



Case Study:

McDonald's - HACER

Year: 2023



This case study was prepared for the client McDonald's for the HACER campaign to provide Hispanic students with financial support that makes their higher education dreams more attainable while building a positive brand reputation among the growing demographic. It was developed and designed by Alma DDB. In the Media Connections & Content Strategy Impact category, it won silver. In the Best Hispanic Cultural Insight category, it won bronze.

Executive Summary

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hispanic families suffered economically. For many Hispanic students, college was no longer an option due to financial obligations. The McDonald's HACER National Scholarship serves to provide Hispanic students with financial support to attain their goals of higher education. In doing so, the HACER program also seeks to build positive brand recognition for McDonald's. Due to the pandemic, applications for the HACER program declined, likely because students no longer viewed college as an option. Alma DDB created a campaign to increase the number of applications, specifically by Hispanic applicants, by telling the story of a past scholarship recipient and how it changed his life. This campaign resulted in a 9% increase in applications.

Definition of your challenge

College enrollment for the fall of 2021 for Hispanic students declined by 2.8% due to the pandemic negatively affecting Hispanic families economically. McDonald's sought to increase the number of applications to their scholarship program, HACER, by 5% within the Hispanic community.

The Key Insight and Strategy

Regardless of their academic capabilities, each student needs support in their college experience. This audience is native to digital, heavily influenced by social networks. More often than not, these students are English or bilingual speakers. Our secondary audience is parents and educators, an important touchpoint to drive students' awareness of McDonald's HACER. Educators are more native to digital and English or bilingual speakers, while parents vary in familiarity with technology and can be solely Spanish, English, or bilingual speakers. Due to the uncertainty created by the pandemic, focusing on present and immediate financial needs took precedence over future needs, like college, for many Hispanic families. There was a clear tension between the loss of morale and the relentless desire for achievement. This led to our opportunity: students' needs for McDonald's HACER became even greater. This meant that the program could make a larger impact. The 2021-2022 campaign was about motivating Hispanic students and showing them that pursuing higher education was still within reach through McDonald's HACER via tools, workshops, and resources. Leveraging Hispanic students' desire to HACER Más (Do More) and re-establishing their confidence in applying for the scholarship was a key strategy to achieve McDonald's goal.

Execution

HACER Más focused on a docu-style campaign centered around a former scholarship recipient, Erick Soto. The campaign aimed to share Erick's background, family, and upbringing. This created a deeper connection and inspired others to follow his path, demonstrating that attending college with McDonald's HACER scholarship support is possible. To reach our target audience, we utilized various channels, including television, OLV, social media, direct partnerships, CRM, public relations, search, and display. Creative assets were developed in both English and Spanish to direct traffic to the McDonald's HACER website, which hosted valuable resources for students and parents, including the scholarship application. Additionally, CoolSpeak provided virtual motivational speaking sessions and workshops for students, parents, and educators.

In 2021, we expanded our CRM efforts beyond mere reminders for students to submit their applications. We introduced three email campaigns: a welcome email, essay writing tips, and educational resources. Our Public Relations initiative, *Puertas Doradas*, encouraged students to open the "golden doors" to educational opportunities through social media and a paid partnership with Dascha Polanco, motivating students to apply and participate in our workshops. To ensure effective outreach, 60% of our media buy targeted Hispanic students, and in 2021/2022, we increased the percentage allocated to parents and educators from 30% to 40%. This comprehensive approach was crucial in engaging with students, educators, and parents, going beyond just advertising McDonald's HACER and focusing on providing tools and resources for prospective Hispanic students and their families, addressing more than just their financial needs.

Results

Through the campaign that targeted Hispanic students, McDonald's HACER program saw a 9% increase in applications, which almost doubled the established goal of a 5% increase. With 137 million impressions earned, we achieved a 452% increase from the prior year (24.8 million impressions). The campaign generated 9MM in reach via influencer activations, achieving an overall ER of 2.96% (above the TikTok ER benchmark of 2.2% and the Instagram engagement rate of 1.9%). Facebook generated an ad recall lift of 224K and a lift rate of 11%, exceeding the 9% benchmark. We also increased engagement with McDonald's CRM program, significantly surpassing benchmarks with an open rate of 27.6% and a click-to-open rate of 32.5%.

Industry Impact

The McDonald's HACER 2021 campaign is a prime example of what a solid multicultural strategy, built on detailed, genuine, and specific insights can do. We understand that Hispanics are future-oriented, and value hard work to elevate their families. However, once their ability to focus on the future was limited by the pandemic and financial hardships became more jarring, we were able to identify that gap and saw an opportunity to create more nuanced and timely connections with our target audiences. The campaign also demonstrates how pinpointing generational differences among Hispanics allows marketers to target generations of consumers more efficiently. The 2021 HACER campaign illustrates how a solid multicultural strategy can bring real value to a brand and help positively impact the Hispanic community.