

MAD SPOON SERVE YOURSELF CEREAL BAR

by

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ABSTRACT

Mad Spoon is a Brooklyn-based cereal bar that redefines breakfast through rebellious branding, nostalgic design, and an immersive customer experience. Rooted in personal memory and cultural insight, this essay outlines the strategic design, marketing, and advertising actions taken to bring Mad Spoon to life. Inspired by art history—specifically the whimsical linework of Saul Steinberg—and grounded in consumer behavior research, the brand identity balances playfulness and edge. With bold typography, expressive illustrations, and a distinctive color palette, Mad Spoon crafts a visual language that invites customers to break the rules and make breakfast their own. Its marketing strategy spans experiential retail design, viral digital content, and high-impact advertising in Times Square and New York subways. More than just a business, Mad Spoon is a tribute to the creator's childhood connection with cereal and their father—a reflection of how joy, memory, and design can merge into a vibrant, community-driven brand experience. This project is both a nostalgic homage and a modern disruption, proving that cereal is no longer just a meal—it is a movement.

INTRODUCTION

Since childhood, cereal has always been my favorite food, not just because of its sugary greatness, but because I associated my father's love with a bowl of cereal. The serenity of pouring a bowl of cereal brings me back to the chaos of school mornings, getting ready for soccer practice, and the late-night snacks, moments over which my dad and I built a special bond. Amidst the whirlwind of growing up, he always found time to show his love and support by sharing a bowl of happiness, creating small but meaningful moments of connection.

Thesis Statement

This project centers around the branding and marketing a serve-yourself cereal bar, Mad Spoon. This is not just a business venture, but a fulfillment of a cherished childhood dream shared with my dad. This space invites people to unleash their creativity, blending cereals and extravagant toppings to make each bowl an experience. Mad Spoon pays tribute to those cherished memories and the power of sharing simple joys with those you love. It offers a brand where young and older adults can indulge in nostalgia, experiment with flavors, and create special memories over their creations. Through extensive research into branding, business models, advertising, and interior design, I developed a comprehensive result that includes logo design, branding guidelines, promotional materials, apparel, collateral, and an inclusive environmental experience. Mad Spoon embraces the adventure of cereal combinations, reminding us that something as simple as a bowl of cereal can bring people closer and spark endless imagination.

CASE STUDY OF BUSINESS MODELS

Overall Consumerism

Each business evaluated showcases the diversity and creativity of modern food business models, each uniquely tailored to consumer preferences and market trends. In this section, I analyzed three business models: Yogurtland, Cereal Killers, and Magic Spoon. Although these businesses are located worldwide and reach their target market through various selling platforms, they all revolve around an experience that evokes nostalgia for the customer.

All three brands illustrate how innovative business models, whether through self-service, nostalgia, or health-conscious offerings, can disrupt traditional markets and create new opportunities for growth and customer loyalty. By connecting their target audience with unique problems in the food industry, each business offers convenience, emotional resonance, and a sense of childhood joy, demonstrating the power of understanding and catering business models to consumer needs.

Yogurtland

Company Overview

Entrepreneur and business owner Phillip Chang wrestled with the struggles of the food industry for years. While constantly innovating ways to stay relevant in the ever-changing industry of food, it was not until Chang expanded his Boba tea franchise, Boba Loca, into a frozen yogurt shop that he found success in opening a new business model, self-served dessert (Garfinkle, 2023). Yogurtland officially opened in 2006 in Fullerton, California, a self-serve frozen yogurt brand that sparked an international craze. Now, with 300 storefronts open nationwide and a rotation of 200 flavors annually, Yogurtland keeps its food experience exciting

during every visit (Persons, 2022). Yogurtland differentiated itself from other snacking and dessert options in the restaurant industry, as it allowed customers to serve themselves, giving them complete control over their portions, flavors, and craving combinations. This innovative self-serve model opened the door to consumer choices, allowing Yogurtland to stand out in a crowded market. Chang's execution of Yogurtland brought a healthy option to the dessert market and capitalized on a unique business model that allowed the customer to choose their experience.

Big Idea

Yogurtland's "Big Idea" is to develop a user-centered business model that focuses on each yogurt connoisseur's unique and individual experience. Through the self-served business model, Yogurtland empowers customers to choose their experience. Driven by Chang's mission to enhance customer experience, Yogurtland accomplishes a joy-filled, personalized snacking option.

Additionally, Yogurtland has a unique emphasis on product quality, offering a variety of flavors that also cater to dietary restrictions and healthy consumer options (Persons, 2022). While partnering with dairy brands like Oatley, Yogurtland's menu offers premium, non-fat, dairy-free, sugar-free, and plant-based varieties that continue to build consumer loyalty and trust in younger generations like Gen Z. Recent surveys show that Gen Z is becoming more conscious of sugar and dessert consumption, which supports Yogurtland's inclusion of healthy options on its menu (Cobe, 2023). By meeting the consumers' personalized needs with its flavors and customizable options, Yogurtland uniquely caters to audiences of all ages and consumer values.

Demographic

Yogurtland focuses on a diverse consumer market with the mission to bring “Love, Joy, and Hope into everyday.” With a demographic focused on consumer experience and unique dessert combinations, Yogurtland capitalizes on community experiences. Although frozen yogurt does not have an age limit, Yogurtland pulls a large majority of families with a middle-class socioeconomic status. Yogurtland serves a large demographic because it offers a wide variety of yogurt options, from cotton candy to blackberry tart, which caters to the flavor and health-conscious decisions of a wide age demographic of 4 to 55. When analyzing the consumer patterns of individuals 18 years and older, younger generations statistically are more inclined to engage with “away from home” frozen treats, including frozen yogurt and ice cream. According to a survey by Mintel, 51% of Generation Z purchases frozen yogurt from retail stores, compared to Baby Boomers, which is only 21% (Olsen, 2024). Promotional marketing to families during the summertime and unique seasonal flavor options attract this young family demographic. Although this is not the only demographic for Yogurtland, they provide an efficient and effective job of catering a nutritional dessert option to all age groups.

Mission Statement

Yogurtland’s website introduces itself: “At Yogurtland, we are in the community for the community.” Redefining Yogurtland’s commitment to bringing all age groups and communities together. Although this statement is broad, Yogurtland's priority is creating a customizable experience for every customer (Yogurtland’s website). By providing a variety of flavors, toppings, and serving size options, Yogurtland continues to reevaluate how the restaurant experience can empower its customers to take pride in their choices. By empowering its

consumers, Yogurtland connects communities around a sweet treat and an experience that satisfies all ages and tastes.

