

Weightwatchers: Losing Weight and Brand Value

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SYNOPSIS

Beginning in 1963, WeightWatchers grew into an international, iconic brand by emphasizing healthy diet and interpersonal support. However, after decades of steady growth, Weightwatchers revenues peaked in 2012 and began declining until 2015 when popular media figure, Oprah Winfrey, announced that she had purchased stock in the company and joined the board. But WeightWatchers faced new challenges as GLP-1 weight loss drugs rapidly gained acceptance in the marketplace. Oprah resigned from the board and made public statements disclosing her use of weight loss medication and that she no longer believed that she felt obesity was driven by willpower alone but she thought it was also driven by genetics. Weightwatchers added a platform for consumers to access weight loss drugs and began de-emphasizing its weekly community support meetings. Weightwatchers recent advertising campaign promoted their joint weight loss strategy, but the campaign appeared to do little to stave off the declining profits.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In analyzing this critical incident, students should be able to:

1. Identify a brand's values and describe the role of community in reinforcing the brand's values
2. Examine trends impacting an industry and devise strategies to address these industry changes
3. Analyze the impact of a spokesperson's public statements on a brand
4. Investigate a company's brand promise and identify how employees should represent that brand promise
5. Appraise the impact of an advertising campaign on a company's performance

APPLICATION

This descriptive case was designed for an undergraduate or graduate course in branding, marketing communication, and/or marketing strategy.

KEY WORDS

Brand Promise, Brand Identity, Brand Promise, Brand Community, Spokesperson Theory

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