

Introduction

There are certain things in pop culture that unify all the internet users of the world for a short period of time. Whatever it may be will consume everyone's thoughts and conversations and in some cases become an actual story in the news cycle. Then as soon as they enter our minds, the next big pop culture thing comes along and we quickly move on and forget. One of these things in early 2019 was the World Record Egg on Instagram. Everyone was talking about the World Record Egg. They wanted to know who was behind it and what it meant. The reveal was highly anticipated and highly successful. Although it is not perfect, the World Record Egg made its mark in pop culture history, which is what makes it such a successful and powerful campaign.

Background

On February 4th, 2018, Kylie Jenner shared a photo of her newborn daughter announcing her name to the world, which garnered over 18.3 million likes, setting a new world record. On January 4th, 2019, an account on Instagram called @world_record_egg posted a photo of a single perfect egg on a white background with the caption, "let's set a world record together and get the most liked post on Instagram. Beating the current world record held by Kylie Jenner (18 million). We got this!" (World Record Egg, 2019)¹. Within 10 days, the World Record Egg surpassed Kylie Jenner's record, and in the weeks that followed it continued to gain millions of likes. As of now, in 2021, the post has over 55.5 million likes. Instagram users worldwide wanted to be involved in beating the world record, and it became a central part of conversations and the subject of news articles and broadcasts. It was a moment in pop culture where the entire

¹ Egg Gang [@world_record_egg]. Photo of an egg. *Instagram*. 4 January 2019.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/BsOGulcndj/>

world was unified for one common goal: to help an egg get more likes than the ever-so-famous Kylie Jenner.

After successfully beating the record, the buzz around the World Record Egg refused to die down. While the world was watching, the World Record Egg account continued to post more content on Instagram. The egg was given the name Eugene and over several weeks, the account shared additional photos of the egg. However, in each picture it showed the egg cracking little by little. This caused the buzz around the egg to grow even more. The entire world was speculating about who was behind the World Record Egg and more importantly, what was going to happen when the egg cracked open. Each post documenting the egg cracking garnered over 5 million likes and thousands of comments.

The success of the World Record Egg was also grabbing the attention of marketing, advertising, and public relations professionals alike. While the entire industry discussed this one Instagram account, “one marketing agency claimed that a partnership with the egg would be worth \$10 million” (Jurberg, 2020)². The more people speculated, the more of a build up there was and the more valuable a partnership with the World Record Egg became. There was speculation over whether the whole world was just tricked into helping some corporate organization to launch an ad for some product or service or if behind the account was just a random person looking for a little fun and attention. The World Record Egg’s account eventually posted a photo of the cracked egg with football laces on February 1st to announce that it would

² Jurberg, Ash. “What Ever Happened to the World Record Egg That Cracked Instagram?” Medium. Better Marketing, December 21, 2020.
<https://bettermarketing.pub/what-ever-happened-to-the-world-record-egg-that-cracked-instagram-5226cc9359f8>.

be partnering with Hulu to answer everyone's questions and reveal its identity after the Super Bowl on February 3rd, 2019 (Tobin, 2019)³.

Before the reveal video could air, the New York Times revealed the identity of the man behind the World Record Egg. Many people expected it to be a marketing ploy from some company or political campaign, but in reality, it was a British man named Chris Godfrey who worked as an advertising executive in an agency. When interviewed, Godfrey discussed why he chose a picture of an egg to try and beat the world record and he responded saying “an egg is recognisable to millions of people across the globe, no matter what your age is. It has no race, religion, or political agenda. An egg is... an egg. You can't hate an egg. And Kylie Jenner being dethroned by an egg? You have to admit it would be funny” (Jurberg, 2020). He was strategic but in a comedic way. He knew that beating the record held by Kylie Jenner would require help from people from all over the world, so he knew it was important for him to pick an image that was universally recognizable. However, he also had a thorough understanding of his target audience which consisted primarily of millennials and Gen Z. These two age groups tend to favor a random, quirky style of comedy, and Godfrey knew that this audience would appreciate the idea of Kylie Jenner being dethroned by an egg. When questioned about why Godfrey chose to partner with a nonprofit rather than a large company, he discussed that “they weren't as interested in making money as they were in promoting positivity” (Leskin, 2019)⁴.

³ Tobin, Ben. “We Finally Know What That Mysterious Egg Instagram Account Is All about: Mental Health.” USA Today. Gannett Satellite Information Network, February 4, 2019. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2019/02/03/world-record-egg-instagram-mental-health-awareness-campaign/2765315002/>.

⁴ Leskin, Paige. “The Person behind Instagram's World Record Egg Has Been Revealed, and He's Using the Most-Liked Photo to Send an Important Message about Mental Health.” Business Insider. Business Insider, February 4, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/instagram-egg-identity-revealed-2019-2>.