In-Store Experience

Yogurtland capitalizes on the unique opportunity to serve yourself during every visit, creating a customizable experience for every customer. This innovative and diversified restaurant industry approach caters to the consumer's cycles and emotions. According to an exclusive interview with CEO Phillip Chang, he expresses that “Yogurtland’s self-served yogurt is a better value for consumers than competitors who dish up their product from behind the counter” (Kneiszel, 2023). More importantly, the self-served model caters to the convenience, cravings, and cost-effective options for the consumer. Since customers can take as little or as much frozen yogurt as they please, their returning patterns increase as they feel responsible for their portions. Statistically, this choice later entices these customers to try new flavors and satisfy all cravings regardless of size. Psychologically, this in-store self-serve model increases customer confidence and empowerment, leading to more loyal customers (Larsen, 2023).

An ounce scale measures each serving of yogurt and costs 33 cents an ounce. With sixteen classic flavors, four additional seasonal flavors, and sixty-five topping options ranging from berries to chocolate candies, Yogurtland caters to the consumption options of all different demographics (Kneiszel, 2023). The serve-yourself experience allows consumers to pay for their experience and cravings. This business model increases customer loyalty and caters to varying socioeconomic markets.

Cereal Killers

Company Overview

Cereal Killer Café is a London-based novelty café founded by twins Alan and Gary Keery. On a hungover afternoon, the twins craved cereal after a long night out. Living in a small apartment in London, the twins did not have the cupboard space to store all the boxes of their favorite cereal brands, ranging from sweet tooth treats to healthy-sustainable snacking options. That is where Cereal Killer Café took off, offering over 120 varieties of cereals, served with a wide array of flavored milk and toppings (Goorwich, 2019). While analyzing the holistic stance and demographics of Cereal Killer Café, we see that they are a prime example of catering to the nostalgia and joy of enjoying cereal that was a special treat as a kid. To the Keery twins, the consumer is more than a cereal lover, but someone who wants to indulge in moments from their favorite childhood memories, connecting London's hipsters to their brand.

Big Idea

The café's mission is rooted in nostalgia, celebrating the familiar ritual of eating cereal, which the founders, Alan and Gary Keery, believed resonates with childhood independence and familiarity for customers worldwide. After analyzing the London market, the brothers understood that there was nowhere for individuals to go for a singular bowl of cereal, limiting creativity and variety in their cereal consumption (Millington, 2019). The Keery believes in the nostalgia of pouring and enjoying your bowl of cereal, which influences their advertisement, in-house decorations, and style. Therefore, they were not only selling cereal in their café but also the experience and emotions to a consumer who still craves childhood traditions.

Demographic

In the few years that Cereal Killer Café was in business before closing due to the 2020 global pandemic of COVID-19, it targeted young adults and families as its demographic. Open from 7 am to 10 pm, the storefront provided a childish, sugary fix to everyone craving it. One factor that impacts this brand over others is how the politics of the United Kingdom have impacted their business. Cereal Killer Café, which opened on Brick Lane, was gentrified about 15 years ago during times of sensitivity to the “rise of gentrification” in London. Cereal Killer Café targeted middle to upper-class individuals due to their marked-up prices for a bowl of cereal (Rhys-Taylor et al.). Although a moral dilemma was associated with Cereal Killer Café, young families often took their children to enjoy a bowl of cereal as the parents enjoyed the museum of their childhood. With features like vintage cereal boxes, magazines, cartoons, and 1970s-1990s soundtracks, Cereal Killer Café catered to the young family demographic (Millington, 2019). Through this business case study, consumers' relationship with a brand will influence their purchasing decisions, regardless of protests or moral dilemmas surrounding the business.

Mission Statement

Cereal Killer Café is much deeper than a bowl of cereal. Connected to evoking nostalgia, Cereal Killer Café celebrates the simple joy of eating cereal – a memory that, according to the founders, brings back feelings of childhood freedom and comfort, offering a familiar experience that resonates with customers globally (Millington, 2019). Prioritizing the experience and emotions of the consumers attracts a consumer base that values a sense of belonging and trust. Consumers tend to choose brands that align with their values; by attending to emotional satisfaction and psychological recognition, Cereal Killer Café gained high brand loyalty to a

younger, more emotionally inclined consumer (Kenan, 2024). Therefore, Cereal Killer Café focuses on how their business brings joy, emotions, and a sense of childhood belonging to every customer.

In-Store and Online Sales

Cereal Killer Café goes beyond just selling your favorite cereal in a bowl; they expanded their business model through signature offerings and flavor combinations for their customers. Cereal Killer Café's made-to-order business model allows customers to choose between over 100 varieties of cereals, 30 types of milk, and various toppings. Cereal Killer Café was explicitly known for its menu options, including “cereal cocktails.” Through innovation, mixtures of cereals and ingredients, like their famous “Lon-Don-Done,” created a staple and “must-try” element to their business model. These combinations of cereal bowls were sold at \$5.50 per bowl, which is a high price point compared to the value of a bowl of cereal (Cereal Killers menu). Overall, the brand prioritizes the experience of consuming a bowl of cereal in its nostalgic environment.

Despite the challenges of the 2020 global pandemic, Cereal Killer Café achieved a strong fan base and following. Unfortunately, due to increased prices and limited in-person interactions, Cereal Killer Café closed its physical locations. Instead, it shifted its focus to e-commerce, selling imported cereals and brand merchandise to cereal enthusiasts (Kunert, 2020). Still holding value and truth to its brand's mission, Cereal Killer Café continues to serve nostalgia in the comfort of your home with unique, retro cereal combinations and styles.

Magic Spoon

Company Overview

Founded in 2019, Magic Spoon is a high-protein, low-carb, and no-sugar cereal that caters to the nostalgia of sugary childhood cereal with the health standards of an adult. Cereal fanatics and co-founders Greg and Gabi started Magic Spoons to create the nostalgia of a Saturday morning cartoon cereal but upgraded for a 21st-century consumer (Magic Spoon website). Starting as an online, direct-to-consumer selling base, Magic Spoons gained popularity by mimicking adults' childhood favorite cereals, such as Rice Krispies treats, but formulating a high-protein, no-sugar recipe. Magic Spoons has grown as a business through a new wave of health-conscious consumers, creating a new spot on the cereal aisle shelves.

Big Idea

Magic Spoon's "Big Idea" is to create better cereal. Through careful ingredient selection, nutrition scientists and popular childhood cereal flavors, Magic Spoon provided an exciting new snack on the shelves for health-focused consumers. Magic Spoon's new standard for adult snacks breaks the stigma that eating healthy must be boring, but customers can enjoy old-school favorites while fueling their bodies throughout the day (Magic Spoon website). With each serving having 130 calories, 11 grams of protein, 7 grams of fiber, and 0 grams of sugar, Magic Spoon aims to evoke nostalgia for cereal-loving enthusiasts without the guilt of consuming large portions of sugar with little to no protein like other cereals in the market (Watrous, 2023).

