

IMC Case Study: Doritos ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ Campaign

Jack Remishofski

School of Communication and Information, Rutgers University

PR Management

Amy Condon

March 14, 2025

Overview

This will be a case study into the Doritos ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ integrated marketing campaign. Doritos is a brand of chips made by Frito-lay, which is a subsidiary of Pepsico. The ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ campaign was conducted leading up to Super Bowl LIX, in which Doritos created a contest for people to submit fan-made commercials for the chance that it will be shown during the super bowl. If your commercial was chosen as the super bowl ad you got the added bonus of a million dollars. Throughout this case study, you will see the analysis of research into Doritos ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ IMC.

PR Audit: SWOT Analysis

Strengths: One notable strength of the Doritos brand is their brand positioning and identity. Doritos is positioned as the leading chip brand in the tortilla chip industry. According to a table from the article, “State of the Industry 2024: Tortilla chips gain ground” by Kimberly Decker (2024, July 22), Doritos sat above all other tortilla chip brands in sales for the first half of 2024. This shows that when it comes to the tortilla chips consumers reach for Doritos first, as they have over \$2 million in sales over the next leading tortilla chip in the industry (Decker, 2024 July 22). Ronn Torossian (2024, October 13) highlights Doritos’ brand positioning and identity in his article, “Doritos Marketing and PR Strategy: An Overview.” In the overview Torossian (2024, October 13) explains that, “Doritos has positioned itself as a fun, edgy brand . . . Its brand identity revolves around bold flavors, adventurous experiences, and a sense of rebelliousness.” Doritos has used this brand identity to their advantage, especially when it comes to showcasing their identity in past marketing strategies. In the past, Doritos used the ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ ad campaign; its original reign lasted from 2006-2016. Peter Adams (2024, September 19), senior

reporter for Marketing Dive, explains that, "Spots sourced from the contest ended up in the top five of USA Today's closely watched Ad Meter every year over the program's original decade-long run, with four landing in the No. 1 spot." The original 'Crash the Super Bowl' campaign's success was because the content of the campaign aligned with Doritos brand identity. This campaign highlighted the adventurous and rebellious sense of the company, because it was a new idea that challenged fans of Doritos to go against traditional commercial norms and create something of their own. Doritos was challenging the traditional commercial model while creating a fun and interactive fan experience. The success of the original campaign was because Doritos leaned into their brand identity to create something that their fans loved. This shows that not only is the Doritos brand's identity a strength, but Doritos also utilizes their strong brand identity to make successful campaigns.

Weaknesses: One big weakness of the Doritos brand is the health concerns surrounding their chips. The way that Doritos chips are made and processed draw a lot of concerns regarding long term health. Dr. Walter Kim (2024 September 3) informs us, in his article "Do Doritos cause cancer?," on some of the ingredients in Doritos that may be potentially harmful to humans. Kim (2024 September 3) explains that one ingredient in Doritos called, "maltodextrin may potentially lead to type 2 diabetes, weight gain, and high cholesterol." Considering the fact that Doritos dominates the US marketplace, consumers could associate Doritos with heart disease in the US. According to the Center for Disease Control (2024 October 24) in the United States, "Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups." Americans who are concerned over this significant risk of heart disease in the US might stay away from products like Doritos in hopes of avoiding this fate. Kim (2024 September 3) also highlights another ingredient used in Doritos called Yellow 5 that "might have a mutagenic

effect on human white blood cells, potentially increasing the risk of blood cancers.” This just highlights how unhealthy the Doritos chip could potentially be. Not only can you be more susceptible to heart disease, but you can also potentially be more at risk of cancer from ingredients in Doritos chips. Overall, the chip being viewed as unhealthy is the Doritos brand’s biggest weakness.

