

From Hated to Valued: Redefining Our Perception of Food Advertising by Understanding
Human Truths

By Calvin Ryan

Eats 101

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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Acknowledgements

While I do not yet claim to be an expert in food or advertising, I am passionate about both topics. This paper is a vested interest of mine because I have sought to gain some form of expertise in food advertising as a connection between these two passions.

I am incredibly grateful for my amazing group of peers and professors within Eats 101. I joined this class recognizing only a few faces and a little bit of knowledge on food. Now, I am soon to exit with new, wonderful friends and invaluable insights into food and culture.

A special thank you to Jim, Sam, and Ellie for the creation of the beauty of Eats 101. Their creativity, kindness, love, and generosity are unmatched and something that I will always admire and remember.

To Eats 2023, I love you all. We are a family. Through the ups and downs, pivots, daily changes, and new unique experiences, we are always connected as one. “We have a rhythm. Sometimes that’s better.”

Preface

The concept of "food" is broad. Similarly, the concept of "advertising" is broad. In an attempt to find the intersection between the two, I am left with one key issue: food advertising is equally as broad.

This semester, EATS 101 re-defined the true significance of the world of food; its intricacies are interwoven with everyday behavior, issues, and culture. In turn, I've begun to question my moral compass.

Throughout college, I have studied marketing and advertising. While attempting to bridge the gap between EATS 101 and my previous academic studies and interests, I began questioning the very companies I have learned about in the classroom. Will my occupation merely be a cog in a wheel that may have engaged in historic wrongdoings? Does my moral compass prevent me from working for a company that reaps massive profits and increases the wage gap? I have debated the ethics surrounding the promotion of products that may not have the best utility for future consumers. These reflections surrounding food advertising have converged into one singular, personal question: is my interest in pursuing a career in advertising morally justifiable?

Society, specifically the United States, has become increasingly polarized, thus leading to heightened tension, hatred, and starkly contrasted opinions. Politics? Individuals lean far left or right. Reputations and relationships? People have adopted a cancel culture: they either love you or despise you. We are subconsciously encouraging this world of negativity by promoting a short-sighted, "pick-a-side" mentality that fails to consider the entire picture. I often question when open-mindedness, rigorous debate, thoughtful discussion, fluid opinions, and genuine listening started to disappear.

I believe advertising has suffered from this polarization and has, in turn, become “good” or “bad.” I mean, nearly everyone has said, “I hate ads” at some point in the last week. Yet, I find that taking a one-sided stance against advertising and “hating” it for being “bad” can be a reflection of ignorance. If people genuinely want to tackle issues that are related to advertising, dismissing advertisements through hate will not solve the disarray. This dismissal represents a blind mindset that paints too broad of a brush over the term “advertising” and diminishes the actual value that comes from advertisements.

People complain about advertisements for a variety of reasons: the reputation of the company being advertised, the targeted media placement disproportionately affecting certain groups of people, the stereotyping, the over-saturation of media, and the disruption of an individual’s mobile use. To address qualms with advertisements, people must take a holistic evaluation of the landscape to determine if the true issues lie in government policy, health restrictions, media education, product packaging and labeling, tech data-collection such as cookies, political propaganda, labor concerns, or an alternative reason. No change will occur if people simply choose to partake in cancel culture, by “canceling” advertisements.

Advertising is valuable. It serves the unique purpose of providing information to connect individuals with innovative products or services that may positively impact their lives. This paper seeks to address the distrust and distaste toward advertising by analyzing how food advertising provides value to our society by conveying simplified versions of human truths. For the purpose of this paper, the term “food advertising,” encapsulates food, beverage, and restaurant advertising. Additionally, the term, “human truth” is defined as a concept that is universally true for all humans, while “human food truth” or “food truth” is a human truth related to food.

Introduction

Food and advertising are both considerable parts of our daily lives. Women on average need 1,600–2,400 daily calories and men on average need 2,000–3,000 calories to maintain their weight, and the average American is exposed to 4,000-10,000 advertisements per day.¹ The convergence of food and advertising into food advertising creates a ubiquitous and influential force equally ingrained in our daily existence.

The expenditure on advertising by food, beverage, and restaurant companies in the United States has reached nearly \$14 billion annually as of 2017.² More than 80% of this advertising focuses on fast food, sugary beverages, candy, and other unhealthy snacks, which largely outnumbers the entire \$1 billion budget for all chronic disease prevention and health promotion in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.³ The market size for this sector of the advertising industry is likely larger today, as 2023 global ad revenue is projected to grow by 5% to reach nearly \$830 billion, following revenue increases of 7% in 2022 and 23% in 2021.⁴

The goal of this paper is to demonstrate the value of food advertising by providing insight into food advertising's positive impact on people as a reflection of human truths. This argument is split into two parts. In Part One, I intend to provide a background as to why food advertising is relevant for people. I will first address how food is an inherently personal concept. I will then highlight the importance of food advertising by demonstrating the power that it holds in society. This will establish an understanding of the power and personal effects food advertisements have on people. In Part One, I will dive deep into the main argument of this paper in Part Two. In this

¹ Ajmera and Gunnars, "How Many Calories;" Flynn, "Amazing Advertising Statistics."

² Ha, "Food Marketing."

³ Ibid.

⁴ IPG, "MAGNA Forecast Market Growth."

section, I intend to address the general concern of food advertising's impact on people by demonstrating its unique value in simplifying and ultimately educating people on complex food truths. To do this, I will explore case studies of recognizable advertising campaigns, including Snickers, Coca-Cola, and Burger King.

