



CONTAGIOUS **CASE STUDY**

Burger King /

This article appeared in Contagious issue Eighteen.

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case study / burger king /

RENAISSANCE MAN



CASE STUDY / BURGER KING /

RENAISSANCE MAN / YOU DON'T HAVE

TO BE A BABY BOOMER TO REMEMBER

A TIME WHEN MCDONALD'S NOT ONLY

DOMINATED THE FAST FOOD MARKET

IN REVENUE, BUT ALSO IN MARKETING.

RARE FOR A CHALLENGER BRAND,

BURGER KING STRUGGLED WITH THE

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INCLUDING CRISPIN PORTER +

BOGUSKY, THE PERENNIAL SECOND

PLACE FINISHER IS FINALLY HAVING

THINGS ITS OWN WAY / [BY JESS GREENWOOD /](#)

‘We bore all the hallmark signs of a troubled company,’ reflects Burger King’s chief marketing officer Russ Klein as he reluctantly recalls 2003. Back then, the Burger King Corporation was struggling following seven straight years of sales decline, having been sold off by parent company Diageo the previous year to a triumvirate of private equity firms. Footfall had dropped by 22%, yet the fast food industry as a whole was enjoying healthy growth. ‘The Burger King brand which, in the 1970s had stood for choice, personalisation and individual preference, had been utterly devalued. ‘We worked with our agencies to find out how we were perceived, and concluded that we were a brand that people knew rather than loved,’ Klein continues. ‘That was a sticky set of words for us.’

By the end of 2008, Burger King posted record worldwide revenues of \$2.46 billion – a rise of 10% from the previous year, and its 18th consecutive quarter of positive sales growth. In-store traffic was at its best for a decade. Earnings per share stood at \$1.38, up 24% from 2007 – another record year for the company. At a time when many global companies are shrinking, Burger King is promising up to 400 new restaurants in 2009, especially in growth markets like China and Brazil.

And Burger King’s brand value is soaring. Having successfully experimented with gaming, user-generated content and social networking, Burger King is now feted as a poster child for successful new marketing techniques. *AdWeek* crowned Burger King its 2008 advertiser of the year, while *AdAge* gave its agency of the year award to Crispin Porter + Bogusky, highlighting the agency’s work for Burger King in securing the accolade.

So what brought about this epic change? New menu? Revised retail strategy? Clever marketing? All of these things have featured in BK’s renaissance, but Brian Gies, Burger King’s VP, Marketing Impact thinks it began further back than that. ‘It stemmed from finding our brand proposition, and that coherent voice,’ he explains. ‘We spent years trying to be all things to all people. But for the past half a decade we’ve focused on the Superfan.’

The Superfan Club

Burger King’s Superfan is probably an 18-35 year old male who’s addicted to the net and loves his games console. He loves irreverent humour and doesn’t take himself too seriously. He’s open to new forms of promotion, and prefers his marketing risqué, but honest. He enjoys being challenged, and doesn’t wish to be spoon-fed. Oh, and he also likes big, indulgent burgers.

Burger King finally located its Superfan following some



anthropological research. ‘The science of how we got there is sound,’ says Klein. ‘There’s a more potent set of imagery around our brand identity than other names in our space. Our name is powerful. We cook over fire. There’s a certain masculinity, an adolescence to our brand and our product.’

It takes a brave brand to admit its affinity with adolescent masculinity. ‘The Superfan can be a bit of a misnomer even for people inside our own group of stakeholders,’ clarifies Klein. ‘But the Superfan is by far the most important source of business for us, and we can’t afford to be complacent. Our guy visits Burger King five times a month, but eats out 43 times a month. They’ll go to another fast food restaurant 11 times a month. We’re well aware that the Burger King brand is not the only restaurant this person chooses to visit. Think about the Pepsi generation. The premise was that if you were a Pepsi person, you’d never drink anything else. In reality that was never true. As a challenger, we can afford to take occasional swipes at competitors – but we’re always careful not to go to an inappropriate place as we recognise that our customer finds something of value in those brands.’