Demographic

Magic Spoons is considered a premium cereal brand due to its health-conscious ingredients and nutritional benefits. Priced at almost \$10 a box, Magic Spoons nearly doubles the cost of one box of Honey Nut Cheerios (Waldow, 2023). Despite Magic Spoons being a more expensive cereal, their consumer basis is not comparing price but ingredients and nutritional value with other healthy snacking options on the grocery store shelves. The article “How Magic Spoon went from Online-Only to Wholesale in Six Months” explains that Magic Spoon’s demographic is substituting healthy items like protein bars, green juices, and Greek yogurts with Magic Spoon as a healthy snack to fill their cravings during the week (Waldow, 2023). Additionally, co-founders Greg and Gabi explain that many of their customers were not eating cereal before they entered their product into the market, as Millennials and Gen Z care more about the nutrients they consume in their daily habits (Beer, 2020). 30% of millennials are willing to pay a premium for healthier ingredients, allowing brands to charge up to three to four times the price for “premium” products (Raphael, 2019). Magic Spoon's recipe and premium pricing attract a health-conscious consumer willing to spend more money on their products.

Mission Statement

Magic Spoon’s mission is to offer a guilt-free version of the sugary cereals many remember from childhood. While using vibrant packaging and flavors such as Fruity, Cocoa, and Peanut Butter, Magic Spoon resembles the nostalgia of sugary childhood cereals. At the same time, its recipe addresses a health-focused market (Beer, 2020). The average American eats 100 bowls of cereal a year, but the current cereal market is oversaturated with sugary products that offer no nutritional value. Magic Spoons breaks this stigma with cereal recipes with the same addictive quality as childhood cereals but with ingredients that fuel the body to prevent the

typical afternoon crash (Magic Spoon website). Magic Spoons highlights its unique health-focused approach to providing kids' cereal for grown-ups.

Sales

Magic Spoons's success and fast-growing business centered on offering a healthier, high-protein, low-carb alternative to traditional breakfast cereals, combined with a solid direct-to-consumer approach (Magic Spoon website). Initially, Magic Spoons launched as an online-only sales model, allowing a solid brand identity to develop with an e-commerce presence. By selling directly to the consumer through online sales, Greg and Gabi could engage with customers, gather feedback quickly, and understand how to market their products through digital channels like Instagram and E-Commerce (Waldow, 2023). This model allowed them to control their brand image, customer experience, and pricing until they entered the shelves of various retail stores in 2020.

Before securing its first retail agreement with Target in June 2020, Magic Spoons offered an e-commerce subscription service, contributing to its successful business model. The service allowed customers to receive their favorite cereals regularly at a discounted price while also allowing Magic Spoons to test new flavors and products in their subscription boxes (Waldow, 2023). This recurring revenue model enhanced customer loyalty and provided tangible case studies for Magic Spoons to evaluate their flavor options and recipes.

Magic Spoon previously sold exclusively online until they partnered with Target Corporation and Sprouts Farmers Market in 2020 (Watrous, 2023). In this emotionally heightened period, shopping surveys during the pandemic made consumers purchase convenient and comfortable items (Beer, 2020). Magic Spoon catered directly to this audience, as their product provided the comfort and nostalgia of an adult's childhood with the convenience of a

healthier snacking option. As Magic Spoon reached the shelves, the product has grown to reach broader audiences and increase brand visibility (Beer, 2020).

CASE STUDY OF RELATED BRANDS

Logomarks

Logos are pivotal in developing a solid brand identity that speaks to the target market, has meaning, and defines a set of values that make a brand stand out. According to Alina Wheeler's book *Designing Brand Identity*, logos for a brand are a "trust mark," a shorthand element that allows individuals to identify a brand that further cultivates awareness and loyalty to the brand (Wheeler & Millman, 2018). A logo identifies the meaning and purpose behind a brand's development, creating key relationships and marketing strategies for its audience and consumers. Throughout the evolution of graphic design, logos can communicate a level of sincerity to a buyer that becomes loyal over time. "A logo brand mark or brand icon is a deceptively simple device. It combines colors, symbols, and sometimes letters or words in a simple design that symbolizes the values and promises offered by a product or service manufacturer." (Slade-Brooking, 2016). Analyzing various styles of logomarks in the cereal and food industry shows that Traditional, Grunge, and Trendy styles differentiate themselves in developing a story behind their brand.

Traditional

Traditional and nostalgic logo designs are impactful and long-lasting approaches to the development and memory of a brand. Using nostalgia in design evokes emotions through visuals that can bring back memories from the past. A well-crafted nostalgic logo can elicit positive

emotions, making people feel comforted, happy, and at ease. By tapping into this emotional reservoir, brands can create a deep and lasting bond with their target audience and returning cereal consumers (Perrine, 2023). Cereal brands tap into this emotional response, as most cereal consumers associate their bowl of cereal with a fond memory of family or childhood. The liberty of choosing and eating a bowl of cereal causes many cereal brands to build an emotional response with their consumers (Mazibuko, 2010). Traditional logos that evoke a sense of nostalgia are incredibly impactful in the cereal industry, as brand loyalty patterns with cereal are one of the most impactful and consistent markets in the food industry.

Little Man's Ice Cream

Little Man's Ice Cream focuses on this ice cream parlor's history and storytelling. The vintage design is representative of the traditional flavors and ice cream making that hold this brand to a high standard in the ice cream industry. Due to this logo's line weight and retro design, consumers are invited to indulge in traditional ice cream that evokes a sense of memorabilia and comfort. Little Man Ice Cream combines script and Slab Serif type to create a nostalgic contrast for their logo design. Combining these two types, the brand embodies a vintage attitude in its brand visions and the experience once you enter the parlor.



Blue Bell Ice Cream

Blue Bell Ice Cream has outlasted its competitors and served the dairy industry for over a hundred years. With integrity in its product and strong brand identity, Blue Bell Ice Cream has remained a leader in how a logo can define the meaning behind the brand. The illustration of a little girl guiding a dairy cow embodies the family-friendly and nostalgic appeal of Blue Bell, as it evokes a comfortable and reliable emotion toward the brand. Although Blue Bell Ice Cream has been around for decades, its logo remains true to its original imagery, demonstrating its success and the Blue Bell brand's goals to stay nostalgic and traditional in its products and message.