Part One — The Background

Chapter One: Food as Individualism

Before discussing the integration of food and advertising, it is necessary to first explore the role of food in human life. Food, from our personal preferences to cultural traditions to dietary restrictions to our emotional connection with it, is an inherently personal concept. It is ultimately a representation of identity, as seen through moral values, status, and memory.

Food as a Reflection of Values

Food is inherently personal because it allows people to shape their identity through the demonstration of their values. Historically, food has been used as a political tool for people to voice their beliefs. Early American history exhibits this concept with the Boston Tea Party, where Americans poured 342 chests of tea into the Boston Harbor in protest against Britain imposing taxation without representation.⁵ In 1930, as the British continued to impose unfair rule on India, Mohandas Gandhi organized a nonviolent act of civil disobedience known as The Salt March.⁶ During the march, Gandhi and his followers made salt from seawater to defy British policy.⁷ The crowd grew with each passing day, with tens of thousands of protestors joining Gandhi by the time they reached Dandi on April 5th.⁸ This mass act of civil disobedience became a powerful symbol of resistance against British colonialism, with salt at the center of the protest.⁹ Both the Boston Tea Party and The Salt March exemplify human's unique, personal relationship with food as a tool for political expression.

⁵ Onion, Sullivan, and Mullen, "Boston Tea Party."

⁶ Onion, Sullivan, and Mullen, "Salt March."

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

In the modern day, food companies such as Ben and Jerry's constantly update their image, brand, and identity to better match and express the values of people. For example, in 2019, the ice cream company made a stand against single-use plastic and pollution by removing plastic straws and spoons from its stores worldwide.¹⁰ Just two years later, they launched the "Change the Whirled" flavor in partnership with Colin Kaepernick. All of Kaepernick's portion of proceeds from the flavor's sales will go to his "Know Your Rights" organization, which "aims to advance the liberation and well-being" of Black and Brown communities through "education, self-empowerment, and mass-mobilization."¹¹ Through its influence in the modernization of corporate practices, food enables the expression of people's values on social issues as corporations can amplify people's voices at a mass scale.

Another contemporary way to express one's values is through dietary preferences. To support sustainable agriculture and to reduce carbon footprints, many people opt to eat plant-based diets or source food locally. Others opt for vegetarian or vegan diets to avoid consuming animal products in support of animal welfare. As a protest against overfishing by commercial boats, people will steer clear of meals with seafood. Through political protests, corporate social responsibility, and diet selection, food is a medium to demonstrate individual values of one's identity, which is inherently personal.

Food as a Reflection of Status

Though morally ambiguous, food shapes personal identity through its ability to distinguish social status. Historically, food has been used as a tool to separate social classes. Medieval and Renaissance Europeans set salt in the middle of tables to separate higher-ranked

¹⁰ PR Newswire, "The Final Straw."

¹¹ Alcorn, "Ben & Jerry's Creates Flavor."

people at the table's head from lower ones, "below the salt," at the foot of the table.¹² Similarly, weight has historically been a social marker, as "past civilizations saw excess body fat as a symbol of wealth and prosperity while the general population struggled with food shortages and famine."¹³ Today, equating food with social elitism prevails through the frequency with which someone eats out, one's knowledge of wine, consumption of foreign foods, or an individual's ability to have a "business lunch" at work.¹⁴ "Food snobbism," the consumption of special-status or prestige foods like caviar, champagne, and goat cheese, has been practiced by elite groups amongst the ancient Greeks, Romans, Chinese, and Aztecs to delineate high status and low status.¹⁵ The general effect of "food snobbism" that distinguishes class through stark contrasts in food consumption remains today, as lower socioeconomic groups consume less "desirable" food options. For example, a study in the UK found that lower food expenditure, which is more common in lower socioeconomic groups, is likely a key contributor to less-healthy food choices.¹⁶ By being a differentiator for social status, food naturally constructs identity, which further makes it an inherently personal part of life.

Food as a Reflection of One's Past

Moreover, the inherently personal nature of food is underscored by the complex and multi-layered relationship between food and memory. The Proust phenomenon, which refers to "the sudden and involuntary evocation of an autobiographical memory along with related sensory and emotional expressions," is just one aspect of the human's complex relationship

¹² Anderson, *Everyone Eats*, 174.

¹³ Ferris and Crowther, "Once Fat Was Fat."

¹⁴ Fox, "Food and Eating," 13.

¹⁵ Anderson, "Everyone Eats," 184.

¹⁶ Pechey and Monsivais, "Socioeconomic Inequalities."

between food and memory.¹⁷ This phenomenon is beautifully illustrated in the American film *Ratatouille*, in the scene where food reviewer Anton Ego takes his first bite of Ratatouille and is instantly transported to a nostalgic memory. Similarly, in the movie *The Menu*, Chef Slowik is asked to prepare a simple cheeseburger, which triggers a flood of memories associated with the familiar taste and aroma. People admire these scenes because they are a reminder of how food has the power to connect us with our past, thus eliciting deep emotions and creating a sense of comfort and nostalgia. They remind people of baking with loved ones, devouring meals on holidays, and learning secret family recipes for the first time.

