

KFC History

The fast-food restaurant KFC is one of the world's most recognizable brands because it popularized fried chicken. KFC is one of the most popular chicken restaurants due to its long history, general quality of products, and widespread growth. The restaurant is the second most profitable in the world. It sits just behind its competitor McDonald's. KFC has over 19,500 restaurant locations across 130 countries (About). Though Starbucks and Subway have more locations, KFC is more profitable than either of them. This is in part due to the restaurant's creative history. The most popular creative asset of KFC is its own founder, Colonel Harland Sanders. The face of the old man who is part of just about every asset of the company. He created a specific method of cooking chicken and traveled throughout the south to find someone interested in purchasing his recipe (KFC). After meeting with over 1000 people, he found someone willing to do business with him. The first restaurant under the name "Kentucky Fried Chicken" opened in Salt Lake City, Utah in 1952. Though because his face had become an American icon, he spent the rest of his life traveling the country and meeting KFC customers (Colonel). Today, Yum Brands owns KFC. It is the same company that owns Pizza Hut and Taco Bell (An Overview, 2013). Occasionally KFC and one of these other brands split one restaurant building. The restaurant menu grew beyond the original fried chicken recipe. It now includes popular side items such as mashed potatoes, corn, and biscuits. They sell many forms of fried chicken such as strips and sandwiches.

The Colonel's Adult Coloring Competition

Unfortunately, the campaign looked at here, despite full of brand imagery failed due to poor communication and a lack of incentive for potential participants. KFC has accounts for 17 different regions. Glancing over their many Twitter accounts, it's not surprising to see the

Colonel as the profile icon for almost every handle. They also have a separate Twitter account entirely dedicated to customer support mostly filled up with responses to negative comments. The campaign being studied is what KFC dubbed “The Colonel’s Adult Coloring Competition” under the hashtag #adultcoloringcompetition (K, 2018). The competition ran for the short time from August 27th to September 7th, 2018. KFC used the platforms Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram to promote the contest. Twitter received the most focus because KFC posted more there. The announcement post included one of the templates people could color. KFC provided a link to the competition’s website that contained more templates with the title “Sharpen Yer Pencils.” KFC imagery stuffed the templates. One depicted the colonel riding a car adorned with the KFC slogan while several parade floats containing giant KFC products followed behind him. An excited crowd gathered around the parade and confetti fell. The template illustrations were busy. Anyone that entered the contest had to spend a lot of time coloring in every detail. Gathering dedicated participants was part of the campaign’s objective.

The main objective of the campaign was for KFC to motivate as many adults as possible to post the provided imagery to spread brand awareness. Something rather glaring about the competition was that it was for adults only. Coloring is oftentimes thought of as an activity for kids to take part in, but only those 18 years of age or above could enter. KFC segmented the demographic that way. Submissions were only accepted by adults who had a lot of time to color in a detailed illustration. Kids, who generally have more free time, were not allowed to submit. KFC could have targeted the adult age demographic because most of their followers were adults. They possibly didn’t want to deal with the legal hurdles required for a child to enter a competition held by a corporation. KFC segmented their target in other ways.

Adults that already enjoyed coloring during their spare time were the target of psychographic segmentation. Participants needed to know how to use social media properly to enter. Though KFC had over 17 different accounts for several countries, they only targeted consumers in the United States, so it was geographically segmented by U.S. accounts. Other accounts like those for Canada and Japan didn't have anything of the like going on at the time.

Before KFC started the campaign, they had 1.29 million followers on both Twitter and Instagram. Their Facebook following dwarfed both of those figures, as it sat at over 52 million followers. Those numbers, particularly on Facebook demonstrated that the KFC brand still has a wide reach. Many people are willing to follow a corporate brand that to most is just there to sell chicken to them. People like to form communities in a social media space, but KFC is a company that typically does not facilitate things such as fan gatherings or form a niche crowd culture. It's likely that people followed KFC because they had an in-person experience with the brand in a restaurant. Though KFC attempted to post funny memes to draw in an audience, most people that follow KFC do so to learn about new products and maybe get a limited time deal on some chicken. At best, some of the brand's followers think of KFC as part of their social identity rooted in good memories with the brand and want to continue supporting them due to strong sentimental ties (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). However, whereas KFC had several Twitter accounts made for several different countries (all of which had less followers than the U.S.A, one), they had one global account on Facebook. Though anything KFC does should bring customers in to their restaurant, they did not focus on the zone of Social Commerce.

