

How KFC gets the media to do their marketing for them

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Last week **KFC** released a chicken-scented sunscreen, which “sold out” in three hours. You’ll no doubt have seen the gleeful puns and all-caps headlines that followed.

A quick search on Google News pulls up [95 news sites](#) who covered the stunt (and counting). In the U.S. it was first covered by HuffPo and [People](#) around 12 p.m. ET, later moving to the likes of Elite Daily and the [Daily Mail](#).

This morning the U.K. media jumped in too, with everyone from [Marie Claire](#) to nationals like the [Telegraph](#) and the [Evening Standard](#) posting articles about the product.

Some, like [People](#), actually received a bottle, describing the smell as “revolting.” Others just used information from KFC’s [retro microsite](#) alone.

What you might have missed in all the hyperbole: There were only ever 3,000 bottles to give away. But while the freebies might be elusive, the free publicity for KFC is very, very real.

The site now reads: “This was a limited-time offer and we ran out of the KFC Extra Crispy Sunscreen. Please accept our apologies in the form of this amazing website that you can still look at.”

The PR stunt was just that: a stunt. One that saw the media — hungry for content — play right into the Colonel’s hands. In the summer news slump everyone is thirsty for content. It fits the bill: big name + bizarre thing.

The sunscreen has seen 11,000 mentions on **social** media since it hit the internet yesterday, said Brandwatch analyst **Kellan Terry**. While 75.9 percent of all sentiment-categorized mentions are positive.

“KFC has found both advertising and social success with their new ad campaign,” he said. The sunscreen spot follows the same formula that has been used by another W+K client” Old Spice. “Its irreverent and unconventional, and people love to laugh and watch the ad as it unfolds. These types of spots are tailored for multiple platform success.”

And media outlets took the bait. **Digital** publishers like BuzzFeed have changed the landscape, upping the stakes as publishers feel increasingly pressured to [chase scale](#). With the dominance of **Facebook**, too, they are also looking for share-worthy content. This was an easy win.

While most sites don't display a share count, Huffington Post's story had [2,200 shares](#).

KFC has a long history of playing the media. The sunscreen follows KFC's [two edible nail varnishes](#) — flavored Original and Hot and Spicy — released in Hong Kong back in May. But they never reached the public, only the offices of the [BBC](#) and the [New York Times](#). A Google News search for the story displays over 300 results.

Then there was the fried-chicken shaped [keyboard and mouse](#) released in Japan. Those too were not for sale.

Wieden+Kennedy's retro infomercial video promoting the sunscreen has amassed [200,000 views](#) since it was posted on YouTube yesterday and 51,000 views on KFC's Facebook page.

And add one more publisher to the list when this post goes live. Ah, the irony.

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