While people can easily understand and relate to food as memory based on feelings, scientific studies have shown there is a complex relationship between food and memory. Krikorian et al. investigated the relationship between daily consumption of blueberry juice and early memory changes and saw improved paired associate learning and word list recall.¹⁸ While Krikorian et al. show the performance link between food and memory, Chinnakkaruppan et al. took a more biological approach. In their research, they found “a direct link between the region of the brain responsible for taste memory and the area responsible for encoding the time and place we experienced the taste.”¹⁹ This explains why tastes and smells trigger vivid memories of past experiences or events. People taste a particular food or flavor, their brains not only remember the taste itself, but also the time, place, and emotions associated with that taste. Therefore, food is often associated with cherished memories and emotions, as it has the unique ability to connect us to our past experiences in a way that is both visceral and emotional.

¹⁷ American Psychological Association, “APA Dictionary of Psychology.”

¹⁸ Krikorian et al., “Blueberry Supplementation Improves Memory.”

¹⁹ Locker, “Reason Why Taste;” Chinnakkaruppan et al., “Differential Contribution of Hippocampal.”

Food's Individualism as a Target for Advertising

Food's inherent personal nature – evident in its ability to allow people to take on a distinct identity through values, social status, and memory – confirms one, seemingly obvious thought: people care about food; it matters to us. The personal aspect of food makes it a prime target for advertising, which seeks to influence human choices and preferences. Because of the targeting nature of advertising, it is crucial to examine the power that food advertising holds to understand its impact on people.

Chapter Two: Food Advertising as a Powerful Force in Culture

From the little banners on phones and tv commercials to various influencer sponsorships, partnerships, promotional events, and billboards, advertising is everywhere. What began as an overwhelming distraction has seemingly become part of a mundane reality; as the number of advertisements has increased, people have become more numb to their messaging. Companies in the food, beverage, and restaurant industries are aware of this invisibility as it relates to and applies to their products. Despite the prevalence among humans, food advertisements present reasonable concerns; strong associations have been linked between increases in advertising for non-nutritious foods and the rates of childhood obesity.²⁰ Food advertising's power lies in the ability to permeate media and influence human behavior through choice and consumption.

Food Advertising's Ability to Permeate Media

Though people may not consciously recognize the prevalence of food advertisements, they consistently establish their presence on media platforms. When the APA created a report on

²⁰ American Psychological Association, "Impact of Food Advertising."

the impact of food advertising on childhood obesity in 2010, they stated, “Food ads on television make up 50 percent of all the ad time on children’s shows,” and that, “these ads are almost completely dominated by unhealthy food products (34 percent for candy and snacks, 28 percent for cereal, 10 percent for fast food, 4 percent for dairy products, 1 percent for fruit juices, and 0 percent for fruits or vegetables).”²¹ While these numbers may have decreased in the past 13 years since the report’s publication, it is clear that food advertisements, especially those of unhealthy products, have had historic success in infiltrating television.

Looking at more modern media, researchers have investigated food and beverage advertisements' prevalence on YouTube and Social Media.²² After looking at the most popular YouTube videos targeting children, Tan et al. found that of the 187 advertisements seen on sampled videos, “food and beverage ads were the most common at 38% (n=71), among which 56.3% (n = 40) promoted non-core foods.”²³ A separate study looked at another more modern medium, social media, where they examined the “frequency and healthfulness of food marketing seen by children and adolescents on social media apps as well as estimate their weekly exposure.”²⁴ The study found that “72% of participants were exposed to food marketing” where 44% of food marketing exposures promoted fast food and 9% promoted sugar-sweetened beverages. Finally, they saw that “children and adolescents see food marketing 30 and 189 times on average per week on social media apps, respectively.”²⁵ The results from these two studies reveal that food advertisement, especially that of less healthy products, has evolved and

²¹ American Psychological Association, “Impact of Food Advertising.”

²² Tan et al., “What’s on YouTube;” Kent et al., “Exposure in Social Media.”

²³ Tan et al., “What’s on YouTube.”

²⁴ Kent et al., “Exposure in Social Media.”

²⁵ Ibid.

expanded to permeate new, more popular platforms for younger generations since the release of the 2010 APA report on television advertising.

Food Advertising's Influence on Choice and Consumption

Food advertisements are considered powerful due to their influence on human behavior through choice and consumption. In a study that looked at the effects of televised food advertising on adult food choice, participants were divided into two distinct groups: one group was exposed to food advertisements and the other group was exposed to non-food advertisements.²⁶ The non-food advertisements included irrelevant products such as cars, sneakers, or cell phones.²⁷ Participants were later tasked with choosing a snack, of which healthy snacks included granola bars, sliced apples, and small bags of trail mix and unhealthy snacks included potato chips, sugary soda, and chocolate candy.²⁸ Findings included, “those exposed to food advertising chose 28% more unhealthy snacks than those exposed to non-food advertising, with a total caloric value that was 65 kcal higher.”²⁹ These results indicate that exposure to food advertisements can lead to a preference for a higher consumption of unhealthier, higher-calorie food, demonstrating how this medium is capable of influencing an individual's choice. A 2009 study investigating the priming effects of television food advertising on eating behavior measured snack consumption whilst watching a cartoon for two groups of elementary-school-aged children, one where food advertising was shown and one where advertising of other products was shown.³⁰ While the snack being consumed was the product present in the food

²⁶ Zimmerman and Shimoga, “Advertising and Cognitive Load.”

