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## Taco Bell tempts app users with free taco after mobile purchase

By [Alex Samuely](#)

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Taco Bell is driving mobile purchases with its January promotion

Taco Bell is driving downloads of its mobile application and ramping up awareness of its mobile ordering function by tempting customers with a free Doritos Locos Taco with each mobile purchase made this month.

The fast food brand will be giving away up to one million free tacos up to Jan. 31 in an effort to thank loyal customers and users of its mobile app. Taco Bell rolled out mobile ordering and a mobile payment solution in late 2014 to offer customers the convenience of ordering before arrival at a bricks-and-mortar restaurant and to provide a slew of customization options.

“Mobile is no longer the future, it is the now,” said Jeff Jenkins, director of digital experiences and new concepts at [Taco Bell](#), Irvine, Calif. “We know that consumers value convenience and want to interact with brands on their terms; mobile is the key to unlocking this.

“The response to mobile ordering has been overwhelmingly positive. A fan even created a Taco Bell App Rap video and uploaded the song to YouTube during the week of launch!”

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### **Driving app usage**

The promotion, which offers each customer that makes a mobile purchase a free Doritos Locos Taco, began on Jan. 1 and is scheduled to run through the end of the month, or until one million free tacos have been distributed. The Doritos Locos Taco is prepared with seasoned beef, lettuce, tomatoes, cheddar cheese and sour cream, and comes wrapped in a taco shell made from Nacho Cheese Dorito Chips.

The brand advertised the offer on its app download Web site, as well as on television commercials played during ESPN's New Year's Day broadcast of the Sugar Bowl college football playoff.

“This type of incentive is an excellent way to boost Taco Bells mobile downloads and by customers using it, I expect it will increase sales considerably!” said Mike Cochrane, sales director at [Atimi](#), Vancouver, Canada. “What Taco Bell is doing right, is cross promoting the app in various channels to make sure consumers know about it, as well as providing incentives and exclusives to download.”

Mr. Cochrane is not affiliated with Taco Bell, but agreed to comment as an expert.



*The Doritos Locos Taco is a popular Taco Bell item*

The promotion is also being talked up on the fast food chain's social media sites, including Facebook and Twitter, via the #OnlyintheApp hashtag.

“We’ve seen a jump in social media conversation and downloads throughout the promotion,” Taco Bell’s Mr. Jenkins said. “The promotion’s launch also saw the highest number of mobile orders in a single day to date.”

The #OnlyintheApp hashtag has been used consistently by the brand to offer app customers exclusive deals, such as \$1 Freezes and \$1 Crunchwrap Sliders. Users can enjoy early access to a plethora of select menu items, which are only discounted in the app.

The hashtag was also used when Taco Bell unveiled their mobile ordering app in 2014. The brand enacted a blackout on all social media sites, choosing to only broadcast the phrase “#OnlyintheApp” to drum up consumer interest in testing out the new function.

“The strategy of consistently using the #onlyintheapp hashtag is a good reminder that you can only get the Doritos Locos Taco offer by using the app,” Atimi’s Mr. Cochrane said. “A consistent hashtag is very important for marketing as it becomes ingrained with your brand identity, and when consumers see it being used in social media, they will be reminded of that product.

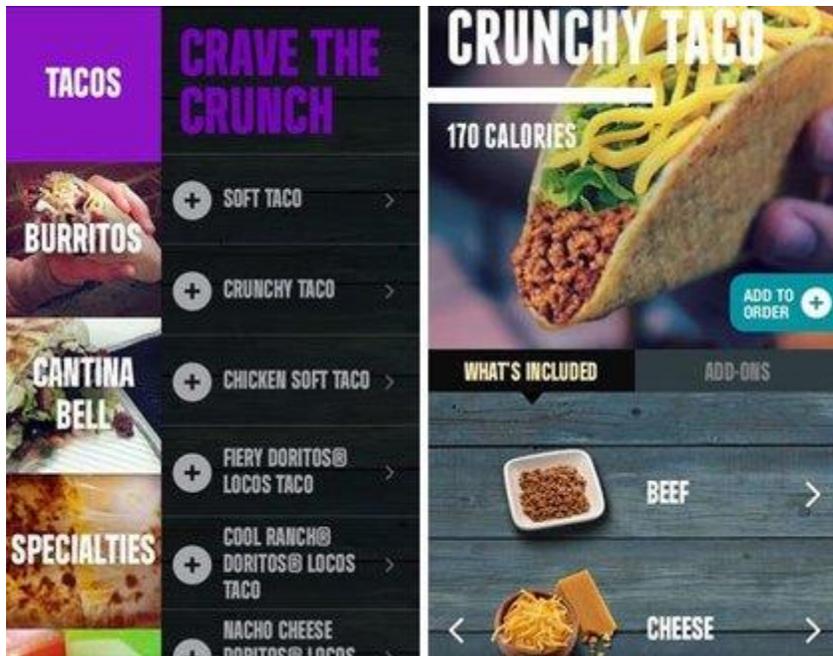
“Consistent hashtags are also needed if you are trying to become a trending topic – which will also help gain awareness to a larger audience.”

Taco Bell’s mobile app is available for iOS and Android devices.

### **Catering to customers**

The brand turned to mobile ordering to help combat struggles of miscommunication at drive-through windows and drive down the chance of order mistakes ([see story](#)). With the app, customers can input their exact order and customize it to their liking, whether that means requesting extra guacamole or no cheese on their food.

Users can choose any menu add-on items, and then pay for the order using a debit, credit or Taco Bell card. Customers can also select their pick-up manner of choice: in-store or in the drive-through window.



*Users now have the convenience of ordering from their mobile device*

When users check-in via their mobile device, Taco Bell employees begin preparing their order to ensure freshness. The customer can then skip ahead of the line to retrieve their food, where they will be greeted personally by the cashier.

“The app will greatly speed up the buying transaction and as more and more people use it, service times will speed up for all of their customers,” Mr. Cochrane said. “The response to the app from October to mid December was very impressive, with more than 1.4 million downloads on iOS and Android devices, so with the offer of a free taco it is only bound to increase the downloads substantially.”