

Jay Chiat Awards Written Submission

Title: Arby's Flaunts New Brown Sugar Bacon with Launch of Vegetarian Support Program

Introduction (200 word limit): Specifically explains the impact that strategy had on the resulting campaign or outcome.

We introduced Arby's newest meaty menu addition by targeting the Brand's anti-audience - vegetarians, fully knowing the risk of potential outrage, but also knowing Arby's core meat-loving demographic and the media would eat it up.

The Arby's Vegetarian Support program excited and engaged consumers and grabbed the attention of media outlets across the country, turning possible outrage into something outrageously funny.

Good ideas become great ideas when they impact the business with measurable results benefiting the brand. Arby's Vegetarian Support program delivered quantifiable consumer engagement and increased sales, leveraging a cultural tension no other brand dared touch.

Our results "sizzled," propelling Brown Sugar Bacon to being the brand's most successful new product launch of 2015.

Case Summary (1,500 word limit):

- A clear understanding of the background and the business challenge
- A great story of how brilliant strategic thinking changed the course of the communications development
- Clear evidence that the creative idea that resulted from this thinking was both original and impactful.

Situation Analysis

If you're a thriving QSR restaurant on the brink of industry dominance, would you introduce one of your most anticipated new menu items of the year by targeting the one group least likely to try it? Most wouldn't dare...but most aren't Arby's.

In 2015, Arby's was introducing its newest addition to the menu, Brown Sugar Bacon. Unfortunately, the bacon trend was nothing new and many competitors had already jumped on the bandwagon. To break through the clutter, engage with consumers and possibly even "out bacon" the bacon trend, the brand needed a bold marketing idea.

That's exactly what we did, developing a program targeting Arby's anti-audience, vegetarians, with the **Arby's Vegetarian Support** program.

With our target audience of meat lovers in mind, we set out to drive sales of the brand's new Brown Sugar Bacon and foster long-term brand affinity. A pivotal moment for the brand, as Arby's was transitioning from industry competitor to industry leader. This program would help solidify that transformation.

To be successful, our program needed to meet the following objectives:

- **Increase Sales:** Driving sales of Arby's Brown Sugar Bacon was especially important during Q3 2015 as we needed to continue the brand's streak of 12 consecutive quarters of industry sales outperformance.
- **Spur Consumer Engagement:** While we didn't have specific channel objectives (e.g., X number of YouTube views), we did have a general goal of generating increased social conversation and engagement around our key program components and brand. More conversation lends itself to increased trial.
- **Generate Media Coverage:** This program was led by an earned media strategy with no paid social support. We sought coverage that would praise Arby's bold approach to marketing, help influence consumers and drive the long-term brand affinity Arby's coveted.

Research & Insights

Our research produced two insights:

- 1) **Bacon is irresistible/borderline addictive.** According to a 2010 study from Scripps Research Institute, bacon could be addictive. Arby's own 2015 product testing of the Brown Sugar Bacon echoed this sentiment.
- 2) **Consumers would be energized.** Arby's internal research showed that their core consumer group loves when brands approach marketing with a bold, humorous tone. And although it's risky to speak directly to the one audience who opposes everything you stand for, we knew we had the numbers on our side, only 3.2% of U.S. adults follow a vegetarian-based diet, meaning, the other 96.8% of consumers are meat-eaters – the very people who we knew would find this program compelling.

Strategy

We had to walk a very fine line between being offensive and good natured. There was no malice or ill-intention behind our program, so ensuring it was perceived as being “in good fun” was imperative.

While we were certainly engaging vegetarians with our tongues firmly planted in our cheeks, we were not making fun of them. Our bacon was phenomenal. Our research showed bacon to be addictive and quite possibly irresistible, even to a vegetarian. It was up to Arby's to sarcastically “prevent” that from happening.

Perhaps more importantly, we knew that our core audience, meat lovers, the ones we were actually targeting with this program, would love the idea and would be energized by Arby's humor and bravado.

We believed earned media would strategically be the most effective approach for driving consumer engagement, especially calls to the hotline. Earned media also allowed us to somewhat control the message (to prevent any misconceptions about our program,

especially with vegetarians), but provided much needed third-party validation (media) to prove this was something the brand was actually doing.

Execution & Tactics

To introduce Arby's new Brown Sugar Bacon and energize our meat-loving consumers, we aimed a humorous, sensationalized message at vegetarians with a fully integrated campaign with components resembling an actual "support program" and a targeted earned media approach.

Key components:

- **Vegetarian Support Hotline (1-855-MEAT-HLP)** offering pre-recorded messages of support for vegetarians who were tempted by or had already caved to the lure of Arby's new Brown Sugar Bacon. Callers who had tried the bacon could leave messages to confess their guilt.
- **Open Letter** penned from Arby's to vegetarians across America explaining how Arby's would help vegetarians avoid this new product. This letter became our press release announcing the campaign.
- **Sizzling PSA Video (YouTube Video)** promoting the hotline.
- **Vegetarian Support Webpage**, Arbys.com/vegetariansupport, housed the above resources for vegetarians in dire need of help.
- **Crisis Plan** to help "protect" the brand should from any negative stories or boisterous vegetarians.

On Tuesday, July, 7, with creative assets in hand, we secured an exclusive campaign launch news story with Time.com — the ["Arby's Launches Bacon Hotline for 'Tempted' Vegetarians" article](#) posted in their "Newsfeed" section featuring the hotline number – 1-855-MEAT-HLP, an embedded link to our PSA-like YouTube video (to drive traffic to Arby's YouTube channel) and a link to our microsite, Arbys.com/vegetariansupport.

After researching various media outlets for the exclusive, we approached Time.com reporter Olivia Waxman because of the opportunity to place a story with a highly visible, social and shareable media outlet, and with a writer not afraid to write bold stories and take risks. This approach ensured reverberation among other highly visible media outlets creating a domino effect of third-party media syndication.

From past experiences placing media stories on behalf of Arby's, we knew that if we secured a story focusing on our Vegetarian Support program with a top-tier outlet, the resulting media firestorm would be extraordinary – the mass awareness that would follow would most certainly deliver the consumer engagement the program was hoping to achieve. This was especially important because there would be no paid media (advertising or social media) support due to the limited budget available.

Effectiveness and Results

With long-term brand affinity in mind, our results achieved the objectives for the Vegetarian Support program across sales, consumer engagement and media coverage.

Sales:

- Increased sales comps 13.4% over the same 2014 time period - the highest sales increase for 2015 limited-time offers
- 9.6% system same-stores sales growth in Q3 2015 – highest quarterly sales growth percentage in 2015 – representing the brand’s 20th consecutive quarter of same-store sales growth
- Arby’s outperformed the QSR industry sales by an estimated 7.4% in Q3 2015

Consumer Engagement:

- 16,410 total hotline calls ; 16,351 confession voicemails
 - 99.64% of callers left a voicemail
- 341,333 PSA video views
- 23,315 unique webpage page views
- “Open Letter” broke PR Newswire records for views

Generate Media Coverage

- 24 million earned media impressions generated by 78 media placements, including coverage from Good Morning America, FOX & Friends, Huffington Post, Yahoo! News, NBC News, CBS News, Mashable and more.

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