Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc.: Strategy with a Higher Mission
Or Farmed and Dangerous?

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Synopsis
After hitting its twenty year anniversary, owner Steve Ellis led an evolution of Chipotle’s message from “Food with Integrity” to an even higher mission, “Cultivate a Better World”. With his efforts, Ellis made dramatic steps to further embrace his commitment to fresh ingredients and realized that all aspects of operations management hold a critical element of their brand experience. Although in good faith, concerns arose around whether their message was understood by all, due to the nature of the content. Realizing this, Chipotle sought to embrace the use of share-worthy, rich content. Building from the success of past short films, Chipotle launched a four-part satirical series in hopes to educate the consumer using a technique known as “strategic entertainment”. However, this edgy technique has left the agricultural community upset with Chipotle, calling the brand “big food”.

Learning Outcomes
The outcomes of this case are:

1. Evaluate a brand’s organizational alignment to their mission.
2. Assess how a brand delivers resonance by applying the strategic brand management tool, the Customer Based Brand Equity model.
3. Evaluate how a brand embodies the four key principles of Conscious Capitalism.
4. Formulate a content marketing recommendation, in context of strategic brand management and Conscious Capitalism.

Application
This case is appropriate for both undergraduate and MBA levels in Advertising, Promotion, Marketing Practicum and Strategic Brand Management courses.

Key Words
Customer based brand equity model, conscious capitalism, Chipotle, brand management, content marketing, mission.

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