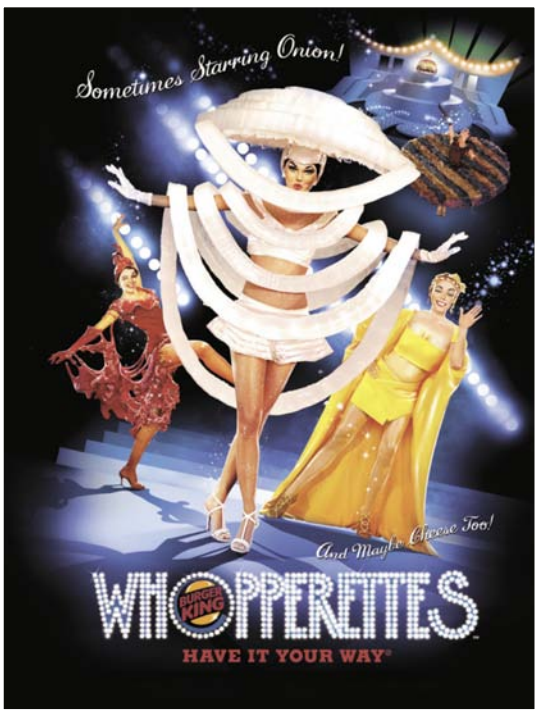
He continues: ‘What we’re really working with and against is need states. What are you in the mood for today? If it’s fast food, why not Burger King? That’s where our growth comes from. If we can go to the same prolific eater-out and wring out an extra visit a month, it may sound small, but the math around that is gigantic.’

Having established this ideological connection with its key customer, Burger King set about establishing an outward-facing brand proposition characterised by the words ‘provocative, not pleasant’. Almost all marketing is devised with this strategy in mind. Small wonder, perhaps, that BK has found such a comfortable creative match in Crispin Porter + Bogusky, whose principal and executive creative director Alex Bogusky is renowned for telling his creatives, ‘Don’t write me a campaign. Write me a press release.’

Rob Reilly is co-executive creative director at CP+B, and has acted as creative lead on the Burger King account since 2003. ‘Six years ago we introduced our brand voice identifying Burger King as the cool uncle – the guy who tells you how it really is. The filter by which we judge ideas is the question: “would the cool uncle say that?”’ When Crispin initially began working with Burger King, things were different. ‘Nobody loved



SUBSERVIENT CHICKEN /



WHOPPERETTES /



BROOKE BURKE / PAPARAZZI SHOTS /



ANGRY WHOPPER /



CAVALCADE OF CARTOON COMEDY / SETH MACFARLANE /

the brand, so we had no idea what would stick,' Reilly recalls. Crispin's response was to experiment by coming up with three completely different campaigns, all designed to resurrect the company's 'Have It Your Way' positioning, established in the seventies as a response to McDonald's perceived rigidity. 'Have It Your Way' is anchored in empowerment,' comments Gies. 'It means quality, authenticity, variety, choice and control.'

The first three campaigns were the by now infamous Subservient Chicken, in which a man in a chicken costume responded to instructions given by web users who wanted to 'have it their way'; a TV campaign aping the awkward dynamics of hit British docu-spoof *The Office*; and 'Wake up with the King', in which a BK icon of old was reborn, turning up in unusual situations bearing breakfast. 'Within the cool uncle voice, we tried to introduce things hoping one of them would hit,' continues Reilly. 'All of them hit.'

Since then, this scattershot approach to Burger King's advertising has proven to be a strength rather than a weakness, with TV campaigns sitting comfortably alongside new media initiatives, a perfect balance of mass communication and niche exercises in brand loyalty. 'Superfans are always expecting stuff that's new, strange and provocative,' explains Reilly. 'Burger King is a brand that is expected to just go for it every time. And yes, we do question whether each idea is something that the press would write about. It's a useful strategy that helps us stay focused on our audience.'

Surfing the Zeitgeist

Whilst McDonald's must maintain a delicate balance, catering to picky mothers, petulant teenagers and ADD tots, Burger King's strict focus on the Superfan, alongside its challenger brand status, enables campaigns to joyfully ride the zeitgeist to new media adulation and global column inches. Being in second place can have its advantages. 'Of course, we'd rather be number one, but we benefit from being protected as a challenger,' comments Russ Klein. 'We can have more edge, more bite.'