Zones of Social Media Used

The campaign utilized three of the four zones of social media: Social Community, Social Publishing, and Social Entertainment (Tuten & Solomon, 2018). KFC attempted to utilize Zone

1: Social Community in a way that encouraged followers to share KFC imagery. It was a coloring contest, not a drawing contest so the same imagery would be shared. Perhaps the campaign would develop more organically, and people would converse over their submissions instead of focusing on winning. They utilized Zone 2: Social Publishing the same way that they did their content marketing, through posts on social media. Likewise, a major component was user-generated content. Judging by the number of people on Facebook that reacted to the announcement with the “laugh” emoji, the campaign fell under Zone 4: Social Entertainment. Though the intended reason was for talented participants to entertain with their coloring.

Internal and External Environment

KFC finished up their previous campaign before they started the coloring contest. It focused on getting customers to try out their new chicken sandwich and make video testimonials. It was one of KFC’s less wacky social media endeavors. Their internal environment pushed a kind of advertising that people may not have expected. They used goofy imagery that usually revolved around the Colonel character. That is why a silly coloring contest is not very surprising. The external environment, particularly KFC’s competitors in the fast-food business vary greatly when it comes to the tone of their social media presence. McDonalds is cut and dry whereas Wendy’s has unrelenting attitude. KFC falls in between them. With such a large following on social media, KFC could have formed a dedicated subset of their market by getting followers to share their imagery.

The Activation Post (The Only Post Made on all 3 Platforms)

KFC posted the first image they wanted people to share as part of the original message that activated the campaign. KFC used brand imagery as part of the brand experience for easy

recognition. They posted their announcement on August 27th, 2018 at 11 A.M. Eastern time simultaneously on all three platforms. According to Sprout Social, each social media platform has times for when it's the most optimal for businesses to post. Something consistent across all three platforms is that Monday overall is the worst day to post because people are less inclined to engage with content. Monday is the first day of the work week and many are too busy to even check social media. An aspect of optimizing when to post on social media platforms that does vary, however, is the time of day. The most optimal times across all platforms cater the most to eastern standard time. The best time frame to post is in-between 11 A.M. and 1 P.M (York). KFC may have posted the announcement at that time to catch people on the east coast during their lunch break. Though the competition didn't necessarily tell people to buy KFC products, building awareness and making people want to eat at KFC remained the underlying goal even if this particular campaign didn't focus on sales. The activation message is a crucial part of any campaign. The response to it varied between different platforms.

On Instagram, the announcement message received the most likes by far. The 12,900 likes the announcement received on Instagram far exceeded the 197 likes it received on Twitter despite KFC having about the same number of followers on both platforms. The Facebook announcement received the most comments though. Some people expressed enthusiasm and made bold claims that they were going to win the contest. Those were the kinds of people KFC targeted. They would be the ones that spread KFC imagery. When it came to word of mouth conversation, a study done by *Journal Marketing Research* says Word of Mouth for food and dining brands online was only 4% (as cited in Tuten and Solomon, 2018). KFC may have intended to position the campaign like one that an entertainment or media brand did as

discussion for those sorts of brands was 32% online. An image like one for the KFC coloring contest would hopefully get mixed in with other image-based social media messages.

Twitter

KFC focused their campaign messaging on Twitter more than any other platform. They took advantage of Twitter by retweeting some submissions. Twitter makes it easy for followers to see retweets, so a few people who didn't win at least got their submission given more attention. They only retweeted 5 submissions. That may not sound like much, but that is one sixth of the total number received on Twitter. Yes, only 30 people entered with the correct hashtag (with one submitted after the deadline). Despite that, KFC continued to focus their messaging only on Twitter. They put out three reminders that all generally said the same thing just with different templates that were already up on the website. They put out the three reminders on August 31st, September 4th, and 5th. A rather interesting Twitter user won the contest. She only had made her account in July, with her submission still being her only post since. KFC commented on her post right after on the same day and asked her to DM them. After that, KFC went silent about the campaign for 25 days. Besides the person that submitted late, no one outside of KFC used the campaign hashtag again. In the meantime, KFC started another campaign. Like the coloring competition, it provided an incentive. Though the winning participant had to make a bigger commitment than coloring a picture (name their baby after the Colonel on a specific day), they offered an \$11,000 prize. Their competitor Wendy's stacks multiple product-related campaigns on top of each other such as a 50-cent frosty deal combined with free food with the mobile app. KFC had two completely different incentivized campaigns going on that had nothing to do with chicken. Though the prize for the baby name campaign could have enticed some, it may have been a bit too ridiculous and the coloring contest unsurprisingly received more submissions.