The question of who was behind the account had been answered but there was still one huge unanswered question on everyone's minds: what would happen when the egg cracked after the Super Bowl. The choice to hold the big reveal immediately following the Super Bowl was not random. The Super Bowl is a major cultural event for people year after year, regardless of whether or not they enjoy football or whether or not their favorite team is playing. When the Super Bowl ended, the world held its breath awaiting the big announcement. Hulu posted a video to their platform titled "The Reveal". When people clicked on it, they were met with a short clip showing what they had all been waiting for.

When the egg cracked and crumbled, it was revealed that there was nothing inside the egg at all. It was not an ad for a company after all. The World Record Egg simply cracked under the pressure of social media. Chris Godfrey did not know if it would work when he initially posted the photo, but when the World Record Egg gained as much success and attention as it did, Chris Godfrey reached out to Mental Health America, a nonprofit that provides mental health resources and advocates for mental health legislation, to engage in a partnership. The end of the video directed the audience to visit Mental Health America's website, and the idea of "cracking under the pressure of social media" became the overall theme of the campaign.

This entire campaign was incredibly strategic. It was no coincidence that it started on social media, because the people that were most likely to be struggling with the pressure of social media were going to also be the ones who would be engaged in a social media trend like the World Record Egg. If Hulu had released a video after the Super Bowl of an egg cracking under the pressure of social media that directed viewers to Mental Health America without the build-up on social media, no one would have cared. They would have been encapsulated by the game, the commercials, or the half-time show. The big reveal was as successful as it was because

of the way the World Record Egg account built excitement. It specifically allowed everyone to feel like they are taking part in a significant cultural moment and then used that momentum to engage the world in an important conversation regarding mental health.

After the big reveal, Godfrey was not ready to let the account die there. He wanted to continue to share positive messages and resources about mental health. Therefore, Godfrey enlisted a team of friends to work on the World Record Egg account with him, and they continue to post on the account sharing mental health resources and information to this day. As a group, they are known as the “Egg Gang” and they create content for Instagram and TikTok to continue to spread the message about mental health.

Results

The response to the World Record Egg was overwhelmingly positive. Using the World Record Egg Instagram, the Egg Gang opened an online store where it sold merchandise featuring the World Record Egg. All proceeds from this store were donated to a variety of nonprofits that advocate for and provide resources about mental health, and a different nonprofit was benefited each day. One of the beneficiaries was a nonprofit called Young Minds UK, which was founded by Emma Thomas in 1993. Young Minds UK saw an immense increase of 147,000% in account discovery after being promoted by the Egg Gang on the World Record Egg account and through the merch store (Jurburg, 2020). The CEO of Mental Health America, Paul Gionfriddo states, “the egg mattered because it helped us reach a population in need. It elevated the conversation to an international level to reach even more people, to help more people” (Gionfriddo, 2019)⁵. This

⁵ “Why the Egg Matters.” Mental Health America, February 11, 2019.
<https://www.old.mentalhealthamerica.net/blog/why-egg-matters>.

further exemplifies how successful the use of social media was for this campaign as well as exemplifies the way that Godfrey knew exactly how to reach the audience that most needed to hear this message about mental health, which are the two most significant factors to the success of the campaign.

After the initial buzz settled down, the Egg Gang behind the World Record Egg was still adamant about keeping its message out in the public sphere. The Egg Gang began utilizing other social media platforms like TikTok in addition to Instagram to continue to share mental health information and resources. Additionally, the Egg Gang started posting what became known as “good eggs of the week” on TikTok. The account shared stories of people around the world and the positive impacts their actions are having on the global community, especially in regard to mental health advocacy.

The World Record Egg was able to gain so many impressions and so much engagement because Chris Godfrey was able to use social media in order to comment on the overuse of social media itself. “Marketers agreed that the youth had been the key to the egg’s success” which makes sense since the younger generations are the ones most frequently using social media (Bromwich and Maheshwari, 2019)⁶. Rather than creating a commercial or posting on Facebook, the account knew its target audience was young people and knew where young people would be most active and why they were the most important ones to receive the message. By creating a huge cultural event that the whole world could participate in, the World Record Egg was able to get their message through to teenagers and young adults who regularly struggle due

⁶ Bromwich, Jonah E., and Sapna Maheshwari. “Meet the Creator of the Egg That Broke Instagram.” The New York Times. The New York Times, February 4, 2019.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/03/style/world-record-egg-instagram.html>.

to the constant pressures and judgement that come inherently when people spend half their lives trying to impress others through social media.

The success of the World Record Egg did not go unrecognized. Chris Godfrey ended up being named one of TIME's top 25 most influential people in 2019 (Jurberg, 2020). This list also featured prominent pop culture figures like Donald Trump and Cardi B. This is significant national recognition which he never would have achieved without this stroke of brilliance. It goes to show that ideas that seem crazy can end up being incredibly successful.