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Harris, Bargh, and Brownell, “Priming Effects.”

advertisements, “children consumed 45% more when exposed to food advertising.”³¹ This research illustrates, once again, how encounters with food advertisements can dramatically alter the consumption habits of individuals. Whether people are conscious of it or not, food advertisements have a unique ability to influence the actions of humans by reshaping human choices and consumption habits.

Food Advertising’s Power Concerning its Impact on People

Food advertisements have two apparent, significant strengths: the ability to permeate media and the ability to sway human behavior through choice and consumption habits. With capabilities as substantial as those, it is important to recognize the abundantly clear power that food advertisements hold in the world. Food advertising has clear relevance in our society. This begs the question: if food is so personal and its advertising is so powerful, should we be concerned with food advertising’s impact on people?

³¹ Ibid.

Part Two — The Argument

Chapter Three: Food Advertising's Value and Impact on People

Many people distrust advertising; 96% of people do not believe that advertisements are truthful, and 91% of people believe advertising is more intrusive than 2-3 years ago.³² As a result, Americans are opting for ad blockers, with 40% of US internet users using an ad blocker on any device.³³

Trust is one of the biggest issues in the advertising industry right now. Media experts fear declining consumer trust as a top concern for advertising on social media platforms, with 77% agreeing that it may negatively impact their media spend.³⁴ Reports from 2021 indicate low trust in advertising across all media. While television and print media enjoyed high levels of trust, with 46% of American consumers considering them to be somewhat or very trustworthy, modern mediums like search engines, internet websites, and social media are less trusted, with only 38%, 30%, and 19% of American consumers, respectively, placing their trust in advertisements on these platforms.³⁵

A significant problem with Americans' general attitudes toward advertising is that they are misguided. Americans mistakenly conflate various critiques, complaints, and issues into labels of “hate” and “distrust” and apply them to the general term “advertising.” Too often, they ignore the heart of advertising: the “big idea.”

The “big idea” is the “overarching message that underpins all elements of a campaign.”³⁶ All components of advertisements, including copywriting, art direction, marketing strategy,

³² Dan, “Reasons People Hate Ads;” An, “Why People Block Ads.”

³³ Insider Intelligence, “Consumer Attitudes.”

³⁴ PR Newswire, “Eroding Consumer Trust.”

³⁵ Navarro, “Trust in Advertising.”

³⁶ Llewellyn, “Developing a Big Idea.”

media placement, budget, and other elements, are synergistic in achieving one, common purpose of communicating and conveying the “big idea” of a product or service. To address genuine concerns about the impact of food advertising, it is critical to go beyond the broad scope of “advertising” and evaluate its core.

Food advertisements have a profoundly positive impact on people because the “big ideas” – the core of the advertising; the message to the consumer – connect strongly with people by uncovering deeply rooted human truths. Case studies of famous food advertising campaigns, including ones by Snickers, Coca-Cola, and Burger King, reveal the unique impact and ability of food advertisements to educate people on food truths.

Case Study #1: Snickers - Hunger Changes People

Big Idea

"You're not you when you're hungry"

Campaign Launch Date

2010

Campaign Details

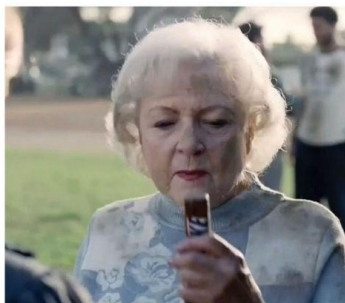
"From 2007 to 2009, growth for Snickers lagged behind other global chocolate brands, both in relative and absolute terms. Snickers was growing, but losing market share. Projections showed that if it remained on the same trajectory, the brand would lose its position as the world's leading chocolate bar" - James Miller, global head of strategy for Mars at BBDO

When launched in 2010, this campaign increased global sales for the 80-year-old, billion-dollar Snickers brand by 15.9% and grew market share in 56 of the 58 markets in which it ran.

Won 47 Lions - spanning 14 categories and six countries - from the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity in the 2010s.

Considered possibly the "best global brand campaign ever" by The Brandgym

Advertising Example



Betty White ran a route in a backyard football game with a bunch of adult men, and just before catching the ball, she was leveled by the defender into a puddle of mud. She was tackled into the mud and scolded by a teammate for poor performance. She argued back, causing more drama. A woman called her "Mike" and told her to eat a Snickers. After eating it, she transformed into a young man playing with his friends.

Figure 1: Background on Snickers Campaign³⁷

³⁷ Tsigarida, "Not you when hungry," Campaign UK, "Case study: Snickers," Whiteside, "Effectiveness insights;" Taylor, "Best Brand Campaign Ever."

In 2010, Snickers developed its “You’re not you when you’re hungry” campaign to position its candy bar as a quick and easy-to-carry snack, “Packed full of peanuts, caramel, nougat, and milk chocolate,” that satisfies your hunger and is the “perfect way to get back to being yourself.”³⁸

Snickers’ advertising campaign resonates with consumers and adds value to their lives by uncovering a human food truth: people are not themselves when they are hungry. Hunger is a feeling that all people share to at least some extent. Because this feeling is so common throughout society, people often ignore or are unaware of the tight control that food cravings exercise over them. Despite people’s subconscious neglect of it, hunger results in significant changes for people because of its ability to shape decision-making, inspire negative mood swings and irritability, and lower energy levels.