KFC finally posted the winner of coloring competition on October 2nd. They showed off the winner's submission and her prize. Two people in the comments congratulated her. Just as few cared to submit entries, few cared about who won. One of those people was the nephew of the Colonel, who commented on many posts made by KFC. Perhaps things went better on other platforms?

Instagram

Besides receiving more likes, the campaign did worse. The announcement post on Instagram received 12,959 likes, but an abysmally low number of 17 people submitted. KFC immediately dropped promotion for the campaign until they announced the winner at the end.

Facebook

The announcement post on Facebook received the most comments-953, but unfortunately only 22 people submitted on the platform. Not only did KFC not continue to promote the campaign on Facebook, but they never even posted the winner like they did on the other platforms. KFC may have realized early on that the campaign would not work out.

What went Wrong

The adult coloring contest failed as a social media campaign. The only thing that worked about it was that at least someone won in end. From lack of clarity to little participation, there are many reasons why it never got much attention.

The first comment to the announcement on Twitter showed one of the biggest flaws with the campaign across all platforms. It asked, "What's the prize if you win?" (EthanBuck44). KFC soon followed up directly and said that the prize was a portrait illustrated by a talented artist with

no name given. They didn't clarify it anywhere else on social media. The sub-40 people who left other comments on the Twitter post may have seen KFC say that. Thousands of others that saw the other posts about the campaign elsewhere may have not. The campaign posts made on Facebook and Twitter contained several comments that asked for information on the prize. None of the other follow-up tweets KFC made about the campaign ever brought up the prize or really any other information. The only other way to find out about the prize was reading into the dense list of contest rules posted on their website. KFC had already asked participants to take a lot of time to color advertisements for them, let alone scavenge for why they would want to do so. Though the campaign heavily involved consumer-generated media, it did not grow organically. The campaign attempted to provide an incentive from the start and KFC did a poor job communicating why anyone would want to take part.

The few people who did discover information on the prize expressed negativity over it. Some believed submitting a piece of art for another didn't make much sense. Some suggested the prize should have been cash or free food. According to a study done by Sprout Social, 73.4% people followed brands on social media because they cared about their products. Brands that offered an incentive was the fourth highest reason at 42.2% (as cited in Tuten and Solomon, 2018). That is not necessarily a low number, but not the most effective means of further popularizing a brand's social media presence. In this campaign's case, the person that won the contest was the only one rewarded for her effort. Because that was the case and a lot people had no idea about the prize, there were not that many submissions. KFC could have given coupons or free food to those that entered. Though that may have led to a dispute over what submissions were good enough to qualify. Regardless, doing so would have tied the campaign closer to what people followed the brand for in the first place. If KFC wanted to do another campaign like this

in the future, they need to make it longer. That would give themselves more time to promote it and people more time to color. It should also be open to all ages because kids like coloring and have more time to do it. They also need to keep up the promotion across all the platforms they use instead of giving up early on.

KFC has over 55,000,000 followers across the three covered social media platforms, yet only 69 people cared enough to enter the contest. They had 1,300,000 followers on Twitter when the campaign began and little more when it ended. Though the announcement post on Instagram and Facebook got many comments and likes, even from just that subset, few people participated. Individual posts started little conversation. No post received more than seven comments and most had none. KFC is a chicken restaurant first. A better and more clear incentive should have been provided to make people think “wow, I really want to win this.” Of course, KFC didn’t lose much off holding the campaign. They got little return, but likely didn’t invest much in the campaign. At most, they had to spend some money to pay the unnamed artist. This campaign remained in character with KFC’s other social media activities, but it clearly wasn’t of any interest to most of their followers. They may have figured that out themselves as the next thing KFC posted on Twitter after announcing the contest winner were details for a \$5 box deal which was much more in line with what their consumers want.

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