

Krystal De Souza
Professor Maya Koenig
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Colonel, I Salute You!

“It’s finger licking good!” This slogan always brought back memories to when I was a child growing up in the small Caribbean island of St. Lucia. I looked forward to my birthday lunch every year, as this was one of my favorite places to eat. It is amazing that even though Kentucky Fried Chicken – or known as KFC – was birthed in America, it somehow made its mark internationally. Although they came from humble beginnings, revamped their image and logo numerous times, and even underwent a name change, KFC nevertheless has grown into a multimillion-dollar company.

Founded by Harland Sanders who became known as “Colonel Sanders”, Kentucky Fried Chicken had very humble beginnings. It was started in the front room of a gas station in Corbin, Kentucky, which served as Sanders’s very first restaurant. Although he was the chief cook there, his love for cooking certainly did not stem from there (KFC). At the tender age of 7, Harland’s mother taught him how to cook since he would have to care for his two younger siblings while she worked (*Wikipedia*). Who would have known that Sanders would later go on (in 1940) to develop the special recipe of 11 herbs and spices for his famous fried chicken?

In 1952, Harland or “Colonel Sanders” as he now referred to himself – after the Kentucky Governor adorned him with the “Kentucky Colonel” title – wanted to do more with his chicken business, and decided to venture out into franchising in various towns. That same year, he succeeded in opening his first Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise in Salt Lake City with the help of Pete Harman. After a few years, more franchises were opened and soon enough Kentucky Fried Chicken and Colonel Sanders became a household name internationally. Ranking as #2 in the Forbes Top 10 Global Fast-Food chains, KFC owns a whopping 11,798 restaurants all over the world (O’Connor). It succeeded in expanding beyond the shores of America in countries like New Zealand (Brailsford) and Egypt (Keating).

Although the special and super secret “eleven herbs and spices” recipe has stayed constant over the years, in contrast, the logo of Kentucky Fried Chicken has evolved various times over the

years (Barboza). In the initial launch of the business, the logo was very simple; a black and white contoured drawing of the face of Colonel Sanders (since he has always been an integral part of the Kentucky Fried Chicken history), and the words “Kentucky Fried Chicken” under the drawing (Fig. 1). In this logo, the colonel appeared to have a more serious facial expression than in the proceeding logos where he seemed to be more “friendly” and his smile more prominent. In the logo designed in 1952 (Fig. 1), which is similar to the one in the initial launch, it is a bit difficult to identify his facial expression. However, it appeared as though he gave a forced smile. Furthermore, the bow-tie image gave the impression that he had a big head and an extremely small body. I don’t think the subliminal message of the food having negative side effects to the body is a message this company or any food company would want to portray. The typeface of the letters “Kentucky Fried Chicken” appears to be that of a serif typeface and had a somewhat mixed style between modern and transitional.

In 1977, the KFC logo changed for the first time in over 20 years. The font of the letters “Kentucky Fried Chicken” underneath the Colonel was swapped out for another font, which has a more pronounced serif typeface and is of modern style (Fig. 2). Artistically, it looked somewhat more creative than the previous one. The descender on the letter “K” was stretched really long so that it can form the dot (·) on the “i” from the word “fried. The colonel’s face appears slightly warmer than previous, and the smile does not seem to be forced as much. This logo was utilized from 1978 until 1991, and used interchangeably from 2014 to present (*History of All Logos*).

The KFC logo had a significant facelift in 1991 where color (red and blue) was introduced to the black and white color scheme for the first time (Fig. 3). Moreover, the name Kentucky Fried Chicken was dropped and its acronym “KFC” was utilized instead. The company decided that the time had come to portray a healthier image since the word “fried” had a negative and unhealthy connotation (*History of All Logos*). Additionally, new menu items (other than the usual chicken and biscuit items) would be introduced, so there was no better opportunity than then to change the name (Quinlan). The font was also changed to “a version of Friz Quadrata typeface” which appears to be of modern style and is possibly italicized (*Famous Logos*). Not only did the logo change, but the (outside) appearance of all franchise restaurants were revamped as well. “With this logo, the signature mansard roof on restaurants were updated from the brown shingles to the new red plastic strips” (KFC). Personally, I believe this change was for the better because the logo seemed to be more outstanding for several reasons: 1) the bold red color was more eye catching