Crispin, along with PR incumbent Edelman and promotions experts Pitch have proven themselves unusually adept at spotting the pockets in popular culture in which a brand can nestle without intruding. Tactical media partnerships with popular entertainment properties have established Burger King's skill in 'leaning into the frame' (or should that be the flame?). When *The Simpsons Movie* was released, several brands launched tie-ins, but Burger King dominated with a website and application enabling hundreds of millions of visitors to create Simpsons-style version of themselves at SimpsonizeMe.com. The site was 'brought to you



HAVE IT YOUR WAY[®] TECHNOLOGY

by Have It Your Way technology', underpinning BK's commitment to giving consumers what they want, when they want it.

More recently, Burger King paired with the creator of the hit animation series *Family Guy* Seth MacFarlane for his 'Cavalcade of Cartoon Comedy', a series of short films showcased exclusively on Google's content platform. Burger King worked with MacFarlane to create the ads. The King opens each film by bursting through the scenery and running towards the camera. Burger King relinquished its sponsorship of the initiative after the first 'series', remaining tight-lipped as to why, although Brian Gies says: 'We were excited to be the first to partner with Seth on the launch, and work together to create original Burger King content exclusively for the digital arena.'

However, Burger King doesn't always need to piggy back existing properties; it's more than proved it can go it alone. Christmas campaigns for its flagship Whopper prove its skill in this area. 2005's effort was the epic Whopperettes campaign fronted by model/actress Brooke Burke, culminating in an elaborate Super Bowl spot which hammered home the ways in which you could make the Whopper your own. In a nod to an obsession with celebrity culture, Crispin seeded paparazzi style photos showing Burke caught in flagrante with The King, now fully revived as an unlikely yet iconic brand ambassador. In 2006, Burger King noted the overwhelming popularity of the Xbox 360 games console, and its relevance to the Superfan. Through a contact of Russ Klein's at Xbox, Burger King developed a series of games featuring the icons built up by Crispin, and sold them in store for \$3.99 with the purchase of a value meal. Reilly reflects: 'That's the proudest I've ever been of our work, because we invented a new model. People came into our stores, bought our product, and then paid to be advertised to.' Burger King sold 3.5m, generating revenue through the ownership of additional intellectual property, and also enjoyed a 9% year-on-year sales spike for that quarter. The games also scooped a Cyber Lion Grand Prix at the 2007 Cannes Lions advertising festival. Further underscoring Burger King's commitment not only to associating itself with pop culture, but to BEING that



XBOX 360 GAMES / POCKET RACER /



SIMPSONIZEME.COM /



FLAME /



WHOPPER FREAKOUT /

culture, Klein suggests that initiatives such as the Xbox 360 games may prove to be the start of something bigger for Burger King. 'One of our objectives is also to be a content provider in that world in our own right'.

Christmas 2007 saw the Whopper Freakout, which played on the public's phenomenal appetite for 'reality'-based programming. CP+B set up hidden cameras in a number of high traffic Burger King stores, and then employed actors to pose as employees bearing the news that the Whopper was no longer on the menu. Customers went nuts. After two months, the video had been played 3.3 million times on whopperfreakout.com and had 357,367 views on YouTube, spawning several spoofs. Burger King reported a 5.4% rise in sales for the quarter, 2.5 points ahead of McDonald's, and attributed the rise in sales to the Freakout campaign.

'This deprivation strategy demonstrated our superiority,' comments Brian Gies. 'We took away a product they loved. A year later, we felt compelled to deconstruct WHY that love is there through conducting an experiment.'

From virgin to sacrifice

The experiment to which Gies refers is the first stage of BK's 2008 winter campaign, Whopper Virgins. 'Virgins' saw Burger King taking its flame broiler to areas that were previously untouched by fast food – remote villages in Romania, Thailand and Greenland – and conducting 'pure taste tests', with villagers who had no preconceived notion of what the titans of fast food stand for. Each villager was given a Big Mac and a Whopper to taste, and the results were filmed. Crispin initially seeded short clips of the experiment online at Whoppervirgins.com, and planted banners on high traffic sites such as The Onion. The final film showed the villagers taking the taste test, many of them dressed in ethnic costume, and interviews with the anthropologists and creatives behind the idea.

