





HOW TO BUILD A

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GLOBAL CAMPAIGN SUNDAE

Ben & Jerry's values are baked (nay, frozen) into its culture and its ice cream, and the company has taken to exporting those beliefs by way of pints and petitions

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BY **SARAH STEIMER**



Ben & Jerry's celebrated its entrance into the U.K. in 1994 in its trademark quirky manner: by creating a special flavor with a funky name. Cool Britannia, a strawberry ice cream with chocolate-covered shortbread cookies and a fudge swirl, has since been retired to the company's famed Flavor Graveyard outside its Waterbury, Vermont, factory. The company's leap across the pond and into new markets has, on the other hand, flourished.



By way of the U.K., Ben & Jerry's entered other European countries, then Singapore in 2005, Australia in 2009, Japan in 2012, Brazil in 2014 and Thailand in 2016. In total, the brand's ice cream can now be found in 35 countries. The company sometimes makes a few special tweaks to its marketing and flavors, depending on the location. Some countries get flavors not found in the U.S. (Minter Wonderland in the U.K. and Ireland, If I Had 1,000,000 Flavours in Canada, Maccha Made in Heaven in Japan), and Ben & Jerry's will occasionally adjust the formulas if their pints are considered a bit large for a market such as Japan, or have names that are a bit too goofy for a serious food culture such as France.

By and large, though, much of what fans around the globe find in scoop shops and freezers stays true to the company's funky, hippie culture that began in 1978. Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield started the company in a renovated gas station in Vermont, a far cry from its shops in São Paulo, Brazil, or Auckland, New Zealand. The company introduces itself to new customers in much the same way the founders did in 1986 when they drove their "Cowmobile" across the U.S., handing out free ice cream.

"When we enter a country, in year one, our focus is establishing ourselves as the best ice cream," Ben & Jerry's CMO Dave Stever says. "It's all about the chunks, the swirls and then it's about the ingredients and the values-led sourcing of all those ingredients. As we continue, we'll bring the activism along as well."

Entering a new market means bringing the Ben & Jerry's mission along with the product, and when either is presented in tandem with the iconic green hills, spotted cows and blue skies, fans know it's authentic Ben & Jerry's.

Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield started the company in a renovated gas station.



Values-based Product

Taking a stand has been part of the Ben & Jerry's mission from the start. The Ben &

Jerry's Foundation was established in 1985 with a gift from Cohen, Greenfield and 7.5% of the company's annual pre-tax profits to fund community-oriented projects. The company's involvement in the community—global and local—has grown since.

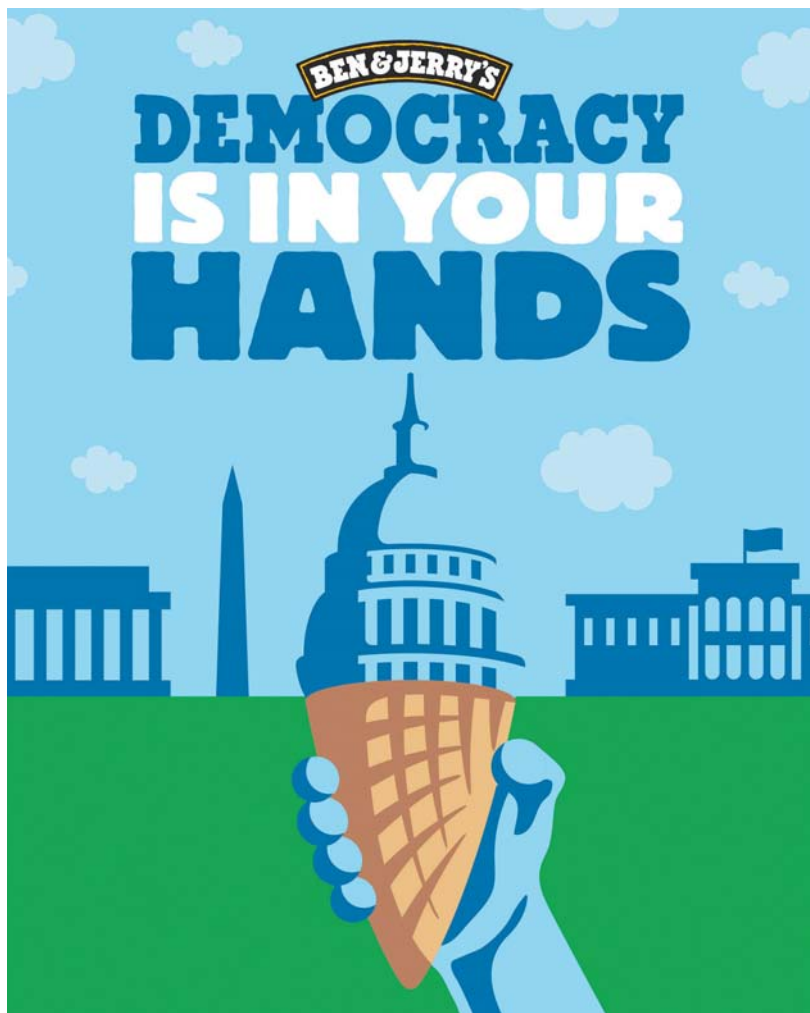
"We believe that the strongest bond you can build with your consumers is over shared values," Stever says. "There was an interview once with Ben and he was talking about the social mission and the interviewer said, 'Isn't your social mission just good marketing?' Ben kind of gruffed and said, 'If having a social mission is good marketing then let's hope more businesses do good marketing.'"

