

**Candy Clash:
M&M's caught in the crossfire**

MANAGEMENT DECISION

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Candy Clash: M&M's caught in the crossfire

20 January 2023

In the conference room, on Friday morning, 10 a.m., the brand management team and the company's key players including executives discussed all options. After two hours of discussion, the decision was made: it was time to act. After first ignoring the negative reactions, it was decided to now react with a creative stunt to show the world how ridiculous the reactions were and shifting the narrative back to the brand, taking the spotlight of the brand opponents.

The team agreed on making advantage of their upcoming Super Bowl commercial in three weeks by planning a whole satirical campaign to shine a light on the beloved spokescandies, starting on Monday, 23 January 2023. This campaign is executed via social media and thrives through various collaborations. It centers on the characters stepping away from their roles as M&M's spokescandies and pursuing other careers, while M&M's introduces a new spokesperson and an overall rebranding. Ten posts were planned on @mmschocolate's official social media accounts, with the final posts marking the climax on the day of Super Bowl 2023. In parallel, multiple brand collaborations were initiated.

23 January 2023 - Post 1 & 2

The first post was a statement about M&M's not having expected the spokesperson's changes would be noticed or even lead to turmoil. Therefore, the decision to take an 'indefinite pause' from the spokescandies and replacing them with actress Maya Rudolph that 'will champion the power of fun' to help M&M's build on its mission 'to create a world where everyone feels they belong' was announced. The second post announced that Rudolph will be acting as the brand's 'Chief of Fun'. With these actions, M&M's subtly acknowledges the influence of pressure from the right on the marketing change while emphasizing that the goal was not to create polarization (Exhibit 1).

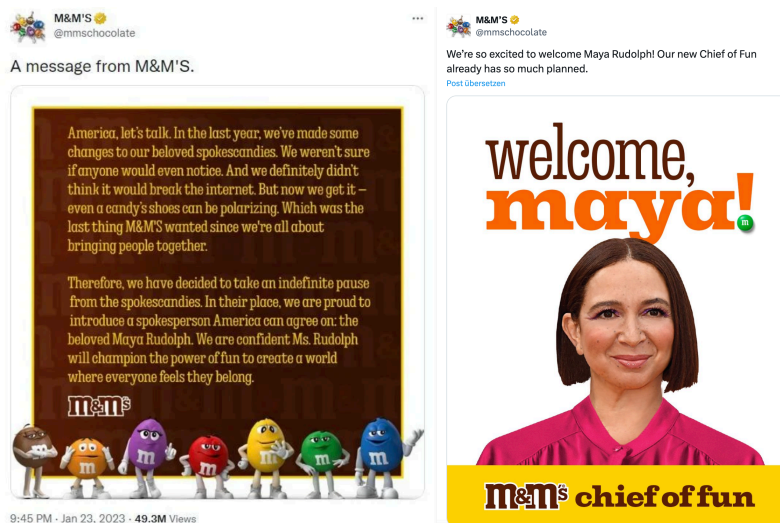


Exhibit 1: M&M's first announcements (M&M'S, 2023)

In a press release, Maya shared her excitement about partnering with M&M's and described it as an honor due to her lifelong love for the candy. She teased that it would include plenty of fun moments and suggested that her younger self would be delighted by the opportunity. At the same time, it was announced that Maya will play a prominent role in an advertising that will air during Super Bowl LVII on February 12 (Jeffrey, 2023). In response to a request by Forbes, M&M's stated that the spokescandies were embarking on a new path to pursue other passions. M&M's mentioned that it would provide further details on the spokescandies' new pursuits over the next few weeks (Elsesser, 2023). The announcements were followed by a vast amount of press coverage, insinuating that M&M's gave in and Tucker Carlson 'won'.

25 & 26 January 2023 - Post 3 & 4

In a first teaser shot, with the caption 'Yum' and a wink emoji, Maya announced the first change: As data proves, many people love Maya, therefore here face is going to be painted on all M&M's replacing the 'm'. In the second teaser shot, with the caption 'another cool change to your favorite candy', Maya announced that the brand name 'M&M's will be replaced by Ma&Ya's' (M&M'S, 2023).

27 January 2023

M&M's revealed that the indefinite pause of the spokescandies is going to end soon and clarified that the spokescandies will return at the upcoming Super Bowl: "Rest assured, the characters are our official long-term spokescandies" (Peysner, 2023).

1 & 2 February 2023 - Post 5 & 6

'A lot has been happening at Ma&Ya's over the last week, we figured you might need a recap...' is the caption of the next three-part post. The first part features a short video showcasing the change in the candy's print. The second part includes another short video revealing the brand's rename. Finally, the third part consists of an image with the caption 'stay tuned.'. Beginning with a summary of the two previous changes, the third teaser, 'A clamsational change to your favorite candy', introduced the third change: The candies will now be filled with clams (M&M'S, 2023).

8 February 2023 - Post 7

Five days before the Super Bowl Commercial, M&M's posted a picture of the new Ma&Ya's packaging with the caption 'What could be better than this? Enjoying Maya's clamtastic creation, Ma&Ya's Candy Coated Clam Bites.' (M&M'S, 2023).

13 February 2023 – Super Bowl Commercial - Post 8, 9 & 10

Finally, Maya Rudolph's anticipated debut as the new spokesperson for M&M's took center stage during a commercial break of Super Bowl LVII. The 30-second spot starts with the removal of an advertising poster with the spokescandies, followed by her introducing the rebranded candy singing 'Come with me to a magic land, bite-sized candies filled with clams'. Thereafter, consumers tasted the new candy with a disgusted face expression. It ended with Maya in magic land, surrounded by human dressed in the spokescandies' colors. In the background the yellow spokescandy appeared accompanied by red holding a 'HELP' sign (**Exhibit 2**).