Hunger’s Influence on Decision-making

Though many people like to believe they have full control over their actions, food and hunger contribute a great deal to the decision-making process. When hungry, an individual’s valuation is impacted, which plays a crucial role in decision-making. A recent study at the University of Dundee investigated how “valuation systems change to homeostatically correct undesirable psychological or physiological states, such as those caused by hunger.”³⁹ Participants “were asked questions relating to food, money and other rewards when satiated and again when they had skipped a meal” and the results indicated that “hunger causes large increases in delay discounting for food, with an approximately 25% spillover effect to non-food commodities.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Minimum, “What’s The Big Idea.”

³⁹ Skrynka and Vincent, “Hunger Increases Delay Discounting.”

⁴⁰ Neuroscience News, “Don’t Make Major Decisions;” Skrynka and Vincent, “Hunger Increases Delay Discounting.”

These results reveal that people's preferences shifted from long-term to short-term, showing how hunger directly influences valuation.⁴¹ Dr. Vincent explains how this finding may affect people in both daily and irregular decision-making, whether that be grocery shopping or purchasing a pension or mortgage plan.⁴² The counterpart of this finding is that the deliberate or inadvertent choice not to eat, such as skipping breakfast, following calorie-restricted diets, or practicing religious fasting also can affect decision-making.⁴³

Additionally, hunger can impact social decision-making. Strang et al. explored "the causal relationship between macronutrient composition, its bodily biochemical impact, and a modulation of human social decision making."⁴⁴ In the first experiment, before lunch, participants submitted a detailed food list of their breakfast on that day and subsequently played an ultimatum game in which they could punish a norm violator who had made an unfair offer.⁴⁵ In the second experiment, participants were randomly assigned to consume breakfasts with different macronutrient compositions before being analyzed based on their rates of rejection of the unfair offer.⁴⁶ Across the two experiments, Strang et al. found that breakfasts with a high-carbohydrate/protein ratio "increased social punishment behavior in response to norm violations compared with that in response to a low carbohydrate/protein meal."⁴⁷ These findings are significant because they demonstrate how levels of hunger substantially impact an individual's social decision-making. Overall, the substantial impact of food on decision-making is far-reaching, influencing everything from valuation to social choices.

⁴¹ Neuroscience News, "Don't Make Major Decisions."

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Strang et al., "Impact of Nutrition."

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Hunger's Influence on Mood

An individual's true self can be compromised by food because hunger can inspire irritability, better known as "hanger." Swami et al. investigated the relationship between hunger and negative emotions to try to get a better grip on the term "hangry."⁴⁸ In the study, participants "reported their hunger, anger, irritability, pleasure and arousal" at five time-points a day for a 21-day period.⁴⁹ The results indicated that "greater levels of self-reported hunger were associated with greater feelings of anger and irritability, and with lower pleasure" and suggested that "both everyday variations in hunger, as well as mean hunger levels over the previous three weeks, were predictive of negative emotions."⁵⁰ While this study shows how hunger can alter the minds of people to become more irritable, the effects of this "hanger" can be negative. In a study that was designed to examine intimate partner violence, researchers measured the glucose levels of 107 married couples for 21 days.⁵¹ During this time, the couples indicated their level of anger towards their spouse by sticking between 0 and 51 pins into a voodoo doll each evening, and also "competed against their spouse on a 25-trial task in which the winner blasted the loser with loud noise through headphones."⁵² Those with lower levels of glucose in their blood tended to stick more pins into the voodoo doll representing their spouse, indicating a higher level of anger.⁵³ Also, they tended to set higher intensity and longer duration of noise for their spouse, indicating a higher level of aggression.⁵⁴ These findings are significant because they illustrate how levels of hunger can have a negative effect on emotions, resulting in anger and aggression. While being

⁴⁸ Swami et al., "Impact of Hunger."

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Bushman et al., "Aggression in Married Couples."

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

“hangry” may be a more playful term, food and hunger have a notable command on moods, often triggering irritability and aggression.

Hunger’s Influence on Energy Levels

Hunger can prevent someone from being their best self because it has a direct relationship with energy level. Oftentimes, when people are hungry, they feel drained. Zajac et al. compared the effects of “true fasting with modified fasting, which had two sub-conditions: extended distribution (three small meals across the day) and bulking (two meals eaten early in the day) over a period of 7.5 hours on a single day with a 7-day washout period between conditions.”⁵⁵ Participants were randomly assigned to the three treatment groups before performing on testing days where they completed a set of tasks designed to mentally strain participants as well as a satiety questionnaire.⁵⁶ The study found that both forms of modified fasting, extended distribution and bulking, improved blood glucose levels, and reduced cravings, fullness, and subjective mental fatigue compared to true fasting. These results are significant because they suggest that those who had emptier stomachs experienced lower levels of energy.⁵⁷

Also, food insecurity, which can result in hunger and is defined as inconsistent access to adequate food for an active and healthy lifestyle, significantly influences energy levels.⁵⁸ For example, a study examining the association between food insecurity and physical and mental health, academic performance, and potential financial risk factors found that food-insecure and at-risk students reported lower energy levels and poorer overall health than their food-secure

⁵⁵ Zajac et al., “Modified Fasting.”

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Carlson, Andrews, and Bickel, “Measuring Food Insecurity,” “Feeding America, “What is Food Insecurity.”

peers.⁵⁹ These findings suggest that food insecurity, which accompanies hunger, can lead to lower energy levels and decreased performance.⁶⁰ Whether through true or modified fasting or due to food insecurity, hunger has a clear negative impact on energy levels, emphasizing the significant role of hunger in an individual's well-being.