David Horowitz, creative director at Mekanism, where Ben & Jerry's moved its lead creative account in 2014, says the ice cream company's values drive the business. It's part of their marketing, he says, not a separate piece. Ben & Jerry's doesn't use the issues it promotes to sell ice cream, Horowitz says, but the ice cream is often used to amplify a message. For instance, the company launched Empower Mint to coincide with the 2016 election year and voter rights. "They see the ice cream as a vehicle that can shed light on these bigger social issues," Horowitz says.

Ben & Jerry's knows product launches gain national and international attention, which provides a platform for messaging on values. Cause marketing isn't unique to the company, but it can come across as opportunistic for many brands. For instance, Gucci's "Chime for Change" concert garnered little attention, despite headliners such as Beyoncé, Madonna and Jennifer Lopez. Adam Kleinberg, CEO of advertising agency Traction, says Gucci's efforts rang hollow: there was no obvious tie between the brand's air of elitism and the campaign's goal of raising women's voices.

"There are some brands that have really built a positioning around a core audience," Kleinberg says. "You take Patagonia and its stance on environmental issues: Their customers are pretty much all environmentalists. It makes a lot of sense, and taking that moral position for them has been really effective. Often brands with the best intentions will pick a cause that they care about, and they'll try to make a gimmicky attempt that doesn't do much for their brand."

Horowitz says the way Ben & Jerry's has



positioned itself throughout its history allows the company to talk with fans about its chosen causes.

"In marketing, when it feels like a brand is trying to attach itself to a cause, it can ring false," Horowitz says. "With Ben and Jerry's, [social values are] integral to their mission. That's always something that people have associated with Ben and Jerry's. When [the brand] talks about climate change or talks about voting rights, it doesn't feel opportunistic. It feels like a true expression of what the company believes, and that's why it goes right."

Jay Curley, Ben & Jerry's senior global marketing manager, told *New York Magazine* this spring that he considers one-third of his job to be an activist campaign manager.





He told the magazine that the company's employees get just as excited about brainstorming ways to further movements as they do about a new flavor.



Fair-trade, GMO-free Messaging

Consumers in the U.S. know the Ben & Jerry's model: ice cream flavors named after jam bands and musicians coupled with peace-loving and justice-seeking rhetoric. How this translates to countries less familiar with Jerry Garcia—let alone his namesake flavor, Cherry Garcia—is a little trickier. Yet Ben & Jerry's has a built-in solution to introducing its values to new markets: the product itself.

Look up any flavor of Ben & Jerry's ice cream online, and you'll get a full listing of ingredients as well as a description of "values-led sourcing." For example, the product may be free of genetically modified organisms, include cage-free eggs and other fair-trade products, and it's wrapped up in responsibly sourced packaging.

"Their values are infused in their product to begin with," Horowitz says. "How they source their ingredients, the removal of [genetically modified organisms] from their products, the Caring Dairy program. From a product standpoint, their values aren't something separate. They're part of the actual ice cream that they make."

