

McDonald's Sponsorships

The Ethics of McDonald's Sponsorships

McDonald's is a well-known fast-food chain throughout the world. In recent years, it has worked hard to broaden its menu offering and try to broaden its food appeal. It has introduced some healthier options and has also added higher quality food and coffee as well.

In addition to having thousands of locations throughout the world, McDonald's also has very strong brand equity and is generally considered one of the top 10 most valuable brands in the world. This has been achieved over many years through a combination of store locations, media attention, advertising and other forms of promotion, including sponsorships.

McDonald's is a significant user of sponsorship as a key form of promotion. Because of McDonald's long history in fast food offerings, there is a proportion of consumers that have a strong negative attitude towards McDonald's – because they perceive McDonald's as primarily selling “junk” food.

And McDonald's uses sponsorships in order to counteract this and create positive view of the company by doing good things in the community and for local groups.

For example, for many years, McDonald's have been involved in Ronald McDonald house and various other related health sponsorships. In many countries, they also are sponsors of sport and children's activities. However, critics argue that McDonald's should not be associated with anything regarding health or sport.

Student Discussion Questions

1. What is your current perception of McDonald's in terms of their food offerings? Do you think that they have worked hard enough to broaden and diversified their product offering or are they still primarily a fast-food chain?
2. Do you think that McDonald's is acting as a “good corporate citizen” in their sponsorship activities, or do you think that they are primarily interested in associating their brand with food and health?
3. Referring to the question above, provided that McDonald's is supporting worthwhile causes, does it really matter what McDonald's intentions and goals are?
4. Marlboro (cigarettes) is still one a strong brand in the world, despite not being able to advertise in many countries for decades. They are still allowed sponsorship of Formula One racing – do you think that is a suitable arrangement? And do you think it is conceptually different to the McDonald's and health and sport sponsorships?