



Nocturnivores - McDonald's Invites Consumers to Savor the Night

Fahlgren Mortine and McDonald's Restaurants of Central Ohio, Miami Valley and Toledo, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award of Excellence Winner — Integrated Communications — Consumer Products — Retail Stores and Restaurants

Fahlgren Mortine, on behalf of McDonald's Restaurants in Central Ohio, Miami Valley and Toledo, invited late-night nosherers – coined "Nocturnivores" – to "savor the night" and embrace McDonald's as their late-night destination of choice amid a cluster of competitive options. An integrated communications plan that relied on aggressive media relations, creative consumer engagement, social media integration and ground-breaking creative that spoke to late night as a broad culture generated more than 99 million earned national and regional media impressions and contributed to an 18 percent average increase in sales during the late-night daypart.

Integrated communications includes any program that demonstrates leadership of public relations strategies and tactics in a creative and effective integrated campaign, along with other marketing or communications. The program must demonstrate the clear leadership of public relations, along with its integration with other disciplines.

Full Text: SITUATION

Picture the scene – it's 1:00 a.m. and you've just left your friends after a night at your favorite watering hole. Before you can lay your head down to sleep, you need something savory to satisfy those late-night hunger pains and ensure a peaceful slumber. As you head down the main street, you're blinded by the lights of open drive thrus on either side, tempting you with promises of late night deals to put your hunger to rest. "Pick me! Pick me!" they seem to scream at you. But with so many choices, how will you choose?

RESEARCH

In an effort to build capacity in their restaurants and drive sales, McDonald's Restaurants across the country identified what is known as the "fourth day part" as an area of strategic priority, especially in light of more consumers "time shifting" their meal occasions – eating whenever it fits into their schedule. Though the idea of being open 24 hours was not a new concept to McDonald's, not everyone in the franchisee community wanted to keep their doors open, and as a result, the number of late night visits to McDonald's was less than ideal.

Through agency research, we identified a unique culture of late night consumers ranging in age from 18-34 years old. While the top end of the target consumer included Gen Xers, the largest portion of the target focused on millennials – a generational group with whom McDonald's has struggled to create any lasting brand affinity, but who will make up more than 65 percent of the consumer base in America in 6-8 years. To these consumers, McDonald's was on the verge of becoming irrelevant. It became imperative that the creative expressions resonate with a contemporary youth audience through an authenticity and spirit not currently portrayed by the brand creative.

PLANNING

In the McDonald's system, a consistent or cohesive expression of "late night" advertising, PR or merchandising did not exist. Historically, the Company focused more on the 24-hour convenience messaging, leaving the consumer, their lifestyle and need states out of the equation. In order to break through the late night clutter and competition, it became clear that we needed a creative, buzz worthy platform to connect with consumers in a way that spoke to their culture, lifestyle and unique desires.

Fahlgren Mortine was charged with developing an integrated marketing campaign that would take "24 hours" beyond the convenience message and create branded equity for McDonald's Restaurants in Ohio – specifically those in Columbus, Dayton and Toledo – that would resonate with millennial consumers and evolve with them over the next 3-5 years. The campaign aimed to:

- **Franchisee Participation:** Encourage more franchisees to stay open during the fourth day part, through the assurance of marketing support to drive late night traffic.
- **Messaging and Creative:** Speak to "late night" as a broad culture, not focusing on any particular franchisee or location. Work well in multiple marketing channels – PR, social media, grassroots and sponsorship activation. Attain at least a .11 digital click-through rate on digital creative.
- **Media Relations:** Generate national media coverage to lend credibility to McDonald's campaign around building their late-night business. Generate at least 5 million media impressions (national and local).
- **Business Goals:** Drive traffic, increase sales and grow guest counts between 12:00 a.m. and 5:00 a.m.

McDonald's Corp. selected Columbus, Dayton and Toledo as test markets for a new "Breakfast After Midnight" menu, from late June through September (2012), offering select breakfast items from 12:00 a.m. – 5:00 a.m. Fahlgren Mortine saw a unique opportunity to leverage the test market news to create a moment in time in which to talk about the late night campaign on a broad scale to local and national media.

EXECUTION: NOCTURNIVORES – SAVOR THE NIGHT

In an effort to transcend the 24 hour convenience messaging and build equity at late night for the McDonald's brand in select markets in Ohio, Fahlgren Mortine developed the concept of the "Nocturnivore" – a person who not only is out eating in the night, but who is out eating **up** the night. The hip, proud, late-night concert-goer, gamer or run-of-the-mill night owl. A person who "savors the night" and lives by the light of the moon. Or, as is often the case, the drive through.