Grunge

In an oversaturated food industry, it is often difficult for brands to stand out against competitors while articulating their brand's meaning. Differentiation is critical as brands compete for our attention, loyalty, and money. A bold, memorable, and appropriate design is the best identity to advance a brand (Wheeler & Millman, 2018). Milk Bar, Velvet Taco, and Cereal Killers accomplish that through their innovative grunge look to a traditionally feminine identity. Grunge's design was characterized by its gritty, weathered, and distressed look, mimicking the

worn-out appearance of 1990s band posters and album covers is a result of these designs rejecting previous eras' clean, polished look to embrace imperfections and unpredictability (“Grunge in Graphic Design: A Rebellious Revival of Raw Aesthetics,” 2023). Although this is a unique approach to cereal design, these companies develop authenticity with their products, inviting all types of individuals into their brand identity.

Milk Bar

Milk Bar is a sweet shop that has been turning familiar treats upside down and shaking up the dessert industry since 2008. Specifically known for its cereal milk soft serve, Milk Bar takes a nontraditional approach to its logo design and brand identity. The wordmark logo combines a feminine script font with a textured slab, embracing the unpredictability of the flavors and desserts you will find with its brand. This combination allows this brand to approach both feminine characteristics while recognizing a potential male audience with the combination of the grunge, all-caps, and sans-serif slab. As this brand progressed into other markets and cities, Milk Bar remains revolutionary in the dessert culture.



Velvet Taco

Another logo that falls into this grunge category is Velvet Taco. Velvet Taco's logo features an emblem with a decorative border. Inside is the unique slab serif type with sharp terminals that continue to push their grunge agenda. The high contrast between the profound pink, black, and white evokes the instability that grunge adds to. This emblem is an appropriate and meaningful symbol for the company selling unique taco combinations, as it communicates a strong point of view to their late-night target market. The depth of creativity and details outlines the attention to originality and detail that Velvet Taco has in its product and brand goals.



Cereal Killers

Cereal Killer Café was a café in London that took an MTV 1990s style to its entire brand identity. From their logo mark to the illustrations and decorations inside the physical café, Cereal Killer embodies the grunge approach to the cereal market. Inspired by the founder's childhood and nostalgia of junior high, skateboarding and coming home from school to enjoy their favorite sugary cereal while watching MTV is

memorable, not only to their experience but for a generation of adults who grew up in the 90s (Millington, 2019). The logo mark is no exception; slabs contrast highly with the all-caps thin sans-serif type selection. Additionally, to add meaning to the brand, the outline of a milk carton is placed in the background to send a subconscious message about the cereal-eating experience. While developing a brand that builds on the consensus of indulging in a bowl of cereal, Cereal Killer Café effectively markets a collective experience.



Youthful/Trendy

As Millennials and Gen Z rise, they create new avenues for brand design and guidelines. Magic Spoon, Jeni's, and Bored Cow invite this new market of consumers while identifying as youthful and trendy brands. As Generation Z grows in economic and social influence, its unique consumer behaviors fundamentally reshape the retail landscape (Weatherwax, 2024). Through its

digital native, value-driven, and preference for personalization, Generation Z calls for diverse and inclusive brand identities unique to the new digital age.

Magic Spoon

Magic Spoon caters its logo and brand identity to a new youthful generation that has entered the market, Gen Z. As Gen Z is more health-conscious and attracted to brands with a robust digital presence, Magic Spoon's wordmark tells the story of a futuristic cereal that is revolutionary not only in its marketing but also in terms of ingredients and nutrition. Magic Spoon introduces an exciting and futuristic design into the cereal space through its highly contrasted terminals and unique movement in the M and N letterforms. Gen Z enjoys a playful and experimental design that challenges the norms of brand identity. Magic Spoon's irregular-shaped type treatment attracts this new generation as this demographic prefers logos with irregular shapes, hand-drawn elements, and surprising visual twists to stand out (Esselstrom, 2024).

Additionally, the bright and bold colors of Magic Spoon cater to Gen Z preferences in the brands they purchase. Bold, vibrant colors in logos attract the attention of the fast-moving digital space as they stand out on social media feeds, creating an impactful brand presence (Kondrashov, 2023). Magic Spoon's use of neon purple targets the Gen Z audience as it evokes energy, creativity, and individuality. As the unique, custom letterforms identify with a trendy brand approach, Magic Spoon's illustrations associated with its design will allow its brand to last for generations.

The logo for MAGIC SPOON features the words "MAGIC" and "SPOON" stacked vertically in a bold, purple, sans-serif font. A small trademark symbol (TM) is located at the top right of the word "MAGIC".

Jeni's

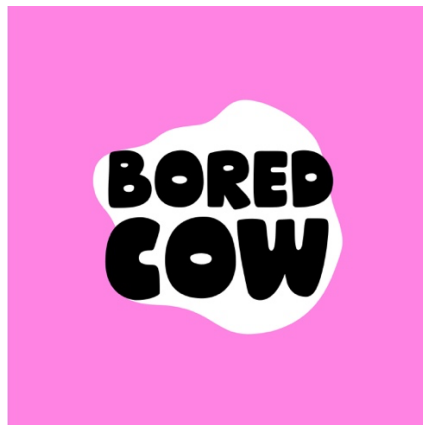
Jeni's Splendid Ice Cream is another example of a youthful, trendy logo that has entered the market for Gen Z. This logo demonstrates a unique movement through its bouncy script and curvatures in its handwritten type treatment. The circular terminals on both ends of the emblem identify its borders, making it an impactful logo for social media and packaging designs on the shelves of retail stores. Using a script font tells a feminine and youthful story of the brand through its curving details and simplicity. The clean wordmark logo caters to the young, modern attitudes of consumers in Gen Z.

The logo for Jeni's Ice Creams features the word "jenis's" in a red, cursive script font. Below it, the words "ICE CREAMS" are written in a red, sans-serif font.

Bored Cow

Bored Cow is a unique combination of wordmarks with an additional illustration that sends a subconscious message with abstract shapes. Bored Cow fits into the youthful,

trendy logo design category as its personalized type gives the brand a handcrafted, playful personality. The bold typeface is complemented with hand-drawn elements in its terminals and general shapes that engage a young audience through its relatable characteristics. Additionally, the abstract shape of a cowhide pattern continues to tell the brand's story, as it plays a role in the logo's background. Since the pattern is a secondary element, it sends a subconscious message to the consumer that Bored Cow is a unique, playful dairy company that has entered the market.



Colors

Relationship with Colors

A brand's selection of colors and how it influences the engagement of its target market involves a psychological decision. Color psychology is the study of how colors impact how we perceive the world, which has a powerful effect on consumer emotions and why consumers behave in specific ways towards different products. Brands must consider their color selection highly, as studies show that 90% of snap judgments on a product are based on the color alone. Consumers identify color as a primary reason for choosing one brand over another, which can

impact how consumers perceive your brand (Whittaker, 2023). While the effect that color has on emotions can vary slightly from person to person based on gender, cultural context, personal experience, and neurological variances, there are overarching guidelines that identify how specific colors impact most of the population's mood and engagement with one brand over another (Lischer, 2024). The color selection for a brand can enhance its overall mission and increase brand recognition.