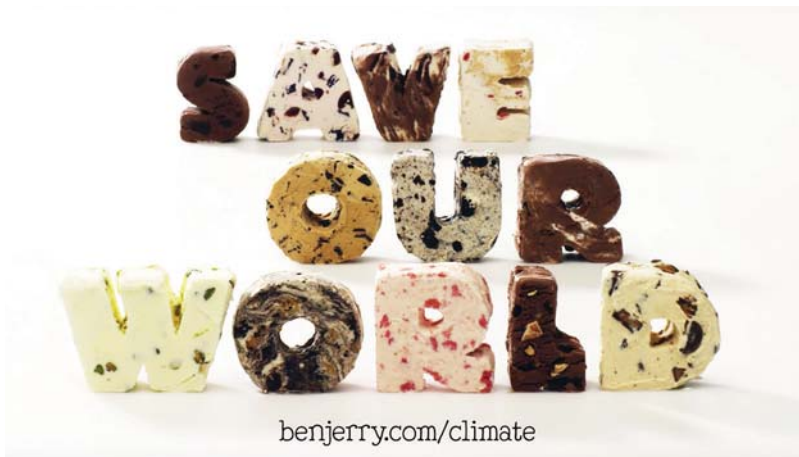
The company's "2015 Social &

Environmental Assessment Report" details milestones on reducing its carbon footprint (this includes placing a self-imposed price on carbon of \$10 for every metric ton of greenhouse gas Ben & Jerry's emits from its U.S. operations); rewriting its Caring Dairy program, which evaluates dairy farms against a set of economic, social and environmental criteria; completing the conversion of its sourced ingredients to those that are fair-trade and non-GMO; and boosting its Producer Development Initiative program. These programs are enacted globally—and sometimes even have more success overseas. For instance, 22.1% of chunks and swirls were purchased from values-led suppliers in North America in 2015, compared to 37.9% in Europe. The company also fully harmonized its Caring Dairy program over all its global regions.

Ben & Jerry's is one of about 2,000 certified B-Corp companies, a for-profit organizational designation bestowed on companies that meet standards of social and environmental performance, accountability and transparency. Stever says the designation brings companies together that want to make a difference in the world, and Ben & Jerry's has partnered with such companies as values-led sourcing suppliers. The collaborative approach has moved beyond the supply chain, as the company seeks out partners to help translate their values to new markets.

"When we have a campaign, we build a relationship with a local partner," Stever says. "That guides us as far as our approach, our tone, what consumers are expecting from us. We're not experts on all these issues. We bring in experts to guide us through those waters. It's been a great way for us to bring the ice cream and the fun to these issues, where the experts bring the knowledge and the deep understanding of how far we can go with consumers. We don't want to be a cause marketer, we want to be at the front end of social issues."

One close connection, however—Unilever's ownership of Ben & Jerry's—has been a source of indirect conflict in the ice cream maker's environmental stewardship work. Ben & Jerry's worked with other Australian organizations to campaign against a \$21 billion coal mine with the slogan, "Scoop ice



cream, not coal!” The blowback against Ben & Jerry’s came hard and fast by way of Australian MP George Christensen, who called for a boycott of Ben & Jerry’s. Christensen accused the company of hypocrisy because of Unilever’s relationship with Wilmar, whose sugar mills are at the center of a dispute with Australian cane growers. Amnesty International found Wilmar’s Indonesian operations source palm oil directly supplied or in part from regions with severe labor rights abuses.

“Sometimes we’ll be a little more progressive than our parent company, and that’s natural,” Stever says. “We’re able to coexist and understand that. There are certain things that we will be for that Unilever may not be for at this point in time. That’s natural and that’s a great tension to have. Along the way [Unilever has] made us better and I think we’ve made them better as well.”

Out of the Carton and Onto the Streets

Ben & Jerry’s participation in movements hasn’t been confined to its ingredients, but includes almost any global or local issue it deems important. Its involvement escalated on a worldwide level ahead of the 2015 Paris climate talks.

Part of the company’s climate change campaign included a new flavor, Save Our Swirled, made of raspberry ice cream, marshmallow and raspberry swirls and dark-and-white fudge ice cream cones. The flavor itself had layers of symbolism: The name was abbreviated to S.O.S. on the lid to urge immediate action, and the tiny cones in each spoonful were meant to give the impression of melting ice cream. The campaign took to the road in an emissions-free, retro-fitted Tesla ice cream vehicle to spread the message, and the company partnered with the community-based organization Avaaz to pull together signatures to be delivered to the United Nations. The flavor launched in 35 countries, 10 of which hosted climate marches with Ben & Jerry’s employees.

On the campaign assets side, Horowitz says the agency created work that could be easily translated from country to country, including a melting ice cream video. Horowitz says



the various markets Ben & Jerry’s exists in have some autonomy as well, providing each market the opportunity to use the campaign in a way that fits their media landscape and local initiatives around an issue.

Ben & Jerry’s delivered more than 10% of the 3 million signatures Avaaz presented to former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in Paris. Its involvement in climate change conversations hasn’t dissipated; the company released a sarcastic statement after President Donald Trump pulled out of the Paris climate agreement, titled “6 Reasons Pulling Out of the Paris

The Save Our Swirled campaign took to the road in an emissions-free, retro-fitted Tesla ice cream vehicle to spread the message.

