

Kendall Jenner Pepsi Ad Controversy

By Andrea Paredes
ESOC 212



pepsi®

Brand Overview

Pepsi Co. is well known for their soft drinks, but has been associated with 22 different beverage, snack and food brands.

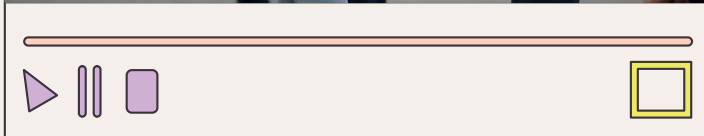
- 1st company to hire black sales executives
- Steady dividend payer
- Founded in 1965
- Been voted “40 Best Companies for Diversity” list before



Demographic Analysis

- Net income= \$7.353 billion USD
- Targeting social media generation with promoting various socially conscious challenges over social media
- No specific association with any political group but most financial contributions are from Republicans
- No specific age range or gender targeted
- For the last couple years, the company has tried focusing on creating products to offer to health-conscious consumers

Problem Statement



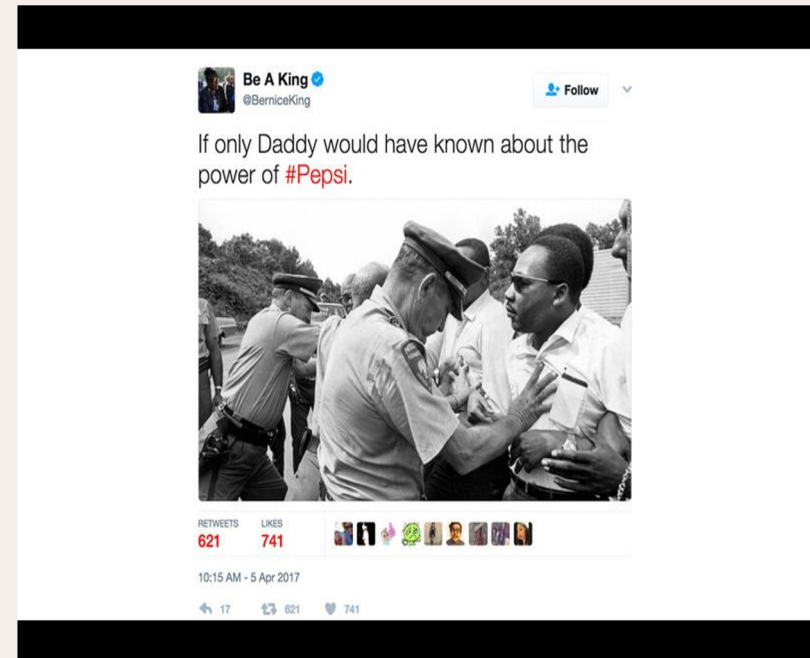
Pepsi in April 2017 released their “Live for Now” campaign featuring supermodel, Kendall Jenner, as the spokesperson

Unfortunately, the commercial didn’t convey the ad’s original intent to inspire millennials too strive for equality and community.

The brand’s advertisement presented protesters fighting against police brutality (even though the protesters unusually had smiles on their faces).

Problem Statement

- In addition, Kendall Jenner was heavily criticized by the public because in the end of the commercial she walked up to the police force through the crowds and handed a can of Pepsi to a police officer, which resulted as a non-verbal peaceful settlement. That scene specifically was enormously ridiculed due to the fact it made it seem like only a “white” person can bring justice to the movement.



Examples of the Twitter Posts expressing outrage



After an overwhelming amount of negative commentary and outrage all over social media, in less than 48 hours the ad was pulled.



Brand Reputation Strategy

- Originally, the company defended the ad and explained their reasoning behind it.

“This is a global ad that reflects people from different walks of life coming together in a spirit of harmony, and we think that’s an important message to convey,” they said in a statement.”

- However, they followed up with a public apology to consumers.

- The ad was officially pulled by the company in less than 48 hours and then released a statement immediately on Twitter. The company accepted full responsibility for their tone-deaf advertisement.
- “Fixed” situation and pulled the “Live Bolder” slogan

Pepsi Co. Apology and Ad



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Follow

Replying to @BerniceKing

We at Pepsi believe in the legacy of Dr. King & meant absolutely no disrespect to him & others who fight for justice.

Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace and understanding. Clearly we missed the mark, and we apologize. We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are removing the content and halting any further rollout. We also apologize for putting Kendall Jenner in this position.

12:52 PM - 5 Apr 2017



How the brand missed the mark

Diminishes
seriousness

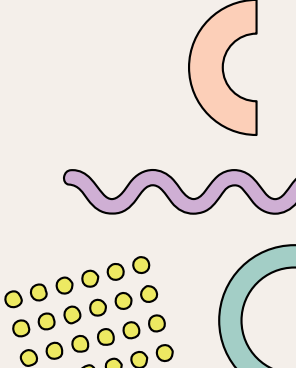
Tried
defending
themselves
before
releasing a
public apology

White
privilege?

Assimilating
imagery from
serious
protests to sell
its product

Protesters
seemed
unrealistically
happy

Insensitive
because it
was
released
after killings
and protests



How the company has redeemed themselves

- Gladly, Pepsi Co. has immersed themselves in focusing on:
 - Sustainability
 - Black Lives Matter movement
 - Equal Pay
 - COVID-19 relief

Important social media lessons for Pepsi

1. Taking a stand can't be faked
2. Choose the right spokesperson that can identify with the product or brand
3. Fairness and equality is key
4. Market research is necessary
5. Political messages can be risky and a delicate topic to talk about
6. Respond immediately and be true
7. Make no excuses
8. Take action

Evaluation



I have always enjoyed Pepsi Co. and their advertisements, however I was very surprised by the content and confused with the message of the Kendall Jenner ad. I think if Kendall Jenner joined the protest and giving the protesters Pepsi cans, the outcome or views of the ad might have been different. Another concept idea could have been after protesters sipped their sodas, they could have walked in formation, (including Kendall Jenner), towards the cops and handed them a soda can. Pepsi Co. has always been known for their focus on diversity and inclusion within their company culture, so it definitely took me by surprise when they released that ad in 2017. Although the company missed the mark with the commercial, I admire their desired vision of connecting with Generation Z and trying to appeal for the ongoing social movements.

Work Cited

- “PepsiCo Home.” *PepsiCo, Inc.*
Official Website, [www. pepsico.com/](http://www.pepsico.com/).
- Petit, Stephanie. “Pepsi Responds to
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[people.com/food/pepsi-responds-
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