Opportunity: When considering the ratings of Doritos’s Super Bowl ad campaigns from recent Super Bowls compared to the past success of the original ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ campaign, you can see how Doritos has an opportunity to reinforce their brand image. The Super Bowl is advertising’s biggest stage. According to Sportsmediawatch.com’s table titled, “NFL Super Bowl ratings, viewership, all-time,” the Super Bowl has averaged over 100 million viewers since 2010. This provides a huge opportunity for Doritos. With so many people watching, stealing the show at the Super Bowl could increase brand recognition. Looking at the recent Super Bowl ad campaigns that Doritos have done, Peter Adams (2024, September 19) tells us that in 2024 Dorito’s Super Bowl ad, “starred ‘Wednesday’ actor Jenna Ortega and promoted a Dinamita product. Its spot from 2023 had appearances from the likes of rapper Jack Harlow and Elton John.” These campaigns followed more of the ‘traditional’ form of a Super Bowl commercial. Their use of celebrities in these ads showed they are conforming to traditional commercial norms. These campaigns leaned away from Doritos rebellious brand identity and went along with how the rest of the industry made commercials. You can see the effects that this had on the ratings. Adams (2024 September 19) explains that Doritos’ ad featuring Jenna Ortega, “landed in the tenth spot on the USA Today Ad Meter while the Harlow effort did not crack the top 10.” Compare these ratings to the success of the original ‘Cash the Super Bowl’ campaign and you can see how the ‘Crash the Superbowl’ campaign provides a much better opportunity for Doritos

on the big stage. In a case study done by Team TBH (2024, September 15) from the Brand Hopper, they examined the impact on brand awareness and perception that the ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ campaign had during its original run. In the Brand Hopper case study, Team TBH (2024, September 15) explains that after the first use of the ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ campaign, the Doritos brand, “became synonymous with creativity, fan engagement, and Super Bowl advertising excellence.” The case study goes on to explain that during the campaigns original run, “Doritos saw an average year-over-year sales increase of 3-5% during the campaign period, outperforming the overall snack category.” As you can see the use of the ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ campaign not only provides a better opportunity for brand recognition, but it has also led to an increase of sales in the past. Doritos has an opportunity to reinforce brand image and recognition by leaning away from traditional Super Bowl advertisements and reusing the ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ campaign.

Threats: One big threat to Doritos business is the new laws that are cracking down on some of the harmful ingredients used in their chips. Kim (2024, September 3) tells us that Doritos contain artificial colors and flavorings like, “Red 40, Yellow 5, and Yellow 6.” Kim (2024, September 3) goes on to say that, “These artificial colors have been linked to various health issues. For instance, Red 40 has been found to contain benzene, a cancer-causing substance. Yellow 6 has been associated with hyperactivity, allergic reactions, and asthma.” These health concerns are not flying under the radar. Some lawmakers have taken notice of the fact that highly processed foods like Doritos have detrimental health effects. Chris Nesi (2024, October 2) in his article from the NY Post titled, “California law could see Doritos, Cheetos and other colorful snacks removed from schools over common ingredient,” explains that the state of California has taken action by banning some of the harmful ingredients used in Doritos. Nesi (2024, October 2), tells us that,

“Gov. Gavin Newsom signed the California School Food Safety Act, which outlaws a variety of artificial color additives . . . The law puts food manufacturers on notice that they have until the end of 2027 to purge the offending ingredients from their products, which include dyes like Red 40, Yellow 6, Yellow 5.” The fact that the state of California is taking action against some of the harmful ingredients in Doritos is a big problem. Doritos already has to change their formula if they want to stay on the shelves in California. If other states follow their lead, Doritos might not have to completely change their formula for all of the US. That day might be closer than it seems. Sandee LeMotte (2025, March 12), writer for CNN, points out that, “chemicals being targeted by legislative bills in 31 states include red dye No. 40.” Doritos will soon need to change their formula, not only to preserve their reputation, but also to preserve their product and company as a whole. The questions surrounding the safety of their ingredients pose the biggest threat to Doritos’ business.

PR Situation:

Doritos needs to reinforce their brand image and maintain their reputation as a giant in the tortilla chip industry. Some potential threats from lawmakers could affect brand perception, making it crucial for Doritos to maintain positive feelings of their brand. Although recent Super Bowl ad campaigns have not been a failure, they have not lived up to the standard of success that Doritos set during the original run of the ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ campaign. Therefore this provides Doritos with an opportunity to be proactive and bring back the beloved ‘Crash the Super Bowl’ integrated marketing campaign for the 2025 Super Bowl. Capitalizing on this opportunity could preserve their reputation and maintain public support for the Doritos brand.

