

THE CHICK-FIL-A
COW CAMPAIGN

BY MADELINE MCGEE



INTRODUCTION

The first Chick-fil-A (CFA) cows were spotted in 1995 atop a billboard painting three words that would change CFA history, "Eat Mor Chickin". The creation of the Cows then became the voice of their company.



THE COW CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN SO
'UTTERLY' SUCCESSFUL THAT 20 YEARS LATER
THE COWS ARE STILL ON THE MOOOOVE.

Chick-fil-A originated in Georgia, the center of the South, otherwise known as the Bible Belt. The restaurant immediately identified with many Southerners by setting themselves apart as a Christian based company closing all their locations each Sunday. Though Chick-fil-A doesn't have an official mission, their purpose is:

"TO GLORIFY GOD BY BEING A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF ALL THAT IS ENTRUSTED TO US AND HAVE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE ON ALL WHO COME IN CONTACT WITH CHICK-FIL-A."

In the South, people love their fried chicken, which presented Chick-fil-A with a challenge. They already had a killer chicken recipe.

The challenge was differentiating themselves amongst numerous chicken competitors- KFC, Popeye's, Chicken Express, and Church's Chicken- as well as the big fish- McDonald's, Burger King, and other burger restaurants.

The solution was a creative approach in the creation of the Cow Campaign. "Chick-fil-A came to The Richards Group with big dreams and a small budget," said Stan Richards, founder and principal for the advertising agency. (Baldwin) The goals of the Cow Campaign were to...

**RAISE AWARENESS
COMPETE WITH BIG BURGER CHAINS
PRESERVE UNIQUE PHILOSOPHIES AND
CULTURE**

Chick-fil-A wanted to differentiate themselves from competition. There was no better way to achieve this than using a tactic that didn't take the obvious route of using a chicken as their mascot, but the cow.

Using the Cows as a mascot was a genius marketing move. The 'Eat Mor Chickin' slogan of the Cow Campaign has a comical nature that appeals to Chick-fil-A's target market: families and their kids.

THE COW'S CREATION



THE BLACK AND WHITE COWS
HAVE BECOME AN ICON.
IT'S REFRESHING TO SEE COWS NOT
ADVERTISE FOR MILK, BUT ADVOCATE
FOR CHICKEN CONSUMPTION.

The Cows are fun, memorable and it's not "technically" the company that's telling you to eat more chicken- it's the cows! "This campaign uniquely positioned Chick-fil-A as the premium alternative to fast food hamburgers." ("Effie")

IN THE MINDS OF MANY,
CHICK-FIL-A SIMPLY ISN'T A
FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT.

The fact that there are flowers on each table, employees always make rounds to refresh drinks, and the fact that the company places such emphasis on the importance of family makes Chick-fil-A not match up with the rest of the fast-food industry.

Though CFA's target audience is families with children, the Cow Campaign appeals to consumers of all ages, amusing them and speaking their language. Speaking of language, it's as if the Cows have a little language of their own. Their handwritten black letters always misspell their messages of self preservation. This makes the Cows seem all the more kid-friendly while appealing to their target market and characterizing the cows as one powerful word- *likeable*. You don't see companies intentionally misspell their advertisements for the world to see, and on top of that it be okay!

Likeability has been acknowledged "as a direct brand-attribute that affects sales through contribution to the reputation of the promoted product" and the strongest factor linked between persuasion, sales, and overall effectiveness. (Rimoldi)

This gives Chick-fil-A power. Their likeability creates positive brand association that promotes consumer loyalty. It also serves as a unique selling point that other companies don't possess. (Rimoldi)

The visual elements of black and white cows doing bizarre things to catch customers attention, differentiate the company from competitors, and make them memorable. "We set out to establish a brand campaign that would increase awareness ultimately drive increased sales. We exceeded those goals, but, more important, our client now has a brand icon that will outlast the Eveready Energizer Bunny." (Effie.)

Steve Robinson, Chick-fil-A's senior vice president of marketing, says that the cows have remained popular over the years because,

"They are endearing personalities, staunch supporters of chicken, and our customers not only find them humorous, but they enjoy watching to see what they might say or do. You never know where the Cows might show up next." (Chick-fil-A)

Using black and white as the campaign colors was unusual because the CFA cows are actually dairy cows and not beef cattle. But this was no mistake.

