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RESEARCH

Poppi, a popular soda brand designed to promote healthy habits and gut health while still maintaining flavor, was launched in 2015. The brand's founder, Allison Ellsworth, is a successful business woman who graduated from the University of North Texas in 2009. After Poppi's appearance on Shark Tank, it became a nationwide hit reaching over \$100 million in sales in 2024. Poppi now sells over 14 different flavors of soda and can be found in over 120 retailers in the United States.

The success of Poppi is hard to ignore, yet in February of 2025 the brand faced backlash over their Super Bowl LIX campaign. This campaign sent full sized, fully stocked Poppi branded vending machines to various social media influencers' homes such as Jake Shane and Avery Wood, in an effort to make Poppi the "go-to" drink during Super Bowl parties. The campaign was designed to "bring awareness to the biggest soda moment of the year, the Super Bowl," according to Ellsworth. However, this campaign did not resonate well with the public and made the brand seem 'out of touch' to customers. Hundreds of people began criticizing the campaign for gifting lavish machines to influencers who seemingly already have more than enough wealth, instead of gifting sodas to communities that would benefit from it. The brand was criticized for consumerism as people did not agree with their choices. One of Poppi's competitors, Olipop, commented on a video of the backlash claiming that the machines cost \$25,000 each, which Ellsworth came to deny. The backlash of this campaign was impossible to ignore, and caused many loyal Poppi customers to stop drinking the soda. Customers lost trust in the brand as they felt manipulated and felt the campaign clashed with the brand's values. This crisis reduced sales for the brand and left customers with a bitter taste in their mouths, damaging the brand's image.

AUDIENCE

Poppi's audience is tailored to Generation-Z and Millennials focused on their health and wellness. With a majority of their marketing and promotions being done on social media such as TikTok and Instagram, Poppi reaches a younger audience. For example, Poppi's vending machine campaign was pushed out on TikTok through various influencers within the Generation-Z and Millennial age range. Most of Poppi's traction came from TikTok, where over 55% of users are under the age of 30. Along with this, Poppi's bright, colorful, and fun packaging naturally attracts a younger eye. Taking all of this into consideration, Poppi must target this audience of young adults who value health, clean ingredients, and wellness trends by using social media and influencers.

GOAL

In order to bounce back from this crisis, Poppi needs to take accountability, regain customer trust, and implement meaningful changes to the brand's future campaigns. Poppi will launch the #SipWithPoppi campaign to achieve these goals. The first step of this campaign is releasing a statement on all platforms including TikTok, Instagram, X, and their website addressing the situation, taking accountability, apologizing for their seemingly out of touch behavior, and explaining the steps below that Poppi will be taking to give back to communities in

need rather than influencers, ending the post using #SipWithPoppi. Releasing this on social media as well as their website will ensure that this message will reach the maximum number of Poppi consumers. The next immediate step for Poppi is to donate to Feeding America, a United States non-profit based organization that feeds over 46 million people annually. The donation amount to this organization should match the amount spent on the vending machines and Poppi inventory sent to influencers, to show to the public that Poppi is willing to spend their money not only on promotion/influencers, but also to charities supporting similar goals. Poppi will then donate 5% of its profits moving forward to Feeding America and/or other similar charitable causes to show ongoing commitment. Lastly, Poppi will need to send and install fully-stocked vending machines to schools, hospitals, and shelters in need of drinks. This is the main focus of the hashtag “SipWithPoppi” as Poppi will be providing healthy drinks to communities to ‘sip’ together. In doing this, Poppi will show their care for these communities and support them just as they supported the influencers. This campaign accounts for public accountability, action, long-term commitment, and community impact which are exactly what Poppi needs.

OBJECTIVES

In order for this campaign to be successful for Poppi, there needs to be specific objectives in place. One of these objectives is to install 50 vending machines in various states across the United States in different communities within the first six months of the campaign's launch. These communities include schools, hospitals, and shelters. Putting these in schools will provide drinks to hard-working students in need of healthy drink alternatives. Hospitals can benefit from the machines by providing a refreshing drink for workers to have during their breaks. Lastly, shelters such as homeless shelters and women's shelters can use the drinks to hydrate people in need. This will highlight Poppi's commitment to the community's well being and response to the crisis.

Another objective for this campaign is to increase engagement on social media platforms by 20% within the first three months using the #SipWithPoppi hashtag. By raising awareness about Poppi's crisis response, consumers will see the dedication Poppi has put into this campaign. This will be achieved by launching digital initiatives such as user generated content, partnerships with influencers, and posts on Poppi's accounts.

The last objective for this campaign is to secure media coverage in at least five different media outlets within the first month of the campaign's launch. Media outlets such as Forbes, Business Insider, BuzzFeed, Healthline, and The New York Times business section align with Poppi's demographics and values, and would be perfect outlets for coverage. Coverage for this campaign will ensure that the greatest number of publics will see Poppi's efforts for transparency and community support. Since many outlets covered Poppi's crisis, outlets need to cover Poppi's response in order for the campaign to be successful.

PESO ANALYSIS

To achieve these objectives, Poppi will implement the PESO model. Using paid media, Poppi will launch paid advertisements on all social media platforms including TikTok, Instagram, and X. These advertisements will incorporate #SipWithPoppi to promote the campaign using a consistent message across channels. Earned media for Poppi will include coverage in local and national news outlets once Poppi's campaign launches. Poppi's shared media will be influencers posting sponsored content on social media using #SipWithPoppi. These influencers include the influencers that were sent the original vending machines, showing

Poppi's new efforts to regain consumer trust. Along with this, many unpaid media citizens will repost and remix Poppi's videos, adding to the shared media. Lastly, Poppi will use owned media and launch #SipWithPoppi on their website and e-newsletters. This will include links to the Feeding America website and a map of all of the new vending machines installed around the US, highlighting Poppi's impact.

CONCLUSION

Poppi's recent Super Bowl LIX campaign did not have the effect that it was intended to have. Audiences felt mistrusted and manipulated, resulting in brand loyalty decreasing and reputation being hurt. In order to make up for Poppi's disappointment, they will launch the #SipWithPoppi campaign to showcase the brands care, transparency, and truth. This campaign prioritizes community impact over sponsored influencer marketing and promotion.

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