Tasting Colors

Cereal overall evokes positive emotions in consumers. According to research, those who consume breakfast cereal have a more positive mood at the start of the day, perform better on spatial memory tasks, and feel calmer at the end (Smith et al. 1999). Since cereal has proven to evoke positive emotions in the consumer, the brand's color is critical to continue elaborating on these emotions to increase brand engagement. Food color has a psychological impact, stating that color is “the most important product-intrinsic sensory cue governing the sensory and hedonic expectations that the consumer holds concerning the foods and drinks that they search for, purchase, and which they may subsequently consume.” (Spence, 2015). Equally, the more luminous and saturated the color of a brand and food is, the more consumers rate the freshness and taste of the flavor as more intense than muted colors. Consumers are conditioned and can inspect food and drink visually before deciding whether to buy or taste it (Spence, 2015). Colors impact taste and, therefore, affect a brand's initial impression and expectations of flavor. The International Association of Color Consultants states that consumers “eat with their eyes.” Brands need to consider the colors of their packaging and branding to prevent consumers from

having a negative emotional and taste experience from their product. Therefore, color combinations in the food industry impact a brand's taste and popularity.

Yellow

Several cereal brands use yellow within their brand's color scheme as it impacts the messaging behind enjoying a bowl of cereal. Companies like Cheerios, Blue Bell, Little Man, Velvet Taco, and Cereal Killers use yellow to evoke a sense of happiness. Yellow is appropriate for breakfast areas of a restaurant, as it can create a cheerful, exuberant atmosphere (Lohrey, 2017). However, brands must be careful with the hue and tone of yellow and refrain from using it as a primary color. Although yellow symbolizes happiness, it can be mistaken for being naïve and unsophisticated when used as a primary color in a brand. A yellow palette can be hard to trust as it encourages our analytical instinct and may result in consumers not initially trusting the brand within the food industry (Howell, 2023). Most of these cereal companies use a subtle tone like beige for their hue of yellow, a more natural spectrum of yellow. This hue suggests that joy emotion, while not overwhelming the consumer. Yellow in light, muted tones impacts the cereal industry as it reassembles the morning sun while remaining a secondary element in these brands' color palettes.



Black & High Contrast Designs

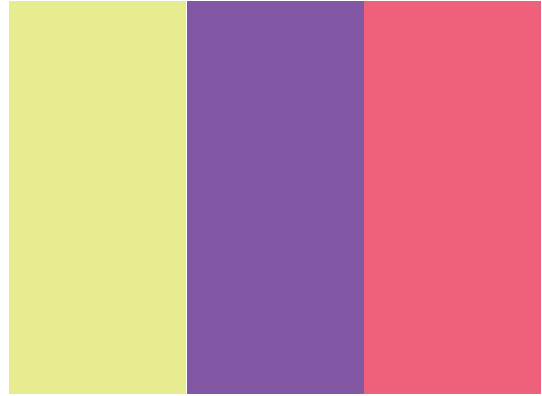
Black is an elegant yet bold and impactful color choice for the packaging design within the food industry. Velvet Taco, Cereal Killers, Milk Bar, and Bored Cow use black as a primary color as it has been studied to have a classic appeal and is commonly used to portray power, authority, strength, and sophistication in design. Although this is important, most of these businesses use black in their design as it provides a high contrast. Menu Engineer Gregg Rapp argues that black is the most impactful color for brands in the food industry (Howell, 2023). When contrasted with white, black makes the brand more legible and portrays a sense of simplicity, leaving the color as supporting material to other colors on the color palette while remaining an underlying chic design. The use of black for brands in the food industry is also supported due to the intensity the color denotes (Magalhães).



Brands like Milk Bar and Velvet Taco contrast this masculine, intense color with high-intensity hues of pink. Compared to black, pink provides a sense of femininity and energy in the design (Howell, 2023). They contrast and break up the sophistication of black to invite a younger and more energetic audience to engage with the brand. When paired with prosperous colors like pink, black continues to push a beautiful, high-contrast design while incorporating a variety of attitudes to associate with a brand's mission.

Gen Z and Bright Colors

Design Trends are constantly evolving to cater to each generation's ever-changing tastes and preferences. Gen Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is a new target market in branding and consumer preferences. The unique values of Gen Z cater to how brands reach these audiences, including incorporating a solid social media and online presence to attract this tech-savvy generation (“Design Trends and Aesthetics Aimed at Gen Z). Gen Z is attracted explicitly to vibrant and bold colors, as they stand out in a sea of content online. Like Magic Spoons, electric blue, neon green, and pink colors resonate with Gen Z’s energetic and expressive nature. Additionally, this generation's bright colors evoke a sense of joyfulness and creative expression, encouraging brand engagement (Frey, 2023). Gen Z has a color scheme, tapping into bold, bright colors that capture a nostalgia for a pre-modern tech past and iconic hope for the future (Vendrell, 2023).



Typography

Typography is printed communication, bridging the gap between visual appeal and conveying ideas through layout and articulation. According to Colin Wheildon in their book *Type & Layout*, “Good design is the blend of function and form, and the greater of these is function. This is as true of typography as it is of an opera house or a space shuttle” (Wheildon, 1996). Wheildon argues that typographic decisions and designs allow brands to get their message

across to their audience in an effective way. The study of typography with brands furthers an understanding of how function is necessary for the success of an impactful design.

In the playful arena of the food industry, explicitly researching cereal and ice cream brands, more businesses prefer using an organic or script shape as their primary logotype, but pair it with a more legible typeface to support the content of their mission. Script fonts used in brands like Milk Bar and Jeni’s tell a unique, bubbly story that targets a female audience. Since most household responsibilities and grocery shoppers are women, using a script font effectively attracts these consumers. Script resembles handwritten lettering and embodies elegance, sophistication, and creativity (Vlahos, 2024). Businesses like Milk Bar and Jeni’s script use it to help their brand feel more personable and more likely to inspire creative emotions and feelings.

Additionally, using handwritten and customized fonts is perceived as a playful and approachable brand, like Bored Cow and Magic Spoon. These unique display fonts inspire and tell a story about the brand by eliciting strong emotional responses (Vlahos, 2024). Using a script or handwritten display font is common amongst most cereal and ice cream brands. To make their message legible to the general population, these brands pair their playful branding with Sans and San Serif types to display information about the brand and its mission.

