# KFC’s Dirty Louisiana ad sparks outrage over ritualistic imagery and animal cruelty references



KFC’s ongoing marketing strategy, encapsulated in its "Believe" brand platform, has recently sparked significant backlash, particularly surrounding its latest advertisement featuring "The Dirty Louisiana" burger. This 20-second film, created by the agency Mother, portrays a group of avid KFC consumers in a darkened room, participating in what appears to be a ritualistic celebration of the burger. Viewers have expressed outrage, with many citing the ad’s visual styling and thematic elements as deeply problematic.

The depiction of individuals chanting and bludgeoning their cutlery against the table, paired with the inclusion of red napkins worn on their heads, has drawn comparisons to the controversial eating practices involving Ortolan buntings, which are now illegal in France. According to observers, this allusion to a practice that involves the force-feeding and consumption of small birds raises serious ethical concerns and hints at animal cruelty. The dish has been portrayed in popular culture, including notable TV series like "Succession" and "Billions," where it is treated with a sense of intrigue and decadence, leading to further discomfort among viewers regarding its portrayal in a fast-food advertisement.

Danielle Ruggles, the marketing manager for KFC UK & Ireland, responded to the criticism by suggesting that the ad's theatricality was deliberately designed to build an engaging and ritualistic dining experience, rather than a straightforward product endorsement. She claimed it highlighted the brand’s commitment to chicken while fostering a sense of community among its "Believers." Despite these claims, the ad has attracted a notable number of complaints; the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) confirmed that while the exact figures were not disclosed, the advertisement is likely to face scrutiny in light of public outrage.

Additional context can be drawn from previous KFC advertisements, particularly the "All Hail the Gravy" campaign, which has generated over 1,300 complaints. Critics maintained that the ad endorsed cannibalism and even glorified satanism, which led the ASA to assess whether it warranted formal investigation; however, they ultimately decided against further action, citing a lack of grounds for such measures. This controversy places the latest advertisement in a larger narrative of KFC's audacious marketing tactics, which have frequently walked the line between shock value and engagement.

Interestingly, the ad campaigns' provocative nature has not only drawn criticism but also sparked extensive public discourse online. Many viewers, particularly parents concerned about the appropriateness of the material for children, have vocalised discomfort with the campaign's disturbing imagery, as illustrated by the unsettling scene of a man seemingly submerged in gravy, which further adds layers to the conversation surrounding food advertising standards in the UK.

In a noteworthy tactical shift, KFC previously enjoyed a different kind of publicity with its "clean-eating" campaign—a promotional effort that debuted as a spoof on health trends. This campaign featured a fictitious vlogger promoting a healthy burger, only to reveal it as a ruse for the far more indulgent Dirty Louisiana burger. This cheeky approach resulted in a 39% increase in sales, illustrating KFC's ability to generate buzz, even amid controversy.

Overall, while KFC's marketing strategies have garnered both admiration and substantial criticism, they undoubtedly reflect a bold attempt to differentiate itself in a fiercely competitive market. As the advertising landscape continues to evolve, these campaigns—though polarising—contribute significantly to discussions regarding ethical marketing practices and consumer expectations in the modern age.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/top-story/new-kfc-ad-sparks-protests-as-gravy-gripes-hit-new-high)
* Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/top-story/new-kfc-ad-sparks-protests-as-gravy-gripes-hit-new-high)
* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/top-story/new-kfc-ad-sparks-protests-as-gravy-gripes-hit-new-high)
* Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/top-story/new-kfc-ad-sparks-protests-as-gravy-gripes-hit-new-high)[[2]](https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/top-story/kfc-all-hail-the-gravy-sparks-600-complaints-to-asa)
* Paragraph 5: [[3]](https://www.marketing-beat.co.uk/2025/03/20/kfc-new-campaign-comments/)
* Paragraph 6: [[4]](https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/kfc-trolled-clean-eating-trend-disruptive-burger-launch/1450471)[[5]](https://www.businessinsider.com/kfc-cleaneating-burger-campaign-was-prank-to-launch-dirty-lousiana-burger-2017-2)
* Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/top-story/new-kfc-ad-sparks-protests-as-gravy-gripes-hit-new-high)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/top-story/new-kfc-ad-sparks-protests-as-gravy-gripes-hit-new-high> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.decisionmarketing.co.uk/top-story/kfc-all-hail-the-gravy-sparks-600-complaints-to-asa> - This article reports that KFC's 'All Hail the Gravy' ad campaign has received nearly 600 complaints, with viewers alleging it promotes cannibalism and glorifies satanism. The 2-minute ad, 'Believe Part 2 All Hail the Gravy,' features a man being dunked into a lake and emerging as a KFC Mini Fillet. The Advertising Standards Authority is assessing these complaints to determine if further action is warranted.
3. <https://www.marketing-beat.co.uk/2025/03/20/kfc-new-campaign-comments/> - Marketing Beat discusses the backlash against KFC's latest ad campaign, highlighting that viewers find the ad disturbing and inappropriate for children. The ad's ritualistic imagery, including a man being submerged in gravy and emerging as a Mini Fillet, has led to calls for its ban. The campaign has sparked significant online discussion, with many expressing discomfort and confusion over its content.
4. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/kfc-trolled-clean-eating-trend-disruptive-burger-launch/1450471> - Campaign Live details KFC's strategy to launch the Dirty Louisiana burger by spoofing the clean-eating trend. The campaign involved a fake vlogger, 'Figgy Poppleton-Rice,' promoting a 'clean-eating' burger, which was later revealed to be a marketing ploy for the indulgent Dirty Louisiana burger. The campaign generated significant online engagement and sales, with the burger surpassing its sales target by 39%.
5. <https://www.businessinsider.com/kfc-cleaneating-burger-campaign-was-prank-to-launch-dirty-lousiana-burger-2017-2> - Business Insider reports on KFC UK's 'clean-eating' burger campaign, which was a prank to promote the Dirty Louisiana burger. The campaign featured a fake vlogger and a 'clean-eating' burger, which was later revealed to be a marketing strategy for the indulgent Dirty Louisiana burger. The campaign received mixed reactions online but led to increased brand awareness and sales.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2005/may/12/advertising.uknews> - The Guardian reports on a KFC advert that shows people singing with their mouths full, which prompted over 1,000 complaints from parents who felt it encouraged bad manners. KFC defended the ad, stating it was intended to be humorous and had been approved by the Broadcast Advertising Clearance Centre.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2005/mar/30/watchdogs.advertising> - The Guardian discusses the Advertising Standards Authority's ruling against a KFC Mini Chicken Fillet Burger ad, which was banned for misleading viewers about the product's size. The ASA found discrepancies between the advertised and actual product, leading to the ad's ban.