Although the commotion surrounding the egg has now died down after several years, as it would with any social media post, the message and importance of the post remains. When people remember the World Record Egg, they will forever remember it as a moment in pop culture history that unified people around the world. It had a huge cultural impact and strategically positioned its message right in front of its target audience to provide valuable resources to young people who were commonly cracking under the pressure of social media

Critiques

Overall, the World Record Egg campaign was incredibly successful, but that does not by any means imply that it was perfect. While it is admirable that the Egg Gang wanted to continue to share its message with the world, to an extent, the message was lost when it continued to post content on the same World Record Egg account. Although all the new content fulfilled the mission of educating the audience on mental health while integrating an egg theme, it also buried the original posts deep within the account, making it more difficult to find the initial powerful messaging that stemmed from the World Record Egg. It could be argued that the Egg Gang

should have created a separate account to continue posting information, so that the resources and links to mental health nonprofits could remain the most prominent aspect of the account.

Concurrently, there was significant room for audience confusion when the Egg Gang made the decision to promote multiple nonprofit organizations rather than maintaining a sole partnership with Mental Health America. While it is always a great thing for multiple nonprofits to get the recognition and support they deserve, it becomes difficult for people to sort through multiple options to find the right resources for them. Not to mention, most people are lazy by nature and do not want to research multiple organizations to see which one has the right resources for them or to see which one they would like to financially support, meaning some people would be lost along the way. Streamlining all attention and donations to one organization would have been easier for the audience to understand and would have ultimately resulted in more donations and support for mental health advocacy.

Additionally, the World Record Egg account missed a huge opportunity to promote mental health resources during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Back in the early months of the pandemic, nearly everyone in the world was at home to prevent the spread of the virus, and they were spending a large portion of their time scrolling on social media. At the same time, there was a massive increase in people struggling with mental health due to the isolation and lack of social interaction with others. The Egg Gang could have taken that as an opportunity to break their record or pull some other stunt with their account in order to promote virtual mental health resources. At a time when their audience was in drastic need of mental health support, it would have been an opportune time to reunify the public to break another record. It would have made people feel like they were a part of something at a time when everyone was isolated from the rest of the world. This would have brought the account back into the realm of

pop culture relevancy and started necessary conversations about mental health resources for people who were struggling while the world was in quarantine.

Finally, the World Record Egg built up so much momentum and was making significant amounts of money for mental health nonprofits through the online merch store, but it chose not to continue this long term. As of now, the World Record Egg account does not have a link to a store nor does the account provide a link in its bio to direct page viewers to any particular nonprofit. It does not even have a link in its bio to additional resources; it lacks a link in the bio altogether. While the information posted on the World Record Egg feed is still valuable, it no longer directly benefits any particular nonprofit. The account is not being used to its fullest potential, and given how successful the initial campaign was, it is puzzling as to why the Egg Gang is no longer directly partnering with a nonprofit. At the very least, the account would be a more significant resource if it directed its audience elsewhere for additional information or to make a donation.

Recommendations

Our recommendation for the World Record Egg is to create an independent nonprofit. It was a bit confusing when the account was directing its audience to various nonprofits and fundraising for different nonprofits around the world. Now that it is not promoting any specific nonprofits, the opportunity to create its own is wide open. If the Egg Gang were to create its own nonprofit, it could announce it with another large social media stunt that redraws in the audiences' attention. Then it could create another platform in the form of a website where people can access the educational information about mental health that is already being shared on the World Record Egg Instagram account. Fundraising could also be a crucial aspect of the new

platform, and the money fundraised could be redistributed to other organizations that have been previously supported by the Egg Gang by the new nonprofit directly, rather than having multiple options and confusing the public. Having one central location to direct the public for resources, fundraising, and education would make it easier to track website traffic which would help to measure the success of the social media posts based on how many click-throughs the website gets from social media.

The creation of a nonprofit and website platform would naturally lead to the Egg Gang launching another social media campaign. Since the initial campaign in 2019, the World Record Egg has lost its clout in the social sphere, so launching a new campaign would help it to regain cultural relevance and bring its mission back into the publics' minds. Establishing a social media campaign would re-establish the World Record Egg as well as Chris Godfrey as leaders in mental health advocacy.

Conclusion

The early 2019 World Record Egg photo on Instagram took the world by storm. The global understanding of an egg attracted people from all over the world and led them to unify in order to beat the record of most liked post on Instagram of all time. The world became addicted first to the idea of beating out Kylie's record, and then it became obsessed with finding out what would happen when the egg cracked, and finally it started a meaningful conversation about mental health. The image of the World Record Egg became a pop culture icon and greatly benefited mental health nonprofits such as Mental Health America and Young Minds UK amongst others. Although the things that unify internet users are only relevant for a short period of time, the World Record Egg will never be forgotten due to the revolutionary nature of the

campaign in conjunction with the continued efforts of the Egg Gang to take a stand and promote mental health advocacy.

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