NOT YOUR BORING BILLBOARD



THE COW CAMPAIGN WAS AN INSTANT SUCCESS THAT BROKE THROUGH THE NORM OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING.

Chick-fil-A could have been just another company among 500,000+ billboards lined along the U.S. highway. However, the restaurant chain embraced classic American outdoor advertising with a bang! The grassroots of the Cow Campaign made a lasting impression in the billboard industry because they weren't your typical, boring billboards.

Studies conducted by Donthu, Cherian, Caron, and Bhargava in 1993 and 1994 discovered consumer recall to be heightened through...

- brand differentiation
- use of a photograph
- use of humor
- use of color
- good location

They also discovered that consumers are more likely to recall advertisements that, "use fewer words or unusual executions." (Taylor and Franke) If Chick-fil-A's billboards achieve anything, they definitely are unusual and Chick-fil-A couldn't be more to-the-point than using three words, 'Eat Mor Chickin.'

By minimizing their wording the Cow Campaign hurdled a known advertising drawback: selective perception and clutter.

Consumer's subconscious information processing makes them 'immune' to many advertisements because of information overload. Chick-fil-A was spot-on in their approach of using an ideal combination of advertising elements along with humorous and catchy phrases on billboards like...



**"VOTE CHIKIN.
ITZ NOT RIGHT WING OR LEFT".**

This approach along with the 3-dimensional life-sized cows was what led to the Cow Campaign's success and consumer differentiation from other companies.

CFA CULTURE

COW APPRECIATION DAY

It doesn't get more unique than Cow Appreciation Day where all of CFA's raving fans dress up like cows to get a free chicken sandwich. It's to the point that they'll dress up in "full cow attire" every year.



Not only do the cow fans get free food, they also have an excuse to dress up and have fun with their families. This element has been a big part of their recipe for success, giving CFA a way to connect with families across the nation.

IT'S AS IF CHICK-FIL-A CREATED THEIR OWN HOLIDAY FOR FAMILIES TO ENJOY A FREE CHICKEN SANDWICH.

So how does Chick-fil-A have a fanbase that will join the Cows calling to dress up like them and 'Eat Mor Chickin'? It's more than just The Cows, what has brought the company to the top of the food chain, so to speak, is their stand-out branding and ethos. Branding is more than the black and white cows and cute billboards. Fannin says that, "If your brand has a true ethos, people become members of your 'tribe' not because of your product, but because they believe in your value system and ethos" (Fannin).



The raving fans of Chick-fil-A identify with much more than The Cows. The company's biblical principles and family values identifies them with their target market. The fact that CFA includes God in their purpose statement says a lot about the culture of the brand.

WHEN CFA CUSTOMERS EAT THEIR CHICKEN, THEY'RE ALSO SUPPORTING A COMPANY THAT STANDS FOR THEIR RELIGION AND EVEN POLITICAL AND MORAL VALUES.

Chick-fil-A's bold move to speak out on heated topics like traditional marriage in 2012 looked like brand suicide but had the opposite effect as they received record breaking sales, support, and publicity. The company's transparency was refreshing to see and increased their brand equity in their target market: Southern families and right-wing chicken lovers. "In a time when companies are trying to win in the market by neutralizing any possibility of offense, CFA is thriving because they unwaveringly cling to their principles and purpose." (Peterson)

Havas research shows that "People expect large companies to be involved in social problems and their quality of life." Many businesses don't deliver taking responsibility for these consumer expectations that come with company power.

INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

When analyzing this strategy of engaging their consumers in a yearly activity like Cow Appreciation Day, it's apparent that CFA focuses on retaining customers and building consumer loyalty.

This is a wise approach since it costs five to ten times more money to create new customers as opposed to retaining current customers (Kingwill).

What better way to build credibility and loyalty than by investing in your customers by showing genuine care about the community? Many companies have two for one promotion short-cuts aimed at loyalty.

