



REST IN PEACE,  
**CHOCO TACO**





# Summary

In the midst of every crisis lies an opportunity. No...really.



Publicly leaked news about the impending demise of Klondike's Choco Taco – one of America's most beloved and nostalgic ice cream treats – turned a usually sweet conversation into a very sudden, sour, and substantial public backlash.

From one innocuous leak, a vitriolic Twitter trend and eruptive series of 6,000+ disparaging broadcast and television stories quickly overtook culture. All creating a tsunami of negative media impressions and brand perceptions.

## **Crisis or opportunity?**

Within a few short weeks, through the creation of a highly atypical crisis response, 'Rest In Peace, Choco Taco' enabled Klondike to take back control of the conversation, transform brand haters and trolls into empathetic supporters, and save the company's critical summertime ice-cream sales.



# challenge

Klondike's business was threatened during the worst possible time: peak summer, key sales season for ice cream



Klondike is a beloved American ice cream franchise known for its brand essence of spontaneous enjoyment and its dynamic portfolio, including Choco Taco - Unilever's former #1 OOH SKU and a \$28M phenomenon [Unilever Sales Data].

Although Klondike's position was strong relative to the market, its market share was still down from one year prior in January 2022 (-.6%), and as summer 2022 arrived, the outlook for the category continued to worsen: sales for ice cream was down -5% YoY [IRI, 52 Weeks ending May 22, 2022], leaving many brands with tough decisions to make.

Klondike was forced to streamline its offerings and cut the SKU with the most supply chain challenges, which unfortunately, was Choco Taco.



# problem

The brand faced a public outcry... and had to do whatever they could to get consumers back on their side and to keep them buying Klondike.



Once named the 'most beloved and innovative of all American ice cream [New York Times, [Choco Taco, The Snack of American Summers, Is Discontinued](#), July 26,2022], Klondike understood fans would be disheartened.

But the extent of public disappointment was beyond belief and went viral in a way no one could have predicted. From celebrities like Chrissy Teigen and Joe Jonas sending Klondike public hate trending on Twitter to being featured in over 6,000+ broadcast and television news placements [MuckRack], jilted Choco Taco lovers were a pack uniting across the nation.

The brand had a crisis on its hands and making more Choco Tacos was not an option given production constraints.



# insight

We realized Choco Taco  
wasn't just an ice cream treat.  
It was a childhood friend.  
And many needed to  
process its loss.



As we listened to fans' lament, we realized many of the detractors were Millennials who enjoyed Choco Tacos from childhoods throughout the 80s and 90s; they were 67x more likely to buy Choco Tacos compared to other Klondike SKUs in their adulthoods [MRI] . During summer 2022, cultural conversation was centered around nostalgia, with searches around 'nostalgic snacks' up +180% and related queries around the '1990s' up +90% [Google Trends, Nostalgia, June 2022 – August 2022].

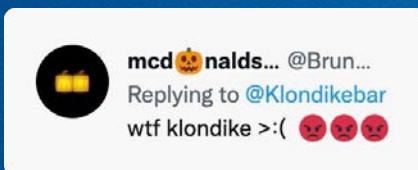
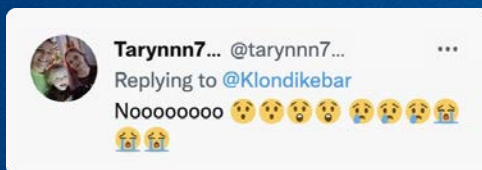
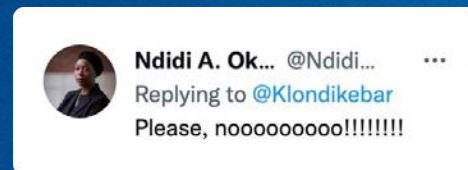
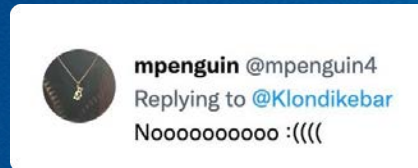
By ripping away the Choco Taco during a time this cohort had their childhood favorites top-of-mind, Millennials' emotional response to the discontinuation was severe. They felt personally attacked in their inability to attain the comfort of a treat they wanted, more than they had ever wanted it in the previous 20 years.

We realized that Choco Taco was more than an ice cream treat – it was a nostalgic childhood friend. This meant fans didn't hate Klondike; they LOVED Choco Taco so much that they felt compelled to publicly process its loss.



# strategy

Turn detractors back into advocates by giving them the time and space they needed to grieve.



Conventional wisdom would have Klondike issue a legally approved apology, cut the losses and move on. But as a fun-loving brand who prides itself on being unconventional - asking people to go to extremes to show 'What Would You Do For a Klondike' –we knew disheartened millennials deserved more than a tone-deaf corporate statement.