Depending on your viewpoint, this could be one of the following: A) A brave exercise from a brand prepared to put its product to the ultimate test, presenting it unstyled to an audience with no pre-conceived notions whatsoever, for them to judge based purely on taste and smell. B) The worst kind of cultural imperialism, rendered particularly creepy by scientific studies demonstrating a link between the arrival of western fast food in a country's nutritional ecosystem and a spike in the rates of obesity and heart disease. Comments on blogs ranged from the positive ('It's just an ad for hamburgers that's doing its job really well') to the disgusted: ('It's like this generation's *Heart of Darkness*').

'Burger King went into this with a lot of research and dedication to cultural integrity,' claims Alex Saliers, client relationship manager and EVP at Edelman in New York,

which handles Burger King's PR. 'People will always have different opinions, and we try and speak to people who might not understand where we're coming from. We care about that. Burger King cares about that. That's the nature of public opinion. A lot of people thought it was ingenious and brilliant.'

Brian Gies is keen to assert: 'It's not our objective to alienate.'

The campaign's resonance was confirmed when *Saturday Night Live* saw fit to include a sketch lampooning the campaign. The villagers were displayed either as simpletons (one places the burger on his head) or as desperate (a second attempts to steal the burgers, pointing out that the Whopper and the Big Mac between them would feed his family for a week).

In the weeks following the launch, *AdAge* reported that Burger King's positive brand momentum had stalled, with buzz monitors BrandIndex suggesting that Whopper Virgins had not reached a new audience, merely antagonised part of an old one. However, The Whopper Virgins campaign was featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Good Morning America*, *Fox & Friends*, and *ABC News Now* among others. Site visits topped 767,000 in the month of December, and more than 27,000 people visited the site from their mobile devices. Whether positive or negative, 'Virgins' had created buzz.

Just as the furore over Whopper Virgins was beginning to die down, Crispin unveiled stage two of the winter campaign. 'Flame' was an aftershave designed to invoke the scent of a freshly flame-grilled Whopper, sold online, in-store and as part of a deal with retail outlet Ricky's in New York and LA. A website showing a half naked King lying before an open fire (www.firemeetsdesire.com) attracted 636,000 unique visitors and the spray sold out in four days. 'How do you stand out in the holiday clutter? You don't sell hamburgers, you sell the scent of it as a stocking stuffer,' explains Rob Reilly. 'That was how we were able to reach not just the Superfan, but his mother or girlfriend.'

Stage three was the devilish Whopper Sacrifice, a Facebook app which asked users to 'sacrifice' ten of their friends in exchange for a free Whopper. When a friend was dropped, a line appeared in the 'news feed' section of the social networking site announcing that 'Jess Greenwood has dropped Paul Kemp-Robertson for a Whopper'. This open information share created a viral effect as users rushed to clear out unwanted friends in exchange for burgers. The column inches stacked up. After two weeks, the application was shut down by Facebook because it violated the company's privacy policy (you're not meant to know when you've been dropped) – but not before 234,000 friends were



WHOPPER VIRGINS /



WHOPPER SACRIFICE /



sacrificed and 20,000 free Whoppers distributed. According to Brian Gies, 'friendship is strong, but the Whopper is stronger.'

'Whopper Sacrifice' is classic Burger King, fusing media understanding and cultural insight. It contains an in-built viral mechanism, an incentive to engage, and a direct path to metrics such as in-store traffic and sales. Lars Bastholm is the creative director of AKQA New York, and this year's Cannes Lions Cyber jury president: 'It speaks to an understanding of how Facebook works, and isn't just another useless application that no-one needs, like most of the attempts at marketing on Facebook are,' he told *Contagious*. 'And knowing Crispin, they probably counted on Facebook to ban it as part of their PR plan.'

Although Reilly hotly denies that 'Flame' and 'Sacrifice' were rolled out hot on the heels of 'Whopper Virgins' to counteract any negative buzz it may have created, this was the effect. 'There's always the worry of cannibalising our own buzz, but our thing has always been momentum. That's the key to brand success.'

'Social currency is a key part of our brand strategy, and to generate that, we move with pop culture,' continues Klein. 'We're not part of the old model of packaged goods where you run two TV commercials a year. We approve a thousand concepts every year. It's eclectic, but never incongruous.'

The other guy

Under Klein, Burger King encourages active participation in all elements for the brand from incumbent agencies. Crispin has come up with a range of concepts, from 'Chicken Fries' to the FryPod – a circular pouch which sits neatly in the cup holder of your car. 'It's just a little touch, but something else to show that Burger King is doing more than the other guy,' says Reilly.