This simply isn't the Chick-fil-A way. The company even has a tab on its website dedicated to 'Kids & Family', in the center of their main menu.



Chick-fil-A implements the value of family into its company by being extremely active within the community of each location. But CFA goes further than this. The company says that since, "Franchised Restaurant Operators own and operate their own individual franchised businesses, local community programs and in-store events are unique to each location."

Rather than setting a standard practice for events throughout all of their locations CFA adapts to the needs individual communities to the extent of "each restaurant having a unit marketing director that engages with the community, including organizing community events and the unit's social media accounts." (Jake Knight, employee of 5 years)

Chick-fil-A catering to each location's different needs and dynamics differentiates them from all other businesses.

**CHICK-FIL-A PRESERVED THEIR
UNIQUE PHILOSOPHIES AND CULTURE
IN BUILDING THE COW CAMPAIGN.**

DATE NIGHTS

CHICK-FIL-A BACKS UP THEIR UNIQUE VALUES BY MAKING EFFORTS TO BRING THE FAMILY TOGETHER.

Another family-friendly approach are Chick-fil-A “Daddy-Daughter Date Nights” and “Mother-Son Date Knights” at restaurant locations across the nation.

This is how a so-called “fast-food restaurant” created their impeccable reputation by hosting events revolving around bringing the family together. Chick-fil-A invites moms and sons, and dads and daughters to make a reservation at a local CFA to be treated like kings and queens.

On Daddy-Daughter date night, a cow-princess will greet you at the door. Daddys dance with their daughters and princesses wait on your table and serve food on a gold paper plate. Little girls get their picture taken with the cow-princess and are escorted to their car by, get this, a horse and carriage! About as close to being Cinderella as a girl can get.



The boys have a night, or should I say knight, of their own. Mother-Son Date Knights are a medieval themed night to remember! A cow dressed in shining armour greets you, later to dub you into knighthood and then lets you make your own shield with a family crest on it. Little boys leave with a goody-bag in hand and a knight's helmet upon their head.



Their philosophy says a lot about their pride in having distinct values and identity:

“From partnering with neighborhood schools to special kids and family night events in the Restaurants, we are committed to encouraging families to come together while enjoying great food.”

(Events For Kids & Families Chick-fil-A Community)



ALL AT A FAST-FOOD RESTAURANT?

Yes, but Chick-fil-A doesn't consider themselves fast food, they call themselves a 'quick service' restaurant. They prove themselves to be a company that truly values not just customer experiences but also family memories, differentiating themselves from the rest of the market. Studies have shown,

“ AROUND 68% OF CUSTOMERS LEAVE BECAUSE OF THE PERCEPTION OF INDIFFERENCE. ”

Customers leave simply because they believe the company doesn't care about them. "Studies indicate that with repeat business is their belief that the organization cares about them." (Brandi) Chick-fil-A strives to, "promote community connections and enrich the lives of everyone they come in contact with." (Phelps)

By doing this, Chick-fil-A makes what could be another fast-food experience something memorable that takes place in their restaurant, like where dad and his daughter Jill went on their first daddy-daughter-date. Walter Dill Scott in addition to his four principles of memory refers to memory as "difficult to define" and something that, "fades rapidly." (Buchanan)

Chick-fil-A's company approach counters this with the knowledge that what people do with their families impact their lives and creates memories.

Chick-fil-A wants kids to grow up eating Chick-fil-A with their family and friends after their soccer and football games. They want families to dress up for Cow Appreciation Day and be part of the CFA family.

Chick-fil-A then expects customers to associate their company with fun, family memories. Starting these Chick-fil-A fans young is something that helps develop a deeper brand association, what Foxall refers to as a, "long term memory that acts as a repository for the evaluation that the individual has attached to the attitude object."

In February of this year, Chick-fil-A emphasized the value of family time by creating something called the Chicken Coop Challenge.

The idea is presenting families with a challenge over dinner. After everyone orders and sits down at the table, all electronics are turned off and placed in the Chicken Coop, which is a box in the middle of the table, until the end of the meal. If everyone at your table succeeds the challenge, free ice cream is served!

