who had previous slammed our old fries.

As this approach was so counterintuitive to how brands traditionally use promoted tweets on Twitter, it began to drum us a real buzz as naturally the beady eyed Twitterati began to notice and question what we were up to.

What was interesting was how many people just didn’t catch on to what we were up to and really thought we were (through stupidity, ignorance or accident) committing suicide.

**Generating intrigue:**

As people and the press began to respond, questioning our motives and what we were up to, we refused to give anything away but instead replied with funny emojis to fuel the confusion, talkability and intrigue.

By this point, even our competitors were bemused by the whole thing. Burger King responded on Twitter, which was handy seeing as they have 43K followers on Twitter.

**Amplifying the attention:**

Once interest in social had peaked, we took it into broadcast, using the same negative tweets in our posters and print to broaden the awareness for what we were up to.

Often, a creatives task is to take a broadcast idea and make it ‘suitable’ for social media. In this case, we did the reverse. We took the promoted negative tweet straight into the ‘real’ world.

**Introducing the upgraded swap:**

Once we had people’s attention it was time to introduce our new fries across Twitter, Facebook, digital banners, posters, print and menu boards. By calling out how much chunkier and crispier they were, they became the obvious antidote to a product that was the source of such hate.

Once the penny dropped, confusion turned to applause.

Even our original Twitter trollers had been turned, as they played along to the amusement of their own followers.
Paid Media Expenditures

Current Year: January 2018 – December 2018

£200,000 - £500,000

Year Prior: January 2017 – December 2017

N/A

Budget

Less than competitors.

Less than prior year’s budget.

This brief was never part of the calendar for the year and was only planned when issues surrounding the transition to the new fries came to light. As such, a campaign of this sort had never run before and the media apportioned to it was only £205K for 4 weeks. To obtain the reach required to make a tangible impact to taste scores we had to rely on the creative delivering significant earned reach. It is why the provocative approach of promoting negative tweets about our fries was created, in order to maximise the buzz surrounding the campaign at launch.

Owned Media

We used our own KFC Twitter account to reply to those who picked up the promoted negative tweets.

Sponsorship

N/A

Communication Touch Points

Branded Content

OOH

Billboard

Packaging

Print

Newspaper Print

Social Media

Trade Communications/Promo

User Generated

Consumer Generated

Viral

Word of Mouth

PR

Results

The campaign received instant attention, generating buzz around the new fries.

i. We were the most read article on the BBC at the start of the campaign.

ii. We were picked up by all the big publications such as The Sun, The Mirror, Lad Bible, Mail Online, Daily Express. Receiving 50 pieces of PR coverage with a reach of over 32M.

iii. We reached 1/3 of UK Twitter users with 7,982 mentions over the first 5 days alone (chart 2).
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The campaign met all the KPIs.

1. YouGov tracking showed an uplift in positive buzz at the time of launch when we promoted the negative tweets. This proved to be the highest spike in buzz for the brand across the whole of 2018 (chart 3).
2. Ad awareness above 2017 average at launch of the campaign

Ad awareness indexed at 23.2 vs the 2017 average of 22.3. For context, ad awareness for Oct 2018 (the month prior to the campaign) indexed at 20.8 yet had 3.5% more SOV.[9]

3. Prompted awareness of the new fries reached well above the 50% target to 62%.

This is a 38% point increase from the 2017, pre campaign test (chart 4).

4. Taste scores improved across every measure for those aware of the campaign (chart 5)
5. **We saw an uplift in Q4 Fast Good brand scores vs Q4 2017 scores:** [10]

- Relevance (+3%)
- Generosity (+4%)
- Trustworthiness (+4%)
- Quality food (+1%)

6. **We saw an increase in penetration from pre to post campaign versus the same period in 2017**

The pre-campaign period saw an increase in penetration of 387,200 buyers versus the same period in 2017.

The post-campaign period saw an increase of 1,056,300 buyers versus the same period in 2017.

So we gained over **669,100 more buyers** through the delivery of this campaign. [11]

**Other Contributing Factors**

 Disorder

KFC was just coming out of the worst business crisis it had faced in years when the chicken shortage closed the doors to restaurants all over the country. The brand was still rebuilding trust and trying to win back customers. It meant the campaign was starting from unusual circumstances where confidence in the brand was low. The campaign results achieved, especially brand equity growth, was testament to the strength of the campaign.

It is worth noting that we had a Christmas campaign which overlapped the end of this new fries campaign (week 3). However, the data we have used in this paper focuses on the period immediately before and after the fries campaign. It means that awareness of the Christmas campaign was still very low, so will not have had the chance to impact brand and penetration figures significantly.

**Sourcing**

10. Decode Tracking presentation Q4 2018
11. Kantar WorldPanel KFC Tracking Q3 & Q4 2018