However, as the market for fast food continues to evolve, 'the other guy' doesn't always sit under a pair of bright yellow arches. 'We've seen an interesting evolution of a casual quick-serve element to the market.' This from Nancy Childs, a professor in the Department of Food Marketing at Saint Joseph's University. 'It's a fast meal but it has healthier connotations, and gives the impression of freshly assembled ingredients.'

It should be noted that Burger King has dedicated serious resources to competing in this area, and attempting to answer criticisms based on the link between fast food and obesity. It was the 11th of 16 companies involved in the Council of Better Business Bureau's Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative, and has teamed with governmental and external bodies on healthy eating programmes. They were the first and only company to introduce and maintain a veggie burger, and have also set a limit for sodium in meals for children.



FRYPod /

A recent project saw the company publicising 350 different meal combinations using existing menu items that added up to under 650 calories each.

The development of the retail environments also features strongly in Burger King's plans. 'There's a significant effort underway to update our stores to the restaurant of the future,' explains Brian Gies. 'We've already got our WhopperBars out there, which bring 'having it your way' to a more tangible space. We recognise an evolving need to remain competitive in retail environment, and know that our stores around the world are the most visible influencer of consumers choosing to come in or not. We have plans to make sure we're not only keeping pace but delivering on consumers' high expectations.'

However, in identifying the Superfan, it appears that Burger King has relaxed its view of the future – a future in which a certain group will always enjoy juicy burgers over salads. Nancy Childs agrees that 'as audiences react to the proliferation of choice, the traditional Burger King consumer will be someone who's looking exactly for what they offer'.

In keeping with this, the newest additions to the product line will be a Steakhouse thick burger, and Burger Shots – six mini burgers for sharing or scoffing. A round of equally quirky marketing campaigns will be unleashed to support the launches. 'Our focus now is renewal and rejuvenation, stamina and endurance,' concludes Klein. 'When I look at what we've achieved over the last five years in terms of sales and brand recognition, I think we've created our own worst enemy. There is pressure, but you have to trust the foundations you put in place in terms of culture and analytics. If you start to assume what you did yesterday will work tomorrow, you're done.' ▮

ANALYST'S INSIGHT /

By Vicky McCrorie, analyst / Datamonitor

While other industries are suffering due to the global economic downturn, the fast food market is booming as people choose to eat in cheaper restaurants. Burger King, as the second largest burger chain in the world, is positioned strongly to benefit, and is planning further growth to take advantage of rising demand.

Burger King has over 11,600 restaurants worldwide and is planning up to 400 new outlets in 2009 to encourage more cash-strapped consumers to eat at its outlets. The company recorded healthy revenues of \$674 million in the first quarter ending October 2008, up 12% from the same quarter the year before, at a time when other businesses were reporting falling growth rates.

For example, Burger King's main rival McDonald's reported falling revenues of 3% for the last quarter and net income which fell a substantial 23%. Nonetheless, McDonald's is undertaking a similar growth strategy to Burger King, announcing the creation of 1000 new outlets in 2009, in the hope that its investment will pay off by aiming to better reach budget-conscious consumers with a ubiquitous high street presence.

Burger King cannot hope to beat McDonald's in the near future, however, as the latter has a much bigger global presence and consequently sales figures. McDonald's reported revenues of \$5.6 billion for the last quarter, and has over 30,000 global outlets, showing that it is by far the larger of the two companies.

Where Burger King does aim to compete, though, is on the quality issue. Some of its most memorable promotions have aimed to show that its burgers taste better than those from McDonald's, including the infamous Whopper Virgins campaign. Burger King probably gained a huge amount of publicity from this, which could in turn drive more people to its restaurants.

By emphasising the quality of its offering, Burger King could succeed in persuading consumers to swap their Big Mac for a Whopper. New product offerings include the Steakhouse burger, further underscoring Burger King's prudence in understanding that while price is a dominant factor in consumer fast food choices, quality still remains an important issue for consumers in a downturn.