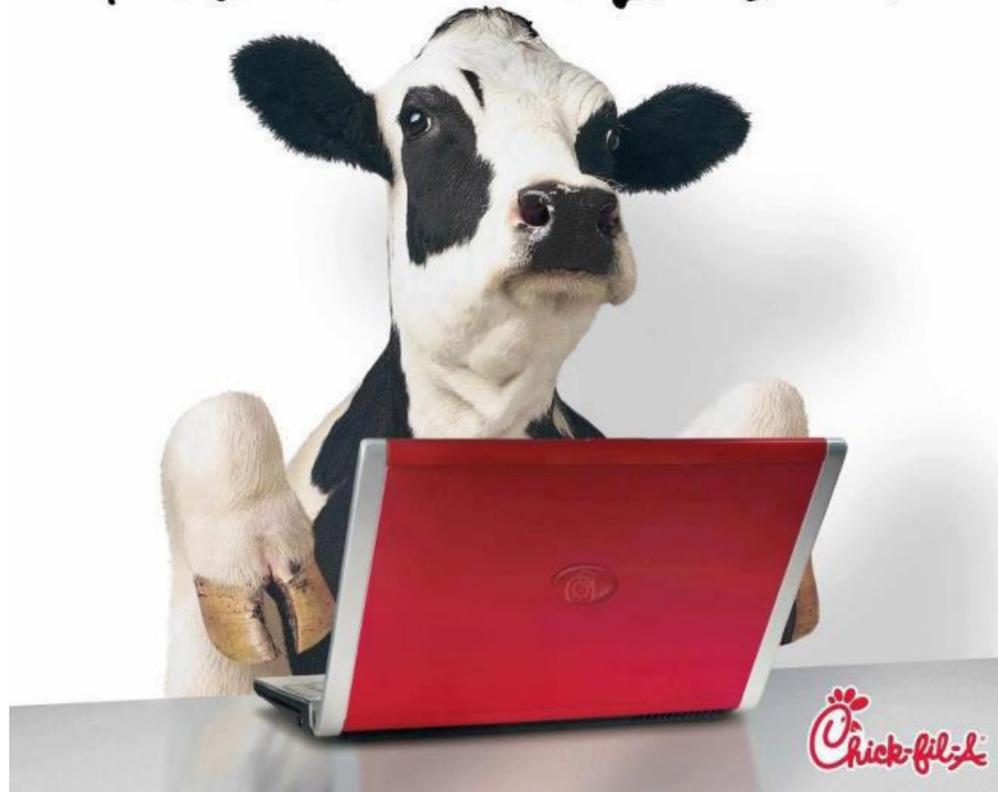


What makes this small but strategic act effective is through providing an incentive of food Chick-fil-A creates an impression upon their target market that's associated with their company values.

AN OPTIONAL CHALLENGE OVER DINNER SHOWS CFA CARES ABOUT FAMILIES HAVING VALUED TIME TOGETHER WHILE GATHERING FOR A MEAL IN THEIR RESTAURANT.

THE COWS GO SOCIAL

EAT CHIKIN OR
I'LL DE-FREND U



Though Chick-fil-A places emphasis on advertising and hosting nights to remember for the family, they don't neglect being social! Chick-fil-A's social media strategy has ranked them above the giants as the,

**“TOP FAVORITE AMERICAN BRAND
ON ALL MAJOR SOCIAL PLATFORMS:
FACEBOOK, TWITTER AND INSTAGRAM
FOR 2015.”**
(PRNEWswire.com)

Chick-fil-A has been David versus Goliath, a Southern chain with a fifth as many locations as other companies that's beating global brands like Netflix, Amazon, KFC, and Coca-Cola.

Chick-fil-A sports a crowd of 8 million people across their social media channels and has the, “strongest and fastest growing channels, seeing a 150% increase on likes and comments per post on Instagram” alone since last year and responding to more than 35,000 mentions per month. The Cows even have their own Facebook page boasting over 735,000 likes.

Chick-fil-A's has expanded their focus from customer satisfaction, embracing new projects by creating “newly-created roles” jobs” (Stein) within their company and bringing in fresh eyes like Ashley Callahan. Formerly the global manager of digital communications and social media at Coca-Cola, the new content strategy manager gave The Cows the spotlight this summer by showing their biggest fans a day in the life of a cow.