Avenir

When addressing San-Serif typefaces commonly used in cereal and ice cream brands, Avenir is an effective type selection that Jeni uses. Designed in 1988, Adrian Frutiger aimed to correct and refine Futura’s geometric approach to create a more legible type, Avenir. Adams’

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The Designer's Dictionary of Type states, "Avenir maintains the spirit of simple geometric forms by taking liberties with letters to add warmth and legibility." Avenir accomplishes more legibility while maintaining a sense of character for the viewer through its short ascenders that allow for tighter leading and a more cohesive appearance. Avenir is an impact typographic selection in branding, as its San Serif and geometric shape contrast script fonts provide an approachable design stability.

Helvetica

Helvetica is arguably one of the most robust type creations since the 1950s. Helvetica is a champion amongst other types, as creators Max Miedinger and Eduard Hoffman set out a vision and determination to create a typeface whose composure and normality are more refreshing now than ever before and whose letterforms are of a pleasingly willful beauty (Langer, 2009). Designed in 1957, Helvetica's simplicity and practical design principles mastered the leap from metal type to the digital age of word processing. Its success in multiple media and its use further argue its purpose and success in branding design. Helvetica is a popular and effective type selection for brands needing a secondary type that supports and provides a consistent character compared to the other types it is paired with. With its even, bold characteristics, Helvetica is a legible, eye-catching secondary type for brands like Magic Spoon and Milk Bar.



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Clarendon

In 1845, Robert Besley designed Clarendon for use in headlines and large text sizes during the early Egyptian era, where typefaces were carved in wood for large headlines.

According to Adams' *The Designer's Dictionary of Type*, Clarendon is an early Egyptian, or slab-serif, typeface. This typeface style first appeared in Victorian England, and the term "Egyptian" is due to its popularity at the time of all things hailing from Egypt.

Initially, Clarendon was considered old-fashioned, but in the 1950s, art directors turned towards Clarendon again as a

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friendlier alternative in display fonts. Due to Clarendon's bold weight and decorative letterform, it is illegible at smaller text sizes. Although branding like Little Man's Ice Cream uses this type, its primary purpose is for the headline type displayed in its logo and interior signage. When a smaller scale type is necessary, Little Man's Ice Cream converts to its script logotype for social media applications to avoid Clarendon's illegibility. Clarendon is an elegant Slab-Serif type that adds a unique character to a brand's type collection. Although Clarendon is illegible in specific small displays, it is effective in large-scale headlines and branding for companies like Little Man's Ice Cream.

Baskerville

Baskerville is a type that symbolizes beauty and harmony. In the transition period of type during the eighteenth century, designers had the opportunity to gradually increase the contrasts of letterforms and apply sharper horizontal serifs to

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their characters, creating a beautiful display of rounded letterforms (Carter, 2006). Baskerville was designed in 1775 by John Baskerville and gained popularity as the first transitional typeface (Adams, 2019). Simplicity and understated elegance were achieved through Baskerville through generous margins and careful letterspacing. Baskerville is a revolutionary and legible serif-type selection in Velvet Taco and Little Man’s Ice Cream branding. Velvet Taco uses Baskerville as its body and secondary type selection due to its legibility in print design and sizes. Due to Baskerville’s legibility, it is a sophisticated typeface that pairs beautifully with various fonts to create a legible system of fonts that can be displayed in multiple media.

Secondary Elements

Use of Textures

Velvet Taco is an impactful brand that tells a complete story about its mission and stylistic choices. Velvet Taco utilizes textures and secondary design elements to tell the edgy story of their brand. Through the high, contrasting colors, Velvet Taco continues to push its funky agenda with torn paper and spray paint elements on its website, advertisements, and in-house interior design.

The grunge-inspired aesthetic taps into a rebellious, non-conformative attitude, echoed in the menu’s bold and unconventional flavor combinations. The brand’s use of rugged street art visuals, including hand-drawn graffiti, distressed fonts, and layered textures, captures its raw



energy, excitement, and urban brand communication. By incorporating these gritty design elements, Velvet Taco cultivates an edgy space that encourages a risk-taking, creative community and culinary experience.

Use of Illustrations

Magic Spoon capitalizes on a unique style of flat illustrations to market to audiences like Gen Z. On their box packaging, animated characters tell the unique brand story while enforcing a feeling of youthfulness to the consumer. The simplicity of the flat illustration style helps the brand communicate its youthful target market in a playful, approachable



way. The difference in Magic Spoon’s illustrations is their clever use of gradient textures applied to their flat illustrations. Magic Spoon adds depth and energy to an otherwise minimalistic design. These color transitions create a sense of movement and dimension, making the design more dynamic and engaging. The combination of flat illustrations with bold gradients catches the eye. It aligns with Gen Z’s brand preferences for a clean yet visually complex design that stands out on store shelves and social media feeds.

Use of Patterns

Jeni’s Ice Cream uses a distinct combination of patterns to tell the story of its ice cream flavors, creating a unique and visually engaging narrative for each packaging design. Jeni’s packaging design utilizes bold, expressive patterns to provide context about the flavor of ice

cream while maintaining a playful yet feminine brand identity. These illustrations explore color combinations and patterns through consistent style, allowing each flavor to feel fresh and distinct while adhering to a cohesive brand look. This balance between consistency and creativity makes Jeni's packaging so effective. The brand is also free to experiment with new designs and



seasonal variations without sacrificing its visual identity due to its consistent logo placement.

Jeni's use of patterns in their packaging design tells a vibrant and artisanal brand story within the ice cream industry.

CASE STUDY OF ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONAL ITEMS

Advertising is a highly impactful factor in a business's success and outreach. Stuart Henderson Britt, author and psychologist from Northwestern University, explained the purpose and significance of advertising: "Doing business without advertising is like winking at a girl in the dark. You know what you are doing, but nobody else does." Advertising is the communication bridge between brands and their target market, a critical element in identifying a business's product, values, and personality that engages various users. The primary purpose of advertising is to increase brand awareness, create demand, and ultimately drive sales by influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors. It enables companies to differentiate their products in competitive markets, often highlighting unique features or benefits that resonate with consumers' needs, emotions, and aspirations.

On average, a person is exposed to over 10,000 advertising materials daily, ranging from social media, print advertisements, and even signage and promotional items incorporated into their environment. Several advertising campaigns rely on critical components, each contributing to addressing and resonating with a brand's mission and target audience. The power of advertising is rooted in its ability to serve and communicate ideas to a mass public while touching the lives of the modern world (V, Sandhya, 2013). Addressing clear objectives, a deep understanding of the target audience, and executing a robust and consistent message while catering to trends will allow a business to stand out from competitors through advertising.