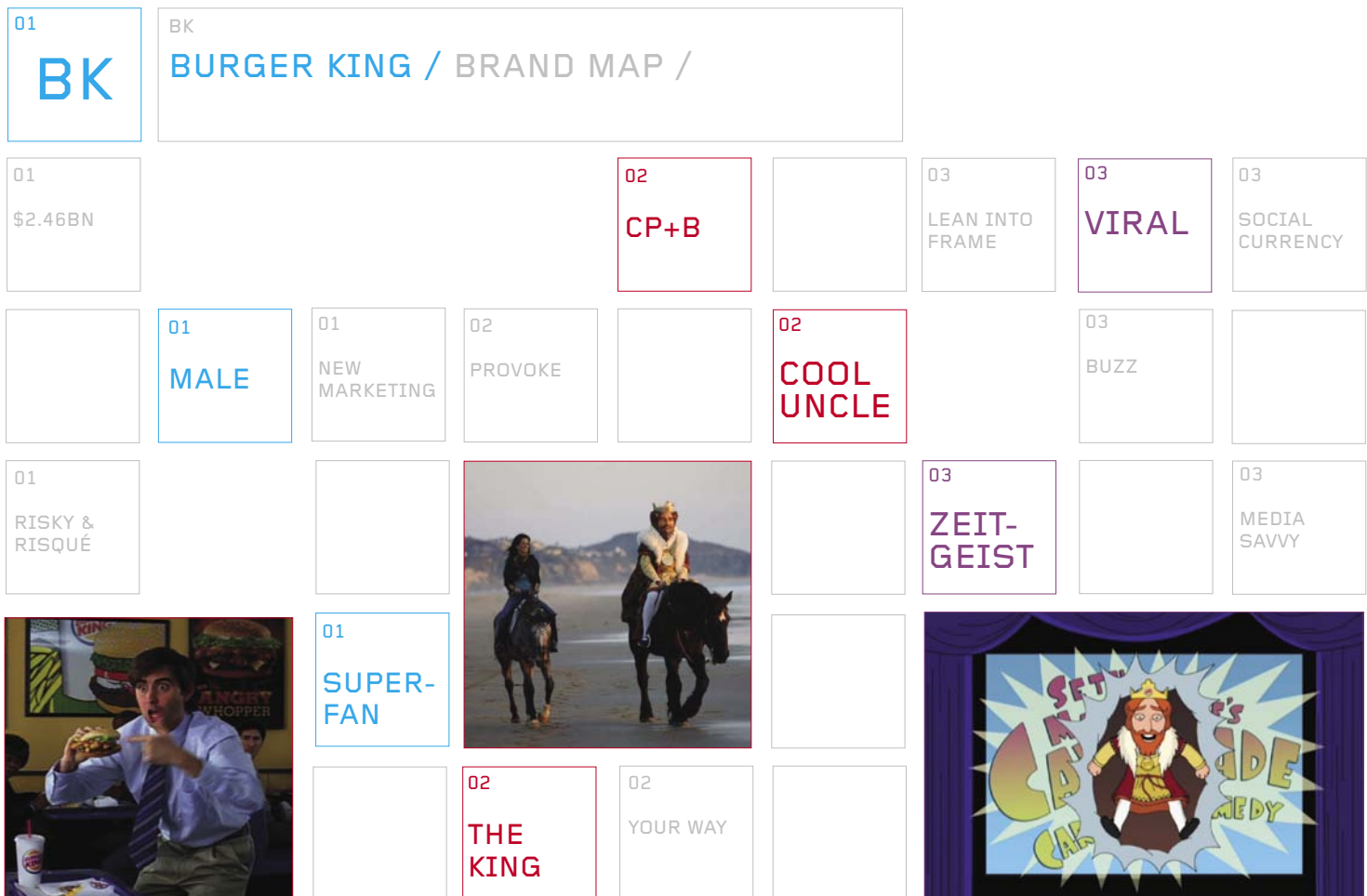
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CHALLENGE / IN 2003, THE BURGER KING CORPORATION HAD SUFFERED SEVEN STRAIGHT YEARS OF SALES DECLINE. FOOTFALL HAD DROPPED BY 22%, YET THE FAST FOOD INDUSTRY AS A WHOLE WAS SEEING HEALTHY SALES GROWTH. CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER RUSS KLEIN CLAIMS: 'WE BORE ALL THE HALLMARK SIGNS OF A TROUBLED COMPANY'. THE BURGER KING BRAND HAD BEEN DEVALUED TO A MARQUE THAT WAS 'KNOWN, RATHER THAN LOVED'. FIERCE COMPETITION ON PRICE, CRITICISM OF ITS PRODUCT LINE AND CONFUSED MARKETING EFFORTS HAD ALIENATED THE CORE TARGET AUDIENCE, WHILST ARCH RIVAL MCDONALD'S CONTINUED TO FORGE AHEAD IN TERMS OF SALES AND BRAND RECOGNITION /