The Value of Snickers' Advertising

The effects of hunger are complex, multi-layered, and wholly true. It can alter someone's behavior through its impact on decision-making, mood, and energy levels. Through their most famous campaign's "big idea" that "you're not you when you're hungry," Snickers showcases food advertising's unique value for people by successfully simplifying the complexities of hunger and ultimately conveying a deep-rooted human food truth.

⁵⁹ Payne-Sturges et al., "Student Hunger on Campus."

⁶⁰ Payne-Sturges et al., "Student Hunger on Campus."

Case Study #2: Coca-Cola - Shared Dining Experiences Inspire Moments of Happiness

Big Idea

“#ShareACoke”

Campaign Launch Date

2011 in Australia; 2014 in United States

Campaign Details

Coca-Cola had found that 10 million teens had not had Coke in the previous year, but “1.25 million more teens tried a Coke during the following summer and sales of participating Coca-Cola packages rose by a phenomenal 11% in the US.”

Tremendous sales impact was attributed to the campaign: against the previous year, volume went up 11%, revenue went up 11%, share went up 1.6%, and velocity went up 10%.

Advertising Example

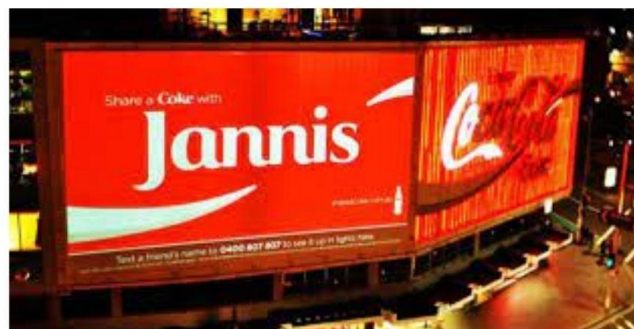


Figure 2: Background on Coca-Cola Campaign⁶¹

⁶¹ Mendoza, “Persuading Teens;” Marketing Mag, “Coke campaign post-analysis.”

As described on the Coca-Cola company website, “the purpose of the campaign was to create a more personal relationship with consumers and *inspire shared moments of happiness*.”⁶² This purpose statement unpacks “Share a Coke” to reveal a more in-depth explanation of the “big idea”: shared dining experiences, whether it is drinks like Coke or food in general, inspire moments of happiness.

Coca-Cola's advertising through “Share a Coke” provides value for people because it simplifies and brings light to a human food truth on sharing food. While people often take them for granted, shared dining experiences genuinely ignite happiness because they lead to improved emotional well-being, social well-being, and cultural connection.

Shared dining experiences improve emotional well-being

Communal dining not only provides nutritional sustenance but also leaves individuals with a feeling of emotional nourishment and connection. A collection of studies used the consumption of chocolate to investigate if the sharing of experiences amplifies the feelings from the shared moment.⁶³ In an initial study, participants “judged the chocolate to be more likable and flavorful when they tasted it at the same time that another person did than when that other person was present but engaged in a different activity.”⁶⁴ The results from this study suggest that actively sharing an experience, like a meal or a drink, can intensify the positive feelings from one's experience. For a hypothetical case of Coca-Cola, this means if two people enjoy drinking Coke, it is likely that the two people will feel greater enjoyment if they have the drink in the company of each other as opposed to by themselves.

⁶² Coca-Cola Australia, “‘Share a Coke’ Campaign.”

⁶³ Boothby, Clark, and Bargh, “Shared Experiences Are Amplified.”

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Moreover, Wagner et al. researched the effects of the social sharing of emotions on subjective feelings, further highlighting the emotional benefits of shared experiences.⁶⁵ In this experiment, two friends remained physically separated while rating their emotional responses to a set of pictures, but “they were made aware on a trial-by-trial basis whether they were seeing pictures simultaneously with their friend (shared) or alone (unshared).”⁶⁶ When participants viewed the pictures together rather than alone, their ratings of subjective feelings improved significantly.⁶⁷ These findings reveal that individuals have a psychological tendency to “seek the company of peers in emotional situations,” suggesting that people like to share emotional experiences.⁶⁸ Applying these findings to eating meals, it is likely that individuals who express happiness about a meal while eating with a peer present will experience an improved level of happiness than if the peer were not present. Both Boothby’s and Wagner’s studies emphasize how the presence of others offers a magnification of emotions, which shows that shared dining experiences can lead to heightened moments of happiness.

Shared dining experiences improve social well-being

Sharing meals or drinks can inspire moments of happiness because they can improve an individual’s social well-being. Professor Robin Dunbar of the University of Oxford’s Experimental Psychology department researched to “test the hypothesis that eating with others provides both social and individual benefits.”⁶⁹ In this study, Dunbar surveyed a sample of 2000 adults over the age of 18, asking reflective questions about happiness, satisfaction with life, and

⁶⁵ Wagner et al., “Social Sharing of Emotions.”

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Dunbar, “Breaking Bread.”

the worthwhileness of life.⁷⁰ He found that people who eat socially are “more likely to feel better about themselves and to have a wider social network capable of providing social and emotional support” and that “evening meals at which laughter and reminiscences occur and alcohol is drunk are especially likely to enhance feelings of closeness.”⁷¹ The increased likelihood of feeling better about oneself, of having a wider social network, and of feelings of closeness from meals of laughter, reminiscing, and alcohol clearly demonstrate how sharing meals can provide significant social benefits.