Campaigns that Changed Cereal Advertisements

Wheaties – "Breakfast of Champions"

A successful advertising campaign that changed the way consumers engage with advertising and influence purchases for over 100 years was the Wheaties Breakfast of Champions campaign. Developed in 1933, Knox Reeves created the slogan, “Wheaties: The Breakfast of Champions,” signifying a change in consumer interest to purchase cereal products that would fuel consumers through their workouts and daily activities. This slogan was produced on every box of Wheaties with famous athletes paired as the hero image. Lou Gehrig, a renowned base-hitter and athlete for the New York Yankees, debuted on the Wheaties box, continuing to push the concept that Wheaties will set your day up to be a champion. Wheaties continued to display famous athletes on their cereal boxes and print advertisements, like Michael Jordan in 1988 and Michael Phelps in 2004. The cereal brand advertised itself to an audience aspiring to a healthy and active lifestyle by leveraging sports endorsements and linking Wheaties to athleticism and excellence.

The use of influencers and athletes in advertisements has been a successful strategy for Wheaties and other brands throughout advertising history. The rise of influencers in advertising has become an adaptive marketing technique for various businesses. According to Harvard Business Review, “Today, 24% of U.S.-based companies spend more than 40% of their total marketing budget on influencers.” (Meyer, 2024). The use of influences increases social proof, significantly swaying the purchasing decisions of individuals on social media. Influencers target a niche audience, with specific goals set by a marketing team’s strategy, causing a more likely chance for consumers to purchase their product due to the sense of reliability and trust the influencers endorse.

Additionally, influencers and athletes personalize ad content, which increases a company’s engagement and purchase intent as consumers feel more directly addressed by

someone they aspire to be. Research shows that 71% of consumers trust influencer content. (Kuzminov, 2024). The use of influencers in advertising is a significantly growing strategy that aids a business in connecting with potential consumers and increasing purchasing trust.

Cinnamon Toast Crunch – “Crave Those Crazy Squares”

The target consumers of cereal range from a broad audience of kids to adults. Cinnamon Toast Crunch capitalized on the strategy of humor to connect with its broad audience and advertise its cereal brand. Dave Ogilvy, the founder of Ogilvy & Mather, is known as the “Father of Advertising.” He stated, “I have a reason to believe...humor can now sell” (Weinberger and Gulas, 1995). This campaign features animated squares with eyes and mouths, humorously expressing how much they loved Cinnamon Toast Crunch. This series of commercials had the Crazy Square mascots interacting with each other in a playful, sometimes chaotic manner, designed to emphasize the irresistible nature of the cereal. The quirky, humorous tone resonates with kids and adults, making it a memorable and shareable campaign that puts a smile on your face.

Using humor in advertising is a strategy that addresses a large audience; through clever copy and irresistible connecting graphics, humor can broaden how companies reach various age groups through their advertising. Humor is a complex topic in advertising, and if it is not appropriate or executed correctly, it can cause severe damage to a product or company's image (Janux, 1997). However, 55% of executives believe that humor is a superior form of advertising over non-humorous ads (Weinberger et al., 1995). Humor in advertising opens the heart and is effective in content persuasion as it increases message linking to positive moods and engagement. Specifically, 90% of people are likelier to remember a brand’s ad if it is humorous

(Isaza, 2022). Advertisements and businesses that capitalize on humor as a strategy to promote a product have a unique opportunity with copywriting and imagery to display a light-hearted story that is memorable and engages a wide range of audiences.

Cheerios – “Heart Health” Campaign

Cheerios tugs on the heartstrings of millions of Americans through its unique storytelling and campaign promoting Cheerios’ nutritional benefits and commitment to its values. With more than 100 million Americans having heart disease, Cheerios focuses this campaign strategy on acknowledging and understanding the importance of heart health. The storytelling aspect of this campaign is the most impactful for Cheerios, as it highlights memories, reminding consumers to take care of their hearts for themselves and those who mean the most to them. The emphasis on choosing Cheerios for its nutritional benefits that help the heart, including lowering cholesterol, provides an emotional attachment to the brand.

The campaign started in 2019, when Cheerios added heart shapes to their cereal, alongside promotional commercials, box designs, and social campaigns, providing the American people a simple yet healthy breakfast option amidst busy morning routines. Then, in 2023, Cheerios launched its second campaign for heart health, encouraging heart-to-heart conversations with loved ones about health options and overall health. Cheerios created various print advertisements, but the most impactful collateral for this campaign was a commercial of real-life friends and active Cheerios consumers, Leslie and Phyllis, sitting down over a bowl of Cheerios to help bring joy to a heart health journey and remind people why this is an essential topic of conversation with loved ones. Most recently, in 2024, Cheerios continued its Heart Health Campaign by adding loved ones’ names onto the boxes displayed on public grocery store

shelves. When consumers see Grandma, Bestie, Dad, and the names of other loved ones on the cover of their box, they will be reminded to take care of their hearts for themselves and their friends and family. The name on the boxes pulls emotional heartstrings as it provides an opportunity for reflection and encourages consumers to purchase breakfast options that are not only delicious but also provide health benefits that will allow them to enjoy memories for years to come.

Emotions are indispensable in decision-making and often drive the initial attraction to a brand. Tapping into consumer emotions has proven an effective brand strategy in influencing purchasing decisions and allowing individuals to connect deeper with a brand (Mariecarrier, 2023). A campaign focusing on values and emotional connections within its advertising results in stronger brand loyalty with its consumers; 60% of Gen Z consumers state that they will stop purchasing from a business that does not align with their values (Ellis et al., 2023). This emotional connection is developed through storytelling, relatability, and a brand's ability to cater to customers' aspirations and desires. Messages with deep core values and emotional connections influence consumers to invest in the brand, reinforcing the importance of understanding and leveraging emotions in advertising strategies.

Social Media

The rise of social media challenges businesses to utilize various platforms online to engage with their consumer or potential new customers. The average American spends 2 hours and 24 minutes daily on social media (Howarth, 2024). Social media provides every business with a free platform that provides additional opportunities for users to interact with a business throughout the day. By utilizing brand content, companies can grow their consumer relations and

recognition through one of the various social media platforms that Americans log onto almost daily. With 98% of adults in America using social media, businesses can gain feedback and track user interactions with their brand to help promote new customers or better understand what forms of advertising work as a selling point (Praw, 2024).

Influencer Culture

Leveraging influencer marketing allows businesses to grow and reach their target audience. Influencer culture started in the early 2000s when individuals on MySpace gained traction through authentic content and relatable personalities that shaped trends and consumer behaviors (Bilodeau, 2024). Today, influencers impact trends and consumer decisions by creating communities where users feel connected to the influencer through high levels of engagement, authenticity, and relatability on media like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok (Nouri, 2018). Brands should capitalize on the prevalent influencer-following culture to enhance brand visibility and engagement amongst younger consumers. By collaborating with influencers who resonate with the brand's target audience, their marketing tactics can create authentic connections and foster trust (Praw, 2024). This advertising approach not only boosts brand recognition but also drives consumer loyalty.