SOLUTION / A SHAKEUP OF MARKETING EFFORTS AND MENU ITEMS REFOCUSSED THE COMPANY ON THE 'SUPERFAN' – A FAST FOOD ENTHUSIAST WITH AN EYE FOR INDULGENT FOOD AND A PREDILECTION FOR TONGUE-IN-CHEEK BRANDS. BURGER KING EMBRACED NEW MEDIA TO REACH ITS SUPERFAN, DEVELOPING VIDEO GAMES AND FACEBOOK APPLICATIONS, STAGING HIDDEN CAMERA STUNTS AND EVEN PRODUCING A SIGNATURE FRAGRANCE. THE RESURRECTION OF THE 'HAVE IT YOUR WAY' TAGLINE AND THE KING CHARACTER AS WELL AS A FOCUS ON KEY OFFERING THE WHOPPER, GAVE THE COMPANY A RECOGNISABLE FACE AND BRAND VALUE. ALL MARKETING EFFORTS ARE 'PROVOCATIVE, NOT PLEASANT', LEADING TO COLUMN INCHES FROM TRADE AND MAINSTREAM PRESS /

RESULTS / AT THE END OF 2008 BURGER KING POSTED RECORD WORLDWIDE REVENUES OF \$2.46 BILLION – A RISE OF 10% FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR, AND THE 18TH CONSECUTIVE QUARTER OF POSITIVE SALES GROWTH. 350-400 NEW RESTAURANTS ARE PROMISED FOR 2009 IN KEY GROWTH MARKETS LIKE CHINA AND BRAZIL. THE COMPANY'S ADVERTISING HAS BEEN CREDITED WITH SHARP SALES INCREASES, FREQUENTLY CROSSING THE LINE BETWEEN MARKETING AND POPULAR CULTURE, AND HAS GARNERED SEVERAL INDUSTRY AWARDS. FUTURE PRODUCT LINES UNDERSCORE FURTHER COMMITMENT TO THE SUPERFAN, WITH THE THICK STEAKHOUSE BURGER PROJECTED TO BE THE COMPANY'S NEXT BIG HIT /



01 / STAKEHOLDERS & SUPERFANS	02 / CRISPIN & COOL	03 / PR & POP CULTURE
<p>Burger King is a poster child for 'new marketing'. Its challenger brand status and record growth has given the brand licence to explore alternative avenues like social networking, videogaming, and user-generated content. After 'years trying to be all things to all people', Burger King's confident, coherent brand proposition can be attributed to its anthropological dedication to a target identified as the 'Superfan'. By focusing on this largely male, 18-35 year-old irreverent, console-clutching net addict, Burger King has celebrated its inner adolescent and added a masculine grunt to its advertising tactics. The Superfan is open to new forms of promotion and prefers his marketing risqué and interactive. And when he likes what he sees, he rewards the burger giant by visiting its restaurants at least five times a month.</p> <p>Such an unlikely hero has caused a healthy tension amongst BK stakeholders, but no one can argue with worldwide revenues of \$2.46 billion and 400 new restaurants planned for 2009.</p>	<p>Having established this ideological connection with its key customer, Burger King established an outward-facing brand proposition characterised by the phrase 'provocative, not pleasant'. Such a stance explains the heavenly creative match found with Crispin Porter + Bogusky, whose principal creative is renowned for urging his troops: 'Don't write me a campaign. Write me a press release.' The agency has given the brand the voice of 'the cool uncle – the guy who tells you how it really is'. Yet despite dabbling in all kinds of eclectic shenanigans, CP+B's approach is rooted in Burger King's classic 'Have It Your Way' positioning. This adds a sense of 'empowerment', 'choice' and 'authenticity' to its endeavours, leading to breakthrough campaigns like the infamous Subservient Chicken site (where a man in a chicken costume responded to random instructions from users) and the resurrection of the 'King' icon of old, rebuilt with a 21st century eye for the paparazzi.</p>	<p>Social currency is a key part of BK's brand strategy. CP+B, along with PR experts Edelman and promotion specialists Pitch are adept at spotting pockets in popular culture where the brand can nestle. Tactical media partnerships with entertainment properties allow BK to 'lean into the frame'. To capitalise on <i>The Simpsons Movie</i> buzz, BK promoted a web app enabling millions of people to create Springfield-style versions of themselves. BK paired with the creator of <i>Family Guy</i>, Seth MacFarlane, to launch his 'Cavalcade of Cartoon Comedy' – short films showcased exclusively online.</p> <p>The devilish Whopper Sacrifice, a Facebook app which encouraged users to 'sacrifice' ten friends in exchange for a free Whopper created a viral storm, with Facebook closing it down after two weeks (and 234,000 sacrificed friends later) because it violated the social network's privacy policy. This is classic Burger King, fusing media savvy and cultural insight to create a viral mechanism with a direct path to metrics and footfall.</p>