Never before had CFA fans been able to see the behind the scenes of the Cow Campaign that had made them laugh for 21 years. The “Meet The Cows Behind the Eat Mor Chickin Campaign” was a hit.

**THE COWS AMERICA FELL IN LOVE
WITH GOT TO “PERSONALLY”
INTRODUCE THEMSELVES TO A
CHICKEN-CRAVING NATION.**

THE COWS SEE SUSTAINED SUCCESS

The 1,950-unit chain has received two Effies, one of the most prestigious advertising awards, from the New York Marketing Association for the Cow Campaign in the category of “Sustained Success” for creativity and effectiveness. (“Effie”)

In 1996 the campaign received the OBIE award for outdoor advertising as well as being “inducted into The Outdoor Advertising Association of America’s OBIE Hall of Fame for “outstanding outdoor creative work over an extended period of time.”

In 1997, the “Eat Mor Chikin” campaign received a Silver Lion at the Cannes Advertising Festival.

THE COWS WERE VOTED AS
AMERICA’S MOST POPULAR
ADVERTISING ICONS IN 2007.



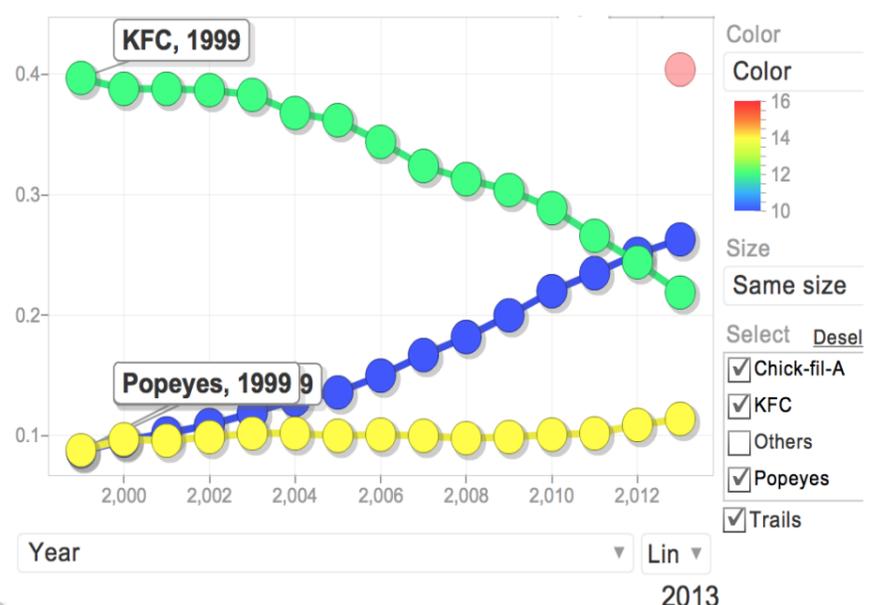
CHICK-FIL-A BOASTS SUPERIOR
CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CONSUMER
SATISFACTION, SURPASSING “ALL OTHER
LIMITED SERVICE CHAINS IN THE
2015 AMERICAN CUSTOMER
SATISFACTION INDEX.” (BERTA)

This included their feature on a permanent banner along Madison Avenue Advertising Walk of Fame in New York City sponsored by Advertising Week.

Chick-fil-A’s same-store sales “more than tripled the pre-campaign trend, sales percentage increased outpacing the competition twofold and threefold and a total sales increase of almost 600% since launch.” (“Effie”) “Annual sales in 2015 exceeded \$6 billion for Chick-fil-A, with average-unit volumes of \$3 million. All of this accomplished in only 6 days a week.” (Facts And History Company Highlights)

CFA has surpassed all of their chicken competitors and have moved onto competing with the giants with sales exceeding Pizza Hut, KFC, and Dominos despite having less than a third as many locations.

Chick-fil-A’s consistent climb to the top can be accredited to their Original Chicken Sandwich, renown customer service, and the voice of the company, the Cow Campaign.



(see chart on right from TIME, Magazine CFA is blue)



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