Though communal dining commonly makes people feel more connected at home, it can have similar effects at work as well. Kniffin et al. explored “the role that interacting over food might have on work-group performance” through firefighters.⁷² Not only is the dining room an opportunity for firefighters to share meals, but Kniffin et al. saw it also was “typically the main gathering location where firefighters could monitor alarms, debrief after returning from alarm calls to help identify lessons that might be useful for future events, and otherwise watch television or talk while ‘on call’ for the next potential run.”⁷³ They also saw that coworkers would choose to “make plans to gather over food and/or beverages when they are not at work.”⁷⁴ It is important to note that this piece of firehouse food culture is fully unregulated by the employer.⁷⁵ Seemingly small things like food culture influence “informal tradition of workplace commensality,” which according to this study, is “significantly and positively associated with team performance.”⁷⁶ At the end of the day, shared dining not only brought these coworkers

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Dunbar, “Breaking Bread.”

⁷² Kniffin et al., “Eating Together at Firehouse.”

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

together but also helped improve social well-being as it led to shared success in group performance.

Shared Dining Experiences Help Connect to One's Culture

Finally, shared dining experiences can spark moments of happiness because they offer opportunities for cultural connection. In Judaism, people celebrate Passover as a way to “commemorate the Biblical story of Exodus – where God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.”⁷⁷ Part of the holiday includes the seder, which is “a religious service set around a dinner table, where the order in which participants eat, pray, drink wine, sing, discuss current social justice issues and tell stories is prescribed by a central book called the Haggadah.”⁷⁸ Items at the table represent important symbols: a roasted shank bone for the Pesach sacrifice, an egg for the spring and circle of life, and three pieces of matzah to represent the bread the Israelites brought with them when they fled Egypt; the Torah also commands that four symbolic cups be drunk during the seder.⁷⁹ Shared dining during Passover inspires happiness because the specific foods and drinks act as symbols to connect with the Jewish Faith. In Islam, Muslims come together at the end of Ramadan to celebrate Eid al-Fitr. The holiday celebrates the end of a month of fasting, and as such, feasting is a critical part of the celebration.⁸⁰ Traditional foods vary based on familial backgrounds, whether it be Maamoul in Syria and Lebanon, Sheer khurma in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, tajine in Morocco and Algeria, or lokum in Turkey, but they all serve the same purpose – bring people together for a shared celebration of breaking the fast.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Gray, “History Behind Passover Traditions.”

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Begom, “Eid Al-Fitr.”

⁸¹ Alnagar, “Celebrating Eid Al-Fitr.”

Whether it be through Passover and Eid al-Fitr, or other religious practices like Easter in Christianity or Diwali in Hinduism, shared meals inspire happiness because they help facilitate cultural connection through celebration.

The Value of Coca-Cola's Advertising

Without a doubt, shared dining experiences inspire moments of happiness – they improve an individual's emotional well-being, social well-being, and cultural connection. By delivering the “big idea” in the “Share a Coke” advertising campaign, Coca-Cola exhibits food advertising's special value for people by successfully consolidating the intricate nature of shared dining experiences and revealing a human food truth.

Case Study #3: Burger King - Food Can Help People Exercise Control over their Life

Big Idea

“You Rule” - a re-imagination of Burger King’s “Have it Your Way”

Campaign Launch Date

2022

Campaign Details

“You Rule” is part of Burger King’s massive \$150 million “Fuel the Flame ” advertising and digital investments effort to accelerate sales growth and drive franchisee profitability.

This campaign is brand-new and its success is yet to be determined, however, it has gone viral over the past 6 months.

If the campaign maintains its virality, it would not be surprising if Burger King’s sales grew.

Advertising Example



*WHOPPER WHOPPER WHOPPER
WHOPPER*

*Junior double triple whopper
Flame-grilled taste with perfect toppers
I rule this day*

*Lettuce mayo pickle ketchup
It's ok if I don't want that
Impossible bow wow bacon whopper
Any whopper my way*

*You rule, you're seizin' the day
At BK have it your way*

You rule!

Figure 2: Background on Burger King Campaign⁸²

⁸² PR Newswire, “Burger King Announces Plan;” NBC Universal, “Inescapable ‘Whopper’ Jingle;” Rivera, “Burger King Commercial Lyrics.”

In October of 2022, Burger King released its “You Rule” campaign as a brand positioning strategy to celebrate the customers of the fast-food restaurant. Burger King’s website further describes the purpose of the campaign as “*celebrating everyday royalty*, and puts the Guest at the forefront of everything the brand does.”⁸³ CEO of OKRP, Burger King’s new partner creative agency, Tom O’Keefe, said the campaign gives people “permission to feel like winners, with *Burger King as a small reward that makes their day a bit better*.”⁸⁴ Matt Wright, General Manager of Burger King Canada outlined the campaign, saying “You Rule celebrates the *little things we can control in life*, and empowers our Guests to rule their day when visiting our restaurants.”⁸⁵

Though the phrase “You Rule” may not fully explain the “big idea,” an understanding of these three explanations reveals the true heart of the campaign: people can “rule” by celebrating the little things, like food (from Burger King), they can control in life.

