

UT students cook up Krystal tailgating promotion

Integrated Marketing Communications in the University of Tennessee's College of Business Administration is a senior-level, marketing elective for undergraduate students. A team-based, client project class, students are asked to apply their four years of business-knowledge training to develop a real-world integrated marketing communications plan.

Last spring, students worked with The Krystal Co. in developing a two-month (September/October) Knoxville-area promotion to enhance image, revenue and profitability.

The company: In 1932, Krystal's first customer, French Jenkins, ordered six Krystals with coffee and spent 35 cents. Seventy-five years later, the Krystal chain owns more than 420 restaurants in almost a dozen Southern states, with 31 stores in the Knoxville area.

The second-oldest fast-food chain in the country, the company has remained at the forefront of the industry, being innovative in its menu and operations and becoming a popular Southern icon for its small, square sandwiches.

Today, the brand is positioned as a fun, iconic part of life in the South. Its current target consumers, those 18 to 54, make up

the heaviest fast-food users, particularly during late night. Its eating contest, the Krystal Square Off, is officially recognized as the World Hamburger Eating Championship and is one of the country's most well-known eating contests, garnering national and worldwide media coverage.

The students: Undergraduate students Reid Clark, Cary Dunning, Emily Redberg, Amanda

Robertson and Jennifer Vakili, supervised by Cindy Raines, course lecturer and director of communications for the College of Business Administration.

The approach: Over the course of the semester, the group acquired the tools and skills to develop an integrated marketing communications plan around its proposed two-month "Game-Day in the Sack" promotion.

Analyzing both its own customer research and data provided by Krystal, the group demonstrated that a viable marketing opportunity existed for a tailgating package. The students evaluated Krystal's positioning, customer attitudes, competitive offerings, niche opportunities and pricing strategies. They looked at key messaging — what Krystal wants to communicate about the promotional offering; traditional marketing avenues (print, broadcast, outdoor, etc.); nontraditional ways of going to market (guerilla, viral and street marketing); the Internet; point-of-sale; editorial coverage; sampling; and couponing.

"The new tailgate promotion will increase brand awareness as well as provide an exciting new offering during football season," Redberg said. "The promotion is in sync with Krystal's positioning of providing consumers with multiple indulgences and fun."

The result: With the message "Krystal's Got Your GameDay in the Sack," the group proposed a combination of targeted marketing ele-



A commercial for the "Krystal's got your GameDay in the Sack" tailgate promotion is filmed for The Krystal Co.

ments to reinforce the convenience and personalization of its program. Its target market: medium- to heavy-users of Krystal between the ages of 18 and 54 who enjoy tailgating. As envisioned, the program will deliver two-month revenue of \$192,000 against a marketing budget of \$125,000.

As proposed by the team, customers will be able to put together a personalized tailgating package consisting of various product and drink offerings. Each product (i.e. Krystals, Cheese Krystals, Krystal Chiks, etc.) will be offered in sacks of 25 and sold at a discounted price. Customers could preorder their packages with as many sacks as desired of each offering and schedule a pickup time before their tailgate party.

"Working with this class was a real pleasure as well as an eye-opener to how college students look at our brand," said Brad Wahl, director of brand marketing for The Krystal Co. "The marketing plan developed by this team is such a perfect fit for our brand as it brings together two well-known Southern traditions — football and Krystals! Bringing these two elements together just makes great business sense."

The group allocated its budget to media appealing to football fans, including WVLT, Channel 8 (game-day broadcasts), ESPN and local news broadcasts, as well as the News Sentinel and News Sentinel Game Day Preview supplements.

"Our commercial and broadcast schedule will allow us to appeal and speak to UT football fans within our target market on a personal basis," Clark said. "We plan on using the current Krystal story approach but using tailgating stories instead. As the game-day promotion becomes more popular and more memories are made with Krystal and tailgating, there will be the opportunity to create more 'tailgating story'

commercials."

A significant percentage of customers surveyed by the group indicated that they would be more likely to purchase a Krystal tailgate package if they had a coupon. As a result, the group recommended that coupons be distributed at game-day tailgates and at Krystal's drive-through windows. The team also included a coupon on a tailgating menu distributed at the drive-through that described the program — how to order, when to order and sack prices. The team budgeted an average tailgate package order of \$60.

Sampling of products available in the Game-Day promotion will take place on UT's campus during pre-game activities. Posters will also be displayed in the drive-throughs of all 31 Krystal locations in the Knoxville area.

"These point-of-sale advertisements will increase awareness of the promotion and simplify the purchase decision," Vakili said. "We also hope that the point-of-sale displays and the coupons distributed at the local Krystal locations will work together to encourage trial and repeat purchases of our promotion."

Additional suggestions included pitching media stories focused on new ways to tailgate and Internet banner ads flashing "It's Tailgate Time in Tennessee" linked to the Krystal Web site.

"The team did an excellent job considering the brand's identity along with some great consumer input to develop the promotion. This type of research and thought helped them develop a promotion that could have a tremendous impact on sales and profit during the fall," Wahl said.

Interested in participating as clients of the University of Tennessee College of Business Administration's student programming? Contact Cindy Raines at craines1@utk.edu.