

Business Leadership: Case Study #5

Summative Ethics Project - McDonalds



McDonald's admits using beef fat for 'vegetarian' french fries

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McDONALD'S faces a \$100 million (£70 million) lawsuit after apologizing to customers for failing to admit that beef fat was used to fry its chips.

The fast-food chain had maintained for more than a decade that only vegetable oil was used in the hope of appealing to vegetarians and religious groups who do not eat beef products. Yesterday's apology triggered a violent protest by Hindus in India.

The American company, which has served more than 200 billion portions of french fries around the world, confessed to a method of using beef fat to partly fry chips before they are sent to restaurants. They are then frozen and refried on the premises using vegetable oil.

An apology to customers on the McDonald's website, said: "A small amount of natural beef flavouring is added to our French fries during potato processing. If there was confusion, we apologize. Because it is our policy to communicate to customers, we regret if customers felt that the information we provided was not complete enough to meet their needs."

The company assured customers yesterday that all chips in British outlets were fried in vegetable oil at all stages and that no beef flavourings were added. McDonald's India also "categorically" stated that its fries "do not contain any beef or animal extracts of whatsoever kind". However, a mob raided a restaurant near Bombay, smashing windows and tables.

The company said it made every possible attempt to conform to "all cultural or religious dietary considerations" in countries where it has restaurants. It added that in Muslim countries all the frying processes conformed to halal standards, which means no beef or pork flavouring in the chips.

The legal case has been filed in America by a Hindu lawyer, Harish Bharti. He claims that the company acted fraudulently in saying its chips were fried in vegetable oil.