Burger King’s advertising through “You Rule” adds value to people because it delivers the human food truth that food can help “rule,” or exercise control of one’s life. While cliché, the phrase “life isn’t fair” reveals a universal truth in that humans have limited control over their human experience. In the United States, many elements of our lives are dependent on a larger group consensus – whether this be societal, environmental, economic, or political. Even individually, people have limited control over their lives regarding their genetic predispositions or mental health. In many cases, food is a way people can express their control and agency over external elements.

⁸³ Burger King Newsroom, “Burger King Unveils Campaign.”

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Burger King Canada, “You Rule.”

Food as a Platform to Express Agency

As human's relationship with food evolved, food became a tool to control one's life because it developed into a platform to exert individual agency. At the beginning of human history, when food was most collected and consumed mainly through hunting and gathering, food was a necessity, not a desire; there was very little room for individual expression. Over time, preparing and cooking meals became the norm for most developed societies. Today, everyone has different sensory preferences. Some people prefer a saltier taste, while others prefer sweeter, bitter, or spicier. Some prefer strong odors, others subtle. Some prefer vinegar-based barbecue sauce, others prefer a ketchup-based sauce. Regardless of preference, cooking naturally enabled humans to exert agency and develop the meals they want.

People may worry that agency through food is disappearing, however, agency simply evolves with the evolution of food. The amount of time Americans spend on kitchen work today is about 15% of that in the 1920s, which is a steep decline since it reached 2 hours per day in the late 1960s.⁸⁶ Despite this decline, the rise of the food delivery market has added a new layer to the decision-making process in exerting agency: the option *not* to cook.⁸⁷ Industrialization led to a boom in the availability of processed foods and more recently there has been a rise in food delivery where the global market has tripled since 2017 and is valued at \$150 billion.⁸⁸ As human's relationship with food continues to evolve, food's inherent ability to be a platform for individual agency remains present and continues to offer the freedom of control.

⁸⁶ Trubek et al., "Empowered to Cook."

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ahuja et al., "Ordering in."

Food as Medicine

Treating food as medicine through preventative healthcare offers the opportunity for people to exercise control over their life. A study on liver cancer in Qidong, China from 1958 to 2017 found that after years of high crude mortality rates of liver cancer, the region experienced a gradual decline.⁸⁹ This decline followed the implementation of intervention and prevention techniques aimed to reduce the intake of levels of aflatoxin, a carcinogen found in corn.⁹⁰ Some of the techniques carried out included measures to control aflatoxin contamination of corn and residents changing their habit of eating corn to rice.⁹¹ The correlation between aflatoxin intake and mortality rates shows that by considering food as medicine in controlling the type and quality of consumed, people can better manage their personal health.

Similarly, food can be medicine based on the ingredients that are consumed. A traditional dish of Rasam, a South Indian soup made of spices, consists of tamarind juice as a base, with the addition of Indian sesame oil, turmeric, tomato, chili pepper, pepper, garlic, cumin, curry leaves, mustard, coriander, asafoetida, sea salt, and water.⁹² The chemical makeup of these different ingredients offers treatment for different health issues, including indigestion, throat infections, common colds, liver ailments, fevers, constipation, muscle aches, and stomach aches, among other issues.⁹³ The benefits from the chemical makeup of the ingredients of Rasam demonstrate how food can be medicinal to allow people more control over their health. Though Western culture often practices curative healthcare instead of preventative, other parts of the world enable people to have better control of their personal health by treating food as medicine.

⁸⁹ Chen et al., "Liver Cancer Mortality."

⁹⁰ National Cancer Institute, "Aflatoxins - Cancer-Causing Substances;" Chen et al., "Liver Cancer Mortality."

⁹¹ Chen et al., "Liver Cancer Mortality."

⁹² Devarajan and Mohanmarugaraja, "Comprehensive Review on Rasam."

⁹³ Ibid.

The Value of Burger King's Advertising

By being a platform to exert agency and also a medicinal tool to manage individual healthcare, food allows people to “rule” over circumstances and exercise control over their life. Through its execution of the “big idea” from the “You Rule” campaign, Burger King showcases food advertising’s distinctive worth by successfully simplifying food’s relationship with individual control and delivering a human food truth.

Conclusion

This paper explored how food is an inherently personal concept, making it a prime target for advertising. It discussed how food allows individuals to embody a distinct identity through values, status, and memory. Through an examination of food advertising, we saw that it holds tremendous power because of its ability to permeate media and influence human behavior through choice and consumption.

The case studies on Snickers, Coca-Cola, and Burger King demonstrated the unique value and ability of food advertising to educate people on human food truths. Snickers' advertising successfully simplifies the complexities of hunger, Coca-Cola's advertising distills the intricacies of shared dining experiences, and Burger King's advertising refines food's relationship with individual control.

At this point, I urge you to think back to this paper's preface. Food advertising is valuable. Snickers, Coca-Cola, Burger King, and the advertising agencies that represent them are by no means companies that reflect an ideal moral compass, yet their advertising has a positive impact on people as a reflection of human truths. While practices in the food and advertising industries may not always be perfect, there is a genuine purpose and place for food advertising. To achieve any rightful change that we deem necessary, we must embrace open-mindedness, rigorous debate, thoughtful discussion, fluid opinions, and honest listening. We must pinpoint our issues instead of settling on sweeping generalizations. We must acknowledge and embrace the things that provide us with value. We must appreciate food advertising's special ability to simplify and ultimately educate people on deep, human food truths.

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