(think about driving down the street and seeing a red roof, with a red logo - I would definitely want to see what this place is); and 2) the “KFC” letters are big and bold which I think would help in readability for both motorists and pedestrians. I believe the colors red and blue were chosen to give a patriotic feeling while simultaneously representing the roots of the company. There would be no confusion in any country that KFC is an American franchise. Moreover, the placement of the red and white stripes with the blue outline pulls reference from the American flag.

A few years later in 1997, the KFC logo was revised once more (for reasons unknown) by Landor Associates; a leading design agency that was founded in 1941. In this logo, the colonel was seen wearing a white suit with his black tie (Fig. 4). Sanders would often wear this attire when visiting his restaurants so adding that element (and a partial body) to the logo humanized it. Furthermore, his smile was recognizable — his teeth were actually visible in this version! I think that these types of changes (visible white suit and bowtie) in this particular logo were made to appeal to a certain group of people— corporate America! — business women and men. He looks very professional in this logo, but there is still a bit of warmth coming through his smile.

However, the ever-changing KFC facelifts did not stop there. It was revamped yet again in 2006 by San Francisco-based designer Tesser, which “featured brighter colors and a more distinctive and friendlier visage of the founder, while retaining his definitive black bow tie, glasses and goatee” (*Famous Logos*). The Colonel’s suit was replaced with an apron, which in actuality was what the Colonel wore when he would prepare a batch of his special chicken in the kitchen (Fig 5). The logo from 2006 had a more natural feel and appearance to it than all the others — his skin tone appeared more natural. I believe in this particular logo, the Colonel tried to target two audiences: families and business people. He wanted to reach 1) families and baby-boomers – to give a warm, “homey” feeling, after all, he does have the “grandfather” look and is wearing an apron which is symbolic of “home-cooking”; and 2) his bowtie and white shirt would continue to appeal to the working class. I believe the message here was “our chicken is for everyone!” Several other temporary logos were designed in the interim for KFC but used only for special events for example, the green and gold logo used during the cricket tournament of 2013-2014 in Australia, and this year’s (2016) cricket tournament in India (Fig. 6).

KFC has been quite innovative with their logos over the years. The various facelifts range from a black and white face of Colonel Sanders with a serious facial expression, emboldened with the words “Kentucky Fried Chicken”, to brighter colors with a more distinctive and friendlier

visage of the founder, retaining his black bow tie, glasses and goatee, with the acronym “KFC”. Despite all the changes, the KFC logo is recognized globally as one of the top fast-food restaurants among its competitors. The KFC logo can be found on the roofs and windows of all its franchises, to various merchandise such as hats, shirts and jackets, bags, luggage, beverage containers, writing tools, golf balls, and the list goes on. Based on the research of this company and their successful strides to becoming a well known fast food chain, I have but one thing to say—Colonel, I salute you!

Figure Reference

Fig. 1



"History of All Logos.": *Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) Logo History*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Feb. 2016. <<http://logoshistory.blogspot.com/2010/09/-kentucky-fried-chicken-kfc-logo-history.html>>

Fig. 2



"History of All Logos.": *Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) Logo History*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Feb. 2016. <<http://logoshistory.blogspot.com/2010/09/kentucky-fried-chicken-kfc-logo-history.html>>

Fig. 3



Famous Logos. N.p., n.d. Web. <http://www.famouslogos.us/kfc-logo/>

Fig. 4



“KFC.” *Logopedia.* N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Feb. 2016. <http://logos.wikia.com/wiki/KFC>

Fig. 5



KFC Logo, 2006 - present

“KFC.” *Logopedia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Feb. 2016. <http://logos.wikia.com/wiki/KFC>

Fig. 6



*The Green & Gold Logo used in
Australia during the 2013-14
Cricket Season*

(<http://logos.wikia.com/wiki/KFC>)

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