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PR in Practice

Research:

McDonald's has faced increased criticism over its environmental practices such as packaging waste, carbon footprint, and reliance on single-use materials. Even though McDonald's has introduced things such as paper straws and reducing plastic, many argue these efforts are not enough to improve the company's global scale. Many people, especially environmental advocacy groups, are demanding and expecting more environmental impact and transparency from large corporations, such as McDonald's. There is a question as to whether McDonald's is greenwashing, which is promoting environmentally friendly initiatives without making significant changes in their operations. In this case, McDonald's could put an emphasis on eco-friendly packaging, but ignore other environmental costs such as beef production and waste generation. Despite some of these efforts McDonald's has implemented, several issues such as beef production, packaging and waste, and franchise operations have led to doubt on the overall environmental impact on the company.

This is a Public Relations Issue because it affects brand perception, loyalty, and brand relevance. McDonald's is not only a fast food chain, but a well known company that is spread globally across the world. McDonald's is a very highly known brand, which comes with a high amount of responsibility. PR professionals must assist McDonald's in repositioning the company as a company that takes economic responsibility seriously in order to satisfy the expectations of the public and maintain trust of customers. If McDonald's fails to do this, they could potentially lose several customers and lose large amounts of profit.

Audience:

The primary audience for this innovation is GenZ and Millennial consumers. This age group is very conscious of the environment and environmental issues and appreciates brands that take action and stand against issues. This age group has grown very aware of the environment over the past several years, and knows that if action is not taken consequences could be severe. This age group is old enough to be aware of environmental issues, but is also young enough to know that environmental issues could directly affect them and their families in the future if serious changes and implementations are not put in place. Not only is this age group passionate about these issues, but they also spend high amounts of time on electronic devices, which includes social media. Through social media, ideas and information can spread rapidly. The more and more people will be able to hear and learn about this innovation, the more action the company will be able to take. This being said, the more action and changes implemented, the

more the McDonald's brand will be recognized in a positive light, drawing positive attention from many to McDonald's.

Goal:

The innovation in PR that is being proposed is a campaign that will address both packaging waste and beef production. This campaign will include a sustainability initiative where each McDonald's tray that is served will be made of biodegradable paper. Additionally, customers will be able to scan a QR code on a burger wrapper or receipt to "plant" a digital tree. Customers will be able to track where McDonald's is planting real trees based on regional sales data. This will allow McDonald's to partner with local conservation organizations. Also, the campaign will introduce a tool that allows customers to scan the QR code to trace where the origin of the beef is from. This will establish transparency between the brand and its consumer and shows McDonald's investment in selling more sustainable meat. This campaign will establish McDonald's as a global brand that is in support of clear environmental impact. This will show growth in the company and major improvement from alleged greenwashing actions to community-rooted engagement.

Objectives:

1. Reach 1 million QR code scans in 100 days, bringing attention towards the tree planting and source of beef tracker.
2. Partner with at least 50 environmental nonprofits and 10 regenerative beef suppliers around the world by the end of 2025, allowing for transparency and eco-friendly decisions.
3. Reduce greenwashing perceptions and allegations through customer surveys by 30% by the end of the campaign.

PESO Analysis:

Paid Media: Post ads on Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube targeting eco-conscious audiences through known influencers.

Earned Media: Pitch stories to national and global outlets focusing on environmental innovation and partner with eco-organizations.

Shared Media: Post interactive Instagram stories and TikTok challenges that consumers can interact with and share with one another along with hashtags.

Owned Media: A dedication to the campaign on McDonald's website, digital tray liner QR codes, and in-app integration showing regional tree planting progress and beef supply tracker.

Conclusion:

McDonald's has faced serious backlash for its lack of urgency in terms of the environment. McDonald's has claimed to make implementations and changes to become a more eco-friendly company, but have been accused of greenwashing. Many believe McDonald's is

doing the bare minimum to help the environment, while still contributing to large amounts of non-environmentally friendly actions. This innovation campaign of “planting” a tree and learning the source of beef production through QR codes, through the PESO Model, offers McDonald’s an opportunity to contribute in eco-friendly progress, while also making a positive appearance in the public eye.

Works Cited

EcoWatch. "McDonald's Rebuked for Greenwashing Climate Pledge." EcoWatch, 13 Oct. 2021, www.ecowatch.com/mcdonalds-greenwashing-2655223811.html.

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