Exhibit 2: M&M's Super Bowl Commercial 2023 (Laughing At The TV, 2023)

After the game, M&M's clarified their 'Ma&Ya's' rebranding and the 'Candy Coated Clam Bites' as a publicity stunt, ensuring no one missed the humor. On M&M's social media three posts were published. First, an animated video, 'PLEASE STAND BY', showing colorful stripes in the TV picture, continuous beep sound and a spinning candy with 'm' print. Second, 'We're back.', finally showed all spokescandies happily united in an animated video. Lastly, the press conference ad called 'Back for good.' ended Maya's short-lived role as the brand's face. The original spokescandies announced their return, with humorous remarks from the purple and orange M&M's characters. **Exhibit 3** (p.4) is an extract of @mmschocolate Instagram feed showing all 10 posts (lower right corner to upper right corner).



Exhibit 3: M&M's announcements Instagram feed (M&M's, 2023)

Further parallel actions

Additionally, as announced on January 23rd, parallel to the ten posts on the official brand accounts, M&M's shared updates on what happened to the individual spokescandies during their pause. Therefore, M&M's seized the opportunity to engage in a series of strategic collaborations across various sectors. Leveraging their iconic brand status, M&M's partnered with well-known influencers, celebrities, established brands, and platforms for innovative marketing campaigns. Here is an overview of the roles each character fulfilled during this time:

Orange created a Spotify meditation playlist featuring guided meditations and relaxing tracks to help listeners find inner peace (M&M'S, n.d.).

Yellow peanut M&M's has become Snickers' new spokesperson, featuring a photo of Yellow with a Snickers 'S' attached to its belly and the caption humorously suggesting, 'Think you can pass as another brand's spokescandy? Maybe you just need a Snickers.' (Exhibit 4, p.5).



Exhibit 4: Snickers Post Yellow (Snickers, 2023)

Red was present on eBay to sell M&M's collectibles in his own store (Brody, 2023). Brown became a guest presenter on Cheddar News, where she shares her views on representation in business (Cheddar, 2023). Blue was a sports commentator (Mars, Incorporated, 2023). Purple collaborated with Cheryl Porter, one of the world's best vocal coaches, to create music on TikTok and Instagram. Porter uploaded four posts featuring the purple character (Porter, 2023). Green teamed up with Jazerai Allen-Lord to design a sneaker and is announced as a Zappos shoefluencer (**Exhibit 5**).



Exhibit 5: Green designs own sneaker (Falcon, 2023)

Summary

Exhibition 6 illustrates and sums up all communication actions taken either on the official accounts or using partnerships on a timeline.

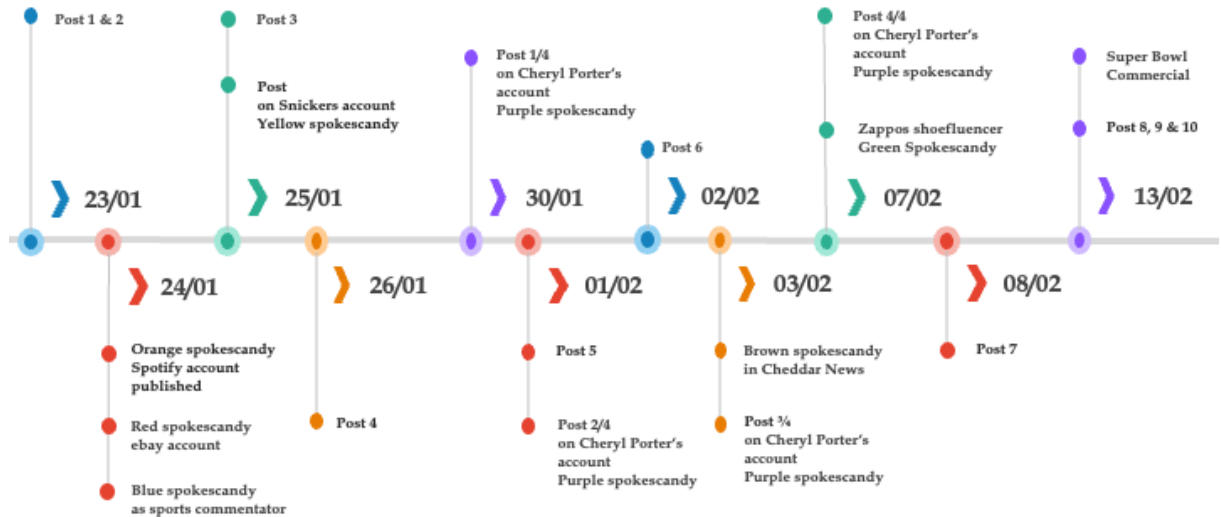


Exhibit 6: Timeline communication actions taken January 23 – Super Bowl 2023 M&M's (Own illustration)

Following the humorous M&M's 2023 Super Bowl campaign, the M&M's decided to keep the changes made to the spokescandy in 2022, despite criticism from conservatives. The spokescandies have remained unchanged ever since, reflecting M&M's unwavering commitment to fun and inclusivity. In addition, M&M's reaffirmed its mission to foster connections and empower people, doubling grants for women who challenge the status quo. These efforts were unveiled on International Women's Day 2023 and underscored the commitment to spreading joy and empowerment (M&M'S, 2023).

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