So, we became the fun-loving *friend* they could lean on in a time of need. By saying goodbye together as a community, Klondike transformed from a brand into a supportive, empathetic ally, showing fans that while Choco Taco was going away, everything they loved about it was still there in Klondike.



# The campaign

A farewell tour that literally went the extra mile to give Choco Taco lovers a proper send-off for their favorite ice cream treat.

Tapping into fan's emotional connection to Choco Tacos, Klondike flipped its iconic jingle "What Would You Do for a Klondike" into "What Should WE Do with the remaining 912 Choco Tacos" at headquarters?

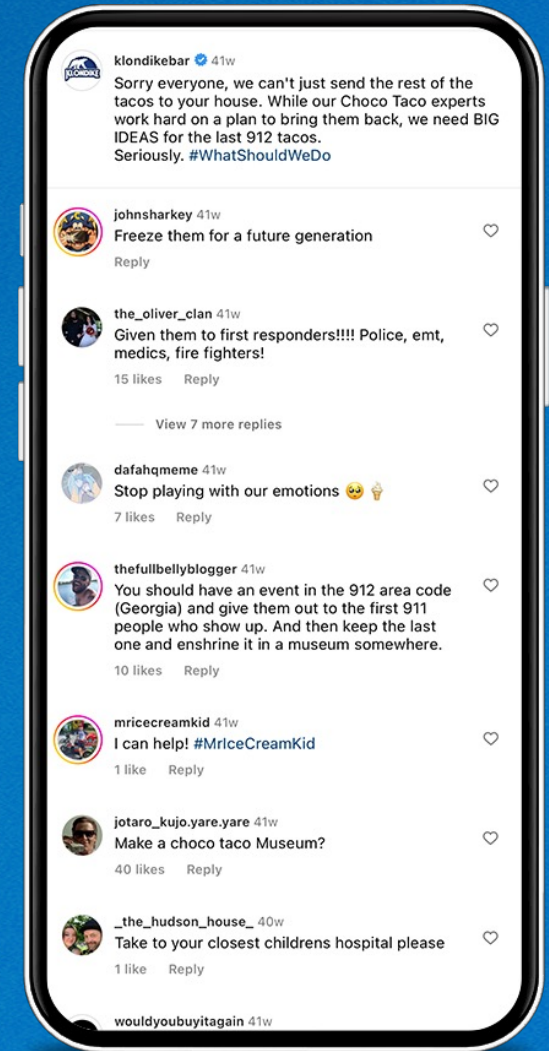
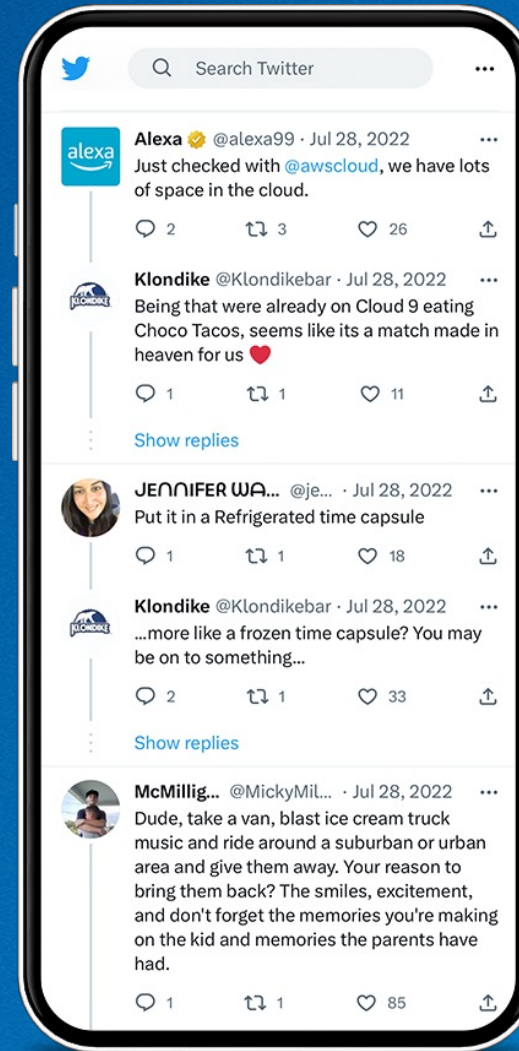




# The campaign

We showed up where the conversation was already happening: on Twitter and on Instagram...

With the help of Twitter and Instagram to make sure fans nationwide could weigh in, Klondike got **more than 2,000 responses** and as expected, not all were positive suggestions. But the brand chose to embrace the hate while giving people what they wanted – one final chance to enjoy their beloved Choco Tacos. Klondike made sure fans felt heard, while keeping true to its brand essence of spontaneous enjoyment.





# The campaign

... and we gave Americans a chance to say goodbye with an iconic Farewell Tour...

Responding while the cultural conversation was still happening, Klondike kicked off its Choco Taco farewell tour just over one month after the discontinuation news broke.

