

# Death by Grimace: A Trend Timeline

Tracking how the McDonald's mascot became a TikTok killer.

On June 12, 2023, McDonald's marked the birthday of Grimace, one of its iconic characters, by launching a special meal box with a purple shake. Initially, despite their promotional efforts before the birthday, video views were low. However, by June 19, 2023, the numbers spiked, and it was not because of their initial public relations activities. What caused this sudden rise?

3.1 B

Views  
#grimaceshake

856 M

Views  
#grimacebirthday

Earlier, in October 2022, TikToks featuring the adult Happy Meal with McDonaldsland characters had fueled a small spike. In early June 2023, users began portraying Grimace as an evil and scary character, setting the tone for what was to come.

## VIDEO STYLES | CHALLENGE

The Grimace challenge became the top video style throughout the trend's lifecycle. As the trend developed, CapCut and other challenge tags gained popularity.

The simple #challenge tag drove much of the volume. Additionally, hacks, primarily under #mcdonaldshacks, played a significant role.

## TOP VIDEOS

The top TikToks were predominantly from large accounts with millions of followers. However, there were notable exceptions, with accounts as small as 10K followers recording 10M plays for their Grimace Birthday TikToks – indicating a widespread and organic trend adoption across different follower counts.

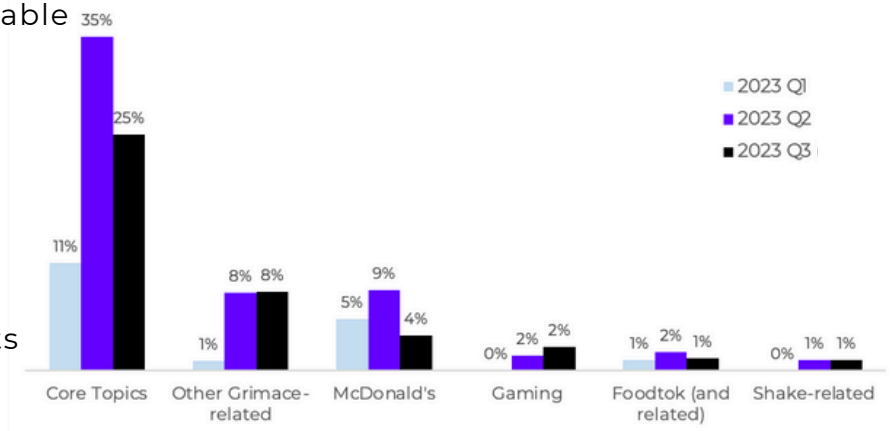


## MAIN TOPICS

Core topics like #grimace, #grimacesbirthday, and #grimaceshake were central to the trend. Additional hashtags such as #happybirthdaygrimace and #grimacebirthdaymeal were also popular. The trend gave McDonald's a noticeable brand boost.

Moreover, the trend diversified through the gaming and Foodtok communities, which added less obvious tags to their TikToks. In particular, Grimace temporarily revitalized interest in the Five Nights at Freddy's (FNAF) gaming community, with users combining FNAF themes with the Grimace death shake.

### Unique Communities Engaged



## IN-VIDEO ANALYSIS

The McDonald's brand name appeared as text on TikToks **90% more frequently** during the peak of the trend compared to other times, significantly boosting brand visibility. McDonald's TikTok account also saw a substantial spike in likes and followers during the trend.

**FOLLOWERS** +40M  
**BRAND LIFT** 90%

## KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Several factors contributed to the #grimacechallenge's virality:

- **Simple Premise:** The challenge involved drinking the shake and pretending to die, an engaging and straightforward concept.
- **Room for Creativity:** Creators had the freedom to express their interpretations, allowing for a variety of content that included different hobbies and communities.
- **Fun Theme:** The horror element resonated well with Gen Z, making the trend entertaining and shareable.
- **Nostalgia:** Grimace's historical character evoked empathy and curiosity, driving engagement.
- **Mascot Popularity:** Lovable mascots like Grimace are making a comeback, providing a nostalgic touch that appeals to a broad audience.





## IMPACT ON QUARTERLY EARNINGS

14%

Revenue increase

2X

Earnings per share

11%

Increase in global sales

17%

Increase in customer spend

Original Viral Video



3.7M

469.9k

@thefrazmaz

6/13/23

## Additional Opportunities

Here are some ways McDonald's could have further amplified the impact of the #grimacechallenge with ViralMoment's TrendSurfer dashboards:

**Early Trend Detection:** TrendSurfer could have identified the early indicators of the trend in early June 2023 when users started setting the tone around Grimace as an evil and scary character, allowing McDonald's to adjust their campaign strategy in real time.

**Content Optimization:** Detailed analytics on popular video styles and top-performing accounts could have helped McDonald's tailor their content to engage large and smaller influencers alike.

**Audience Targeting:** By identifying the diverse communities, such as gaming and Foodtok, participating in the trend, McDonald's could have created targeted content and collaborations to reach these specific audiences in unexpected niches.

**In-Video Branding:** The tool's in-video analysis showing increased brand name appearances could have guided McDonald's in creating more branded content to capitalize on this visibility boost.

**Cross-Community Engagement:** Understanding the cross-community engagement, particularly with the FNAF gaming community, could have inspired further collaborations and content ideas to extend the campaign's reach.

Want the full report? Email GRIMACE to [hello@viralmoment.com](mailto:hello@viralmoment.com)