

VOL 02 ISSUE 29 | NOVEMBER 2021

# INDUSTRY WEEKLY DIGEST

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management

[surrey.ac.uk/SHTM](http://surrey.ac.uk/SHTM) | [@SHTMatSurrey](https://twitter.com/SHTMatSurrey) | [#SHTMatSurrey](https://www.instagram.com/SHTMatSurrey)

## SOCIAL STORIES

Whilst the COVID-19 Pandemic led to the shuttering of bricks and mortar food service businesses, innovative operators turned to social media and other digital means to maintain brand awareness and engagement through diverse tactics including loyalty programmes, gamification and influencer/celebrity tie-ups.

In this digest, **Mark Ashton** explores this trend and identifies which key operators are exploiting these opportunities and where this may lead in the future.

Have a great weekend!



## INNOVATIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA BY THE FOOD SERVICE SECTOR

### MARK ASHTON

In an attempt to drive brand engagement, particularly with a younger audience and often with a mind on digital sales growth and home delivery, operators have innovated through **gamification**. For instance, Pizza Hut recently launched a gaming platform through Twitter and influencer activations with the end goal of becoming the go-to pizza for gamers, whilst Vapiano launched its first augmented reality Instagram game, which gives guests the chance to win free Vapiano food for a year. McDonalds and Chipotle have also ventured into this space and KFC went so far as to launch a gaming console with inbuilt chicken warmer! Indeed, the appointment of KFC's new Chief Marketing Officer from Nintendo reflects the growing importance of gaming to consumer-facing brands including the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) sector.

Brands have also capitalised on **tie-ups with celebrities, influencers and other brands** often with the objective of improved digital sales. On this, McDonald's has aimed to boost mobile growth with the Famous Orders platform. The chain's celebrity tie-ups are a key part of driving app downloads and expanding membership in its new mobile-based loyalty programme. One such example is its teaming up with singer Mariah Carey to launch The Mariah Menu this Christmas as it continues to seek to elevate its brand, boost app engagement and drive sales. An example of a brand tie-up is Chipotle who are bringing their annual 'Boorito' promotion to the metaverse through Roblox, a gaming platform, with an aim to reach younger diners where they are. In addition, C3, a food tech platform, has created an innovation hub to develop delivery-only brands with digital content influencers and reach lucrative younger audiences.



FOLLOW OUR  
RESTAURANT INNOVATION  
LEARNING COMMUNITY POSTS:  
[COLLECTION / TWITTER](#)

The Pandemic may have also been, at least in part, the catapult required to launch **loyalty programmes** in the QSR sector. Amongst these are Burger King with their 'Royal Perks' programme offering rewards, free daily perks and member only exclusives, and Chipotle, who gamify their rewards with personalised challenges to earn extra points and collect achievement badges - they claim to be the first major restaurant brand to launch badges as part of a loyalty programme.

Along with these marketing-focused uses of social media, operators are also **innovating with similar channels in other areas, including HR**. Indeed, Chipotle have been trialling the use of TikTok as a recruitment tool with candidates being invited to submit creative short-form video resumes. Itsu has also tried gamified training, which they see as a combination of gamification and realism using simulations.

To the **future** - I predict we will see continued focus on the innovative use of these channels and beyond marketing, but in doing so brands will need to be careful not to alienate traditional franchisees.