

Member/Volunteer Engagement Campaign

2019 Winner: U.S. Apple Association

Entry Title: U.S. Apple Association; Munch Madness

Project Overview

For the first time in over 50 years, the most produced apple by volume in the United States is no longer the Red Delicious. Gala now holds the top spot—a sign of diversifying consumer apple tastes and more interest in unique flavors and sweeter, crunchier textures. Fresh Plaza reported in 2018 that “consumers are shifting towards producers or products that resonate with their values and are ready to pay a premium price for such choices.” To celebrate the growing taste for diversity and the delicious and subtle differences among some of the most popular apple varieties grown in the United States, the U.S. Apple Association held its third annual Munch Madness competition, with design, messaging, social media, and strategic support from Mekanik. Munch Madness features an interactive bracket-style voting contest in which consumers vote online to advance their favorite apple variety to the “National Chomp-ionship.” The competition coincides with the NCAA basketball tournament to build on the excitement of March Madness. It reinforces healthy eating habits by helping consumers learn more about the different apples they encounter in the produce aisle, find ideas for incorporating them into their diets, discover the myriad important health benefits of apples, and spark debate among consumers and apple growers alike about what America's "favorite" apple variety truly is.

Goals/Objectives

The Munch Madness campaign was designed to help consumers keep apples top-of-mind outside of the popular harvest season and to move beyond some of the most popular varieties with which they are likely familiar already—such as Red Delicious, Granny Smith, Gala, or Honeycrisp. Though the top 16 apple varieties by U.S. sales include many nationwide popular choices, some are only popular at the regional level, giving consumers the opportunity to encounter new flavors. The pun-filled messaging offered reminders for why apples are a delicious part of a healthy diet, and the gamification of apples and their unique qualities during the March bracket frenzy provided an engaging way for people to discover other popular flavors to try. Because the competition was held over a series of several weeks—like the NCAA Tournament—voters were encouraged to come back and continue their engagement over an extended period. In addition, this campaign was designed to make the USApple's grower members feel appreciated and excited about some healthy competition among their apples and to have an exciting consumer-facing campaign to share with their networks outside of the apple industry. With 7,500 apple growers nationwide, this campaign provided an opportunity to give them fun and engaging ways to celebrate the apples they grow and to share the unique and delicious qualities with their personal networks. The U.S. Apple Association's goal was to increase the campaign website's visits and the number of individuals who voted, and who returned to vote again.

Strategy/Tactics

Munch Madness centered around an interactive online bracket, visual identity, messaging, and social posts to bring the campaign to life. Featuring an online bracket and digital “player cards” with images of the top 16 apple varieties (measured by U.S. sales), Munch Madness personified America's favorite apples and heightened a sense of healthy competition by pitting them against each other. Each variety was seeded into the bracket to go “core-to-core” against the other varieties through four pun-filled rounds of consumer voting: The Vitamin-C 16, the Edible 8, Fiber Four, and National Chomp-ionship. The interactive bracket allowed consumers to learn more about each apple variety’s specific traits—flavor, color, texture, and other qualities through the player cards when voting. Each player card provided basic stats for each apple—like a basketball card—to identify whether the apple variety is mild, sweet, or tart, and how best to enjoy them (ex. fresh, in a pie, salad, etc.). At the top of each card, the apple was featured in a “headshot” with sneakers and a sweatband—a nod to the excitement and silliness of the competition. Through the creative use of fonts, iconography, color, and pun-riddled messaging, Mekanik brought to life an atmosphere of healthy competition. The Munch Madness campaign was designed to drive interaction with the applevsapples.com bracket website and garner votes from website visitors. This engagement generated awareness of the different apple varieties and reminded visitors of the numerous health benefits of eating apples—from maintaining a healthy weight to the potentially decreased risk of developing heart disease, cancer, Alzheimer's disease, and more. Various USApple members, including apple growers, suppliers, marketers, and other industry stakeholders also promoted the contest to rally their social networks for votes to support their favorite varieties.

Success Metrics/Results Achieved

The 2018 Munch Madness campaign received more than 30,000 website visits, engaged 3,000 individual voters, and received thousands of social engagements through the course of the campaign. The Envy apple, a popular but newer variety, won the competition, which lends exciting publicity for a trending apple. With apple growers and marketers rallying around specific varieties and engaging with their networks to come out on top of the competition, members of the apple industry became increasingly competitive—even to the point of controversy—on social media. The network of apple growers, suppliers, marketers, and fans for Envy apples banded together to show strong voting support to their favorite flavor, leading it to victory for the second year in a row. Passionate fans of other varieties railed against Envy's back-to-back "Chomp-ionship" victory on social media, claiming that the Envy camp had somehow fixed the competition. Though Mekanik verified that Envy's win was legitimate, the excitement and passion around apples on social media gives a healthy produce aisle staple an alluring new spin to attract shoppers. USApple gained hundreds of new social media followers through organic and boosted posts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and numerous agricultural trade publications wrote about Munch Madness, including *The Packer*, *Good Fruit Grower*, and *Ag Daily*, which are popular outlets among U.S. Apple members. Online news articles featuring apples outside of the harvest season help to raise the U.S. Apple Association's profile and showcase their efforts to encourage

healthy eating among the general public, which supports a thriving apple industry as well.

Learn more

[Click here to view:](#)

[Campaign Logos](#)

[Campaign Logo and Image](#)

[Apple Images](#)

[Campaign Screenshot](#)

[Campaign Smartphone Image](#)

[Campaign Winner Image](#)

Association Website:

www.usapple.org