The brand brought fans along for the ride by amplifying tour updates with paid social to ensure crowds - both physically and virtually - in every stop along the way. When a fan suggested Klondike take the last 912 Choco Tacos to 'a beach or ball game' in the 912-area code - Savannah, Georgia - the brand did just that: they handed out tacos at a Savannah Bananas baseball game. When another fan suggested they hide Choco Tacos in a freezer in Death Valley, Nevada - reenacting the movie plot from the movie "Rat Race" - the brand created an oasis in the desert with Choco Tacos. Others still had a chance to get their Choco Taco through a digital scavenger hunt that took place on Klondike's Instagram.

But one submission captured the sentiment of the internet better than the rest: "Take those last 912 & shove them where the sun don't shine." So that's exactly what Klondike did. They went to the very city with the least amount of sunshine in the U.S. - Bellingham, Washington - and handed out tacos to delighted crowds.





# The campaign

... always staying true to the foundations of the Klondike brand to win consumers (and business) back.

Instead of creating branded content with controlled messaging, which would have slowed down the brand's response time, they invested in responding to fans in funny, personal, unexpected ways, everywhere and anywhere they were: in-person, on Twitter, on Instagram, and with paid support so no fan got missed.

This omnipresence allowed the brand to remind fans across the nation why they not only loved Choco Tacos, but why they love Klondike.

As a result, fans rewarded the brand with an epic turnaround.



**Complex** @Complex

Official

.@Klondikebar came through with the most epic care package ever. #brainfreeze [instagram.com/p/dFYGswPthX/](https://www.instagram.com/p/dFYGswPthX/)



**hailadams** @klondikebar

6w 1 like Reply



**Kristin** @kholstekuhnho

Replying to @Klondikebar

This is the best and funniest thing i have ever seen



**anandjacob1** Well played Klondike!

1h Reply



**Fancy Bigeon** @ombrebird

@Klondikebar A+ decision



**Skoog** @Skoog · Aug 1

Replying to @Klondikebar

LETS GOOOOOOOOOOO



**Amanda Basf...**

Replying to @Klondikebar

I love you Choco Taco!





When Choco Taco first started spiraling out of control, Klondike's goal was to prevent the discontinuation of the sub-brand from having a negative impact on the larger brand's reputation and sales.

With Klondike's agile response, a growing crisis turned into a brand-building opportunity.





# The results

We transformed negative sentiment towards Choco Taco into positive sentiment towards the Klondike brand within 8 weeks (the full duration of the campaign) by showing disheartened fans that the emotional void left by Choco Taco could be filled by Klondike:



**2.46 billion impressions**

[Cision, Muckrack] – more potential impressions than from a Superbowl ad [Digiday, [Here's What a \\$7M, 30-second Super Bowl ad can purchase in digital media in 2023](#), February 10, 2023]



**Over 140 earned placements**

in mainstream media outlets [Cision, Muckrack]

**14X increase in positive sentiment**

in earned media: 7% at the heart of the crisis to 100% positive after the campaign ran [Cision, Earned Sentiment, July 2022 – September 2022 ]



**135% growth in positive media sentiment** of Klondike during the three-week duration of the Farewell Tour [ Brandwatch]



**116% growth in overall media mentions**

of Klondike in August 2022, compared to one year prior [Brandwatch].



# The results

We stemmed sales declines during the critical summer period by shifting demand for Choco Taco into demand for other Klondike SKUs.



Following the launch of the campaign, consumers began to engage not only with Choco Taco, but with the full Klondike portfolio. And the story continued to shift toward Klondike as it unfolded, converting negative noise for Choco Taco into positive engagement for Klondike



By September, Choco Taco took the backseat in the narrative; Klondike was the hero. #4aklondike was the trendiest topic on social for the Klondike brand, overtaking all Choco Taco- specific hashtags and keywords [Brandwatch]

- The phrase outpaced competitors' key hashtags by more than 5 million potential impressions with an 88% hold on share of voice [Brandwatch]



By the end of September, the brand saw a behavioral shift in searching for Klondike as a brand over Choco Taco, with Klondike at 83% popularity on Google, and Choco Taco at 35%. [Google Trends, Choco Taco vs. Klondike, September 29-30, 2022]



# The results

And we maintained total ice cream summer period sales YOY... and beyond.



Klondike achieved double digit growth in sales YoY in Q3



RIP Choco Taco was a major differentiator from activities in market one year prior, and with Choco Tacos largely off the shelf at the time of our campaign, it's clear that our activities created heightened visibility and demand that drove sales back to Klondike's core portfolio.



Months later, the commercial success has been sustained with zero Choco Tacos on shelf



Klondike grew household penetration year over year despite losing all the Choco Taco-only households

[Unilever Sales Data]





In short: We did more than manage a crisis, we dominated share of voice (in a good way) and increased summertime sales of Klondike ice cream.