

Suggestive Kraft Mac & Cheese campaign vanishes after backlash

Ad Age adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/suggestive-kraft-mac-cheese-campaign-vanishes-after-backlash/2287706

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Kraft Mac & Cheese’s attempt at being a bit frisky by suggesting its fans “send noods” vanished soon after some parents expressed their displeasure over the play on words.

The campaign was a quick, racy gamble for the brand. Which was entirely the point.

The Kraft Heinz brand hired Mischief @ [No Fixed Address](#) to find a fresh way to promote its mainstay mac & cheese around National Noodle Day, which was Oct. 6. The effort encouraged people to reach out to friends and family by sending “noods”—boxes of Kraft Mac & Cheese.

Kraft was clearly aware of the homonym it used. In an online video for the campaign—now deleted from the brand’s social channels and YouTube page—former “Saturday Night Live” star Vanessa Bayer speaks about sending “noods” not “nudes.”

As of Oct. 12, that video and all other “Send Noods” ads appear to have vanished from social media.

When a campaign is done with an angle that is “intended to go viral,” you can’t pretend like it didn’t happen, says Denise Lee Yohn, a brand leadership consultant and the author of “What Great Brands Do.”

Brands that are trying to be “progressive and contemporary,” she says, use social media in an effort “to prop up their cool factor. You have to maintain true to your strategy and true to your target and really ask yourself ‘is this the right thing to do?’”

The timing of the campaign, tying it to National Noodle Day, comes as Kraft has been doing well. Easy-to-prepare foods such as mac & cheese have been hits during the pandemic as people spend more time at home and crave comfort foods and quick meals for themselves and their families.

The effort also included digital ads on social networks and dating sites, along with out-of-home work in Chicago.

Kraft doesn’t seem to have issued a public apology. But it has tried to move past the campaign. After the backlash grew, the brand retreated. On Facebook, it posted a standard Kraft Mac & Cheese “smile” image on Monday. Brand followers quickly responded with reminders of #SendNoods.

According to the numbers issued by the brand, at least, the campaign appeared to be a success. On Oct. 6, Kraft announced it planned to send boxes or coupons to the first 7,000 people who responded to @kraftmacncheese on Twitter using the hashtags #SendNoods and #Giveaway or who signed up at the site www.enjoynoods.com (which is no longer up and running).

“For National Noodle Day last Tuesday, Kraft Mac and Cheese encouraged adults to send free noodles to loved ones to provide comfort and make them smile,” Kraft Heinz spokeswoman Lynne Galia said in a statement. “The social promotion resulted in over 20,000 consumers across the country receiving boxes of America’s favorite Kraft Mac and Cheese. We’re always listening to our consumers and appreciate the feedback.”

That feedback, which it didn’t explain, came in the form of hashtags such as #BoycottKraft and #CancelKraft. A Change.org petition signed by nearly 500 people as of Tuesday afternoon suggested the campaign “is intended to be humorous, but totally misses the mark with their target audience,” and asks the brand to “listen to the voices expressing their concerns on your social accounts.”

As BuzzFeed reported, not only did people post on social media that the brand “sexualized mac ‘n’ cheese” and acted “predatory” toward kids, some commenters even included #SaveTheChildren in their complaints, “which was once a real initiative for anti-child trafficking that has since been hijacked by QAnon groups.”