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Ditching Col. Sanders at KFC eleven isn't damaging, expert says



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KFC Corp.'s distancing from the brand's iconic founder Col. Harland Sanders shouldn't be seen as a huge issue, according to a brand expert.

[Denise Lee Yohn](#), who is a San Diego-based independent brand consultant, told me that because KFC has only used the Colonel as an icon or graphic in recent years and not as a spokesperson, there shouldn't be a lot of impact on the brand.

Louisville-based KFC plans to open its new fast-casual concept, KFC eleven, next month at the intersection of Bardstown Road and Baxter Avenue.

The [Associated Press quoted a company official](#) as saying the likeness of the late Sanders won't be part of the new restaurant's branding.

"It's different from when Men's Wearhouse dropped [George Zimmer](#) as its spokesman or Wendy's dropping [Dave Thomas](#)," Yohn said.

Yohn, who has worked with brands such as Burger King and Jack in the Box, said KFC's eleven's development as a fast-casual restaurant is a "really interesting development."

"Certainly, fast casual has been growing more, but there's really no national chicken fast-casual concept," she said. "There's burgers, pizzas, burritos, but no one has really figured out fast casual chicken."

Overall, Yohn said KFC — a division of Louisville-based restaurant giant Yum! Brands Inc. (NYSE: YUM) — must be careful about its branding with KFC eleven.

"I think KFC can be used as an endorsement, they have a lot of awareness with the brand. It brings a foundation to the concept," she said. "But KFC eleven — I'm not sure if that goes far

enough away from the KFC brand to signal this is something really different.”

For the new KFC eleven to work, Yohn said the new concept must provide an entire experience for the customer.

“It’s not just about the food,” she said, adding that restaurants such as Chipotle Mexican Grill (NYSE: CMG) and **Panera Bread Co.** have done a good job of providing an experience to diners.

Also, KFC eleven must have the right food. The company has said the restaurant plans to serve flatbreads and salads.

“Those sound great,” Yohn said. “But what are you doing that isn’t already out there.”

Andrew Robinson covers these beats: Restaurants, retail, government, human resources, technology, automotive (dealers, services), media/marketing/printing, young professionals, West End, East End and Oldham County.