04
TASTE
TEST

04
WHOPPER
VIRGINS

05
FLAME

05
SCATTER-
GUN06
CSR

06
POP
CULTURE

06
CONTENT

04

PR
STORM

04
DIVERSE
OPINION

04
EXPERI-
MENT

05
KING
GAMES

06
WHOPPER
BARS

06
RE-
INVENT

THEY'VE NEVER EATEN A **WHOPPER**.
THEY'VE NEVER SEEN A **WHOPPER**.
THEY DON'T EVEN HAVE A WORD FOR BURGER.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE HERE.

05
FRY-
POD

05
3.5M UNITS

05
IP

04 / WHOPPERS & WHINGERS

Playing so close to the fire means you invariably get burnt. An experiment that put the BK brand under intense PR scrutiny was its 2008 winter campaign, Whopper Virgins. This saw BK taking its flame broiler to areas untouched by fast food – remote villages in Romania, Thailand and Greenland. Using Big Macs and Whoppers, brand reps conducted 'pure taste tests' with ethnically-costumed villagers who had no preconceived notion of the cultural symbolism or bitter rivalry behind the American burger. Crispin seeded short clips online, and planted banners on sites like The Onion. The final film included interviews with sympathetic anthropologists. Accusations of cultural imperialism followed, with bloggers describing the campaign as 'this generation's Heart of Darkness', and others flagging up the link between fast food and obesity. Site visits topped 767,000 in December. BK defended the campaign's 'cultural integrity', connecting the brand with diversity of opinion.

05 / GAMES & GLORY

Unlike traditional marketers who rely on TV commercials as a promotional anchor, BK prefers to 'approve 1000 concepts a year'. This scattergun approach encourages its agency partners to think like entrepreneurs. CP+B targeted the Superfan's mother and girlfriend at Christmas by unveiling 'Flame', an aftershave that invokes the scent of a flame-grilled Whopper. The firemeetsdesire website, showing a semi-naked King, attracted 636,000 visitors. The spray sold out in 4 days. Other Crispin concepts include 'Chicken Fries' and the FryPod pouch - designed for a car's cup holder.

The most commercially successful venture came in 2006 when BK and CP+B developed a series of video games for the Xbox 360. Produced under the IP banner of 'King Games' and featuring the man himself, the titles sold for \$3.99 with the purchase of a value meal. This 'new model' generated a 9% quarterly sales spike, shifted 3.5m units and scooped a Cyber Lion Grand Prix at Cannes.

06 / CONTENT & CALORIES

In America, Burger King wants to be part of pop culture. Initiatives like King Games are the start of something bigger for the brand. One of its core objectives, moving forward, is to be a 'content provider' in its own right.

On the corporate level, BK's focus is 'renewal and rejuvenation, stamina and endurance.' The company is investing in a future-friendly 'update' of its retail environments. It will also introduce a number of 'visible influencer' WhopperBars – smaller, funkier spaces where patrons can 'pimp' their burgers. From a CSR angle, BK has dedicated resources to provide healthy eating programmes and to answer criticisms about obesity. It recently published 350 different meal combinations using existing menu items that added up to less than 650 calories.

And we can expect more innovation in its marketing. 'If you start to assume what you did yesterday will work tomorrow, you're done,' says chief marketing officer Russ Klein.