Target Audience:

Doritos' target audience is geared towards millennials and Gen Z consumers. Going back to what Torossian (2024 October 13) said about the psychographics of the Doritos brand, he explained Doritos, "as a fun, edgy brand appealing primarily to younger consumers." This positioning as a fun and edgy brand is why Doritos appeals to these younger audiences.

Considering that a lot of Doritos' marketing strategies appeal to a lot of sports fans and gamers, it is safe to say that they are primarily targeting younger men with their marketing strategy. So Doritos target audience would primarily be aged 18-35 year old men that are looking for an exciting and bold snack. The 'Crash the Super Bowl' marketing campaign specifically targets a niche audience. Since Doritos is looking for someone to create the best commercial for their brand, they're also targeting filmmakers. Doritos needs to target people interested in filmmaking or small production companies who want the chance for the recognition of a Super Bowl commercial. This campaign is very interesting because doritos has to focus their marketing efforts on people who are interested in a niche skill/hobby as well as their typical target audience.

Objectives: S.M.A.R.T.

Awareness: Generate awareness among filmmakers that Doritos is bringing back the 'Crash the Super Bowl' campaign before the due date for entry. Doritos also looks to generate awareness of the campaign's contest among young male consumers leading up to the Super Bowl after the finalists have been chosen.

Attitude: Be seen as an engaging and adventurous brand before the commercial airs during the Super Bowl by leaning into the Doritos brand's rebellious identity.

Action: Have young male consumers in the target audience go to Doritoscrash.com and vote for their favorite ad once the finalists are selected. Doritos also wants to generate at least a 3% increase in sales during February, after the commercial airs on Super Bowl Sunday.

References

Adams, P. (2024, September 19). *Doritos revives 'Crash the Super Bowl' contest focused on fan-created ads*. Marketing Dive.

<https://www.marketingdive.com/news/doritos-crash-the-super-bowl-contest-advertising-returns>

Center for Disease Control. (2024, October 24). *Heart disease facts*. CDC.

<https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/data-research/facts-stats/index.html>

Decker, K. (2024, July 22). *State of the industry 2024: Tortilla chips gain ground*. Snack Food and Wholesale Bakery.

<https://www.snackandbakery.com/articles/111705-state-of-the-industry-2024-tortilla-chips-gain-ground>

Kim, W. (2024, September 3). *Do Doritos cause cancer?* Brio Medical.

<https://brio-medical.com/do-doritos-cause-cancer/#:~:text=Besides%20MSG%2C%20Doritos%20contain%20other,weight%20gain%2C%20and%20high%20cholesterol.>

LaMotte, S. (2025, March 25). *RFK Jr. wants to eliminate FDA's controversial food additive program. Here's why that matters*. CNN.

<https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/11/health/gras-reform-kennedy-wellness/index.html>

Nesi, C. (2024, October 2). California law could see Doritos, Cheetos and other colorful snacks removed from schools over common ingredient. *New York Post*.

<https://nypost.com/2024/10/02/us-news/doritos-mountain-dew-and-cheetos-and-other-colorful-snacks-will-be-banned-from-california-schools/>

Sports Media Watch. (2024, 14 February). *Super Bowl Ratings History (1967-present)*. Sports Media Watch.

<https://www.sportsmediawatch.com/super-bowl-ratings-historical-viewership-chart-cbs-nbc-fox-abc/>

Team TBH. (2024, September 15). *A case study on Doritos' "Crash the Super Bowl" campaign*.

The Brand Hopper.

https://thebrandhopper.com/2024/09/15/a-case-study-on-doritos-crash-the-super-bowl-campaign/#The_Genesis_of_%E2%80%9CCrash_the_Super_Bowl%E2%80%9D

Torossian, R. (2024, October 13). *Doritos marketing and PR strategy: An overview*. Medium.

<https://ronntorossian.medium.com/doritos-marketing-and-pr-strategy-an-overview-7990b0b3a5a4>