At launch, the agency employed a fully integrated surround-sound approach to reaching our consumers with the campaign:

Media Relations: Timed the media relations component of the Nocturnivore campaign to coincide with the news that McDonald's was testing a "Breakfast After Midnight" menu in select markets, including three in Ohio. Since local McDonald's agencies are not encouraged to pitch national media, Fahlgren Mortine recommended securing feature placements with local outlets that have the attention of national business media. The team secured feature placements with *Columbus Business First*, *Dayton Daily News* and the *Toledo Blade*. These piqued the attention of significant media outlets and, as a result, the team netted coverage in dozens of national outlets.

Sponsorship Activation: Executed a strategic partnership with a Columbus, Ohio-based concert production company – PromoWest Productions – to connect our messaging to the late night concert-goers looking to curb their late-night hunger pains after the shows. Specific activation elements included branded "over age" wrist-bands that were given to 100,000+ concert goers throughout the year, a branded wrap on a photo booth that was located outside

of the main venue to give the consumer a permanent reminder of our invitation to “savor the night,” and in-venue signage at three local concert venues.

Out of Home: Brought the campaign to the consumer when they were making their late night dining choice, ensuring McDonald’s would be top of mind in that moment. As such, we recommended branding a fleet of seven pedicabs that troll the main nightlife streets in Columbus. Each was affixed with oversized McDonald’s World Famous French Fries as a cue that tempted riders’ palate.

Social Media: Brought the campaign to life for our social media followers, coordinating giveaways of “late night” coupons on our Columbus, Toledo and Dayton Twitter handles. In Columbus, our pedicabs drove additional traffic in restaurant by including signage in the cab inviting people to tweet @McDonaldsCMH_OH with their next location using the #Nocturnivore hashtag and they would receive a coupon for a free McDonald’s Breakfast After Midnight menu item.

Paid Media: Columbus, Toledo and Dayton placed target-specific radio and TV spots with “I Am Nocturnivore” messaging, suggesting a late night credo for those who savor the night. Fahlgren Mortine also leveraged insights of millennials’ digital consumption, creating digital media assets that led with messaging specific to the timely Breakfast After Midnight menu and carried Nocturnivore-branded messaging. The team recommended strategic placements relative to our target audience, including integration on Spotify, Pandora, Hulu and EA Sports in-game integration. These strategic placements helped establish the message “in life” for our target consumers, particularly when they were engaging in late-night activities such as online gaming.

EVALUATION

The Nocturnivore campaign has far exceeded the client’s expectations at every level.

Franchisee Participation: Through a combination of the local Ohio campaign and additional efforts by McDonald’s Corp. to encourage more franchisees to remain open for the fourth day part, net participation in the 24-hour program increased by 6 percent compared to the previous year in markets that deployed the Nocturnivore campaign.

Messaging and Creative: Thematically, the Nocturnivore campaign successfully established a distinct, branded platform from which McDonald’s will be able to market the daypart and evolve over time. Over the next few years, the campaign is expected to be extended to more markets and tailored to speak to specific multi-cultural audiences. In addition to the creative elements, strategically-placed audio, video, digital and non-traditional media buys helped to ensure the creative connected with our target audience at the appropriate time. This was evident in our digital click-thru rates (.282), more than double the quick-service restaurant industry standard (.11), proving the creative was relevant even with no distinct call-to-action in our digital executions.

Media Relations: A final testament to the success of the campaign is the earned media coverage. In just under two weeks, the campaign generated more than 99 million local and national media impressions across print, broadcast and online news outlets and their social media channels, including *NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams*, *TIME Magazine Online*, *Chicago Tribune* and *The UK Daily Mail*. The stories highlighted our Breakfast After Midnight test markets, while showcasing how McDonald’s Restaurants in Ohio are using the Nocturnivore campaign to engage millennials in a relevant way. The story also reached outlets popular with millennials, such as *The Huffington Post*, and even entered into pop culture vernacular by inspiring a prose poem from *Gawker*. As a result, Fahlgren Mortine worked with McDonald’s to file and received a national trademark for Nocturnivore on behalf of McDonald’s USA.

Business Goals: And the numbers don’t lie – through September 2012, markets deploying the

Nocturnivore campaign were up nearly 18 percent in comparative sales, and nearly 16 percent in comparative guest counts.

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