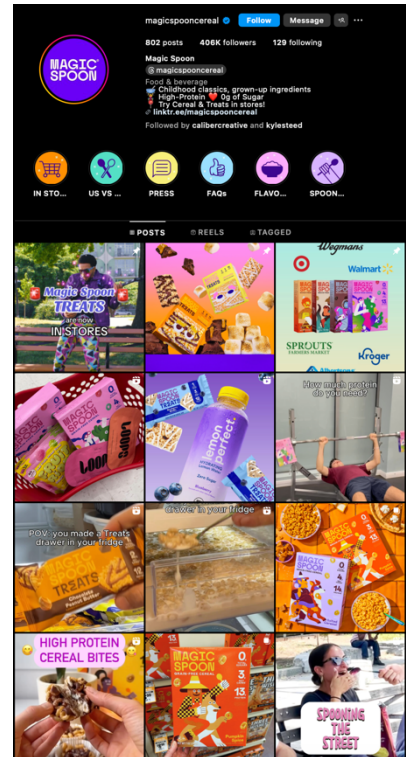
Engaging Audiences through Social Media

Social Media messaging and audience engagement result from specific tactics for attracting target markets through aesthetic content and brand recognition. Before a business uses social media, it must understand its audience's aesthetics to drive profile traction. In the food industry, product photography, influencer reviews, and promotional activity drive the most

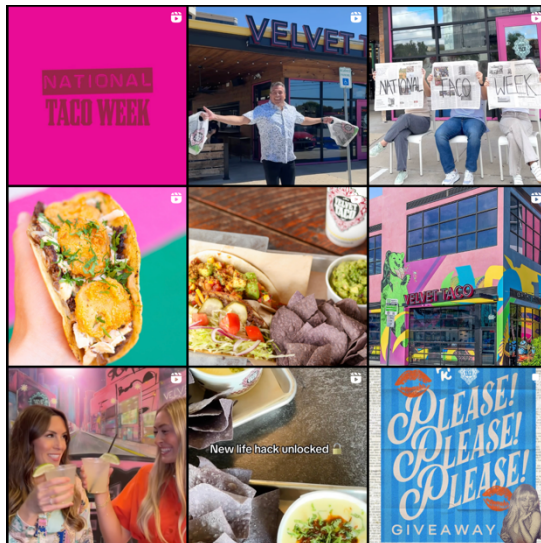
engagement with these business profiles. Additionally, engagement in social media is critical to a business's success. Staying relevant in new technology features like asking users questions, posting on "reels," presenting polls for audience opinions, and connecting with users through comment sections, direct messages, and reposting their content involving the product have all been recent improvements in social media strategies that boost user engagement.

Magic Spoon does an incredibly impactful job of reaching their Gen Z audience through their content and interactions on social media. Magic Spoon displays various content on its Instagram page, ranging from beautiful photography of its products to influencer videos of them purchasing their new flavors. Brands must display a broad range of content so their feed becomes varied and manageable. They are capitalizing on story posts and displaying diverse glamour product shots in individual campaigns to highlight the brand's personality and message. Rather than using too many stock photos of their product, Magic Spoons focuses on images that will connect with their Gen Z target audience. Behind-the-scenes photos and images of real people purchasing cereal products build social proof and consumer trust in the brand (Dublino, 2024). Additionally, Magic Spoon incorporates pop culture trends into its social media content, as these specific memes and sounds cater to the social media algorithm that would allow its content to reach new audiences through trending engagement polls.

Through trends on social media, businesses that adapt to technology and social developments see an increase in their consumer engagement on social media. With a successful



marketing team and strategy, content creators can evaluate trends to adapt to their business model and promotional activities. Velvet Taco does an exceptional job of incorporating pop culture trends to enhance its marketing outreach through social media. For example, on National Taco Week, their content team displayed a trending video of individuals holding giant newspapers to



advertise their tagline message. This simple adaptation of social trends into their regular content creation pushes Velvet Tacos' engagement on social media. Businesses with content teams that utilize trends in their advertising often experience growth and development in increased brand visibility on these various platforms.

Geo-targeting Advertisements

Social media offers a unique and new form of advertising in the market, geo-targeting. A marketing strategy that allows advertisers to target audiences based on their geographic location. Brands using geographic data can promote events, offers, or services directly to users in a targeted area, increasing the likelihood of engagement and action. Specifically, restaurants and retail stores utilize this feature as it reaches customers within their vicinity, enhancing foot traffic and sales. Geo-targeting helps brands personalize their messaging based on regional interests or trends, resonating better with local audiences (Bjork et al., 2021). Using geo-targeting better guarantees that social media advertising will effectively reach channels for the right customer at the right time.

Print Advertisements

Signage and Promotions

Signage is an impactful device in advertising a business to a passing customer, which can draw attention to a business. Outdoor signage can effectively drive foot traffic and increase brand recognition with clever copywriting, clean images, and elements of pop culture. Billboards are a popular form of advertising that involves large-scale advertisements on prominent outdoor locations, such as busy roads or high-rise buildings (Schelcher, 2023). This form of advertising is effective because it reaches a broad audience that can be targeted to their specific geographic location and demographic. On average, a billboard is viewed for six seconds (Jacobs, 2016). Therefore, creative and engaging design elements are necessary for the advertisement to engage its specific audience.

Velvet Taco's 2023 billboard campaign cleverly taps into the rise of AI, using ChatGPT to inspire its "WTF" (Weekly et al.) menu. Each month, Velvet Taco showcases an



inventive taco lineup crafted by the executive chef, featuring daring seasonal flavors and unexpected combinations that have become fan favorites. This bold approach resonates with their adventurous customer base, using playful copywriting and vibrant visuals that reflect the brand's edgy personality. Velvet Taco expanded its reach to tech enthusiasts in this campaign by incorporating ChatGPT to generate the month's WTF menu combinations. This integration made the campaign timely and relevant and broadened its appeal with a fresh twist on its established

menu. The billboard captures attention with its humor, innovation, and cultural relevance, all while staying true to Velvet Taco’s unique brand identity.

Magazine Print Advertisements

Magic Spoon’s “A Good Day” magazine ad campaign highlights Magic Spoon’s Gen Z outreach and the nostalgia that the brand creates around the comfort of enjoying a bowl of cereal. While targeting Gen Z, Magic Spoon recognizes that most individuals in this age demographic are entering their careers and facing the world's daily challenges. Regardless of the inconvenient

events or “lows” of the day, this campaign argues to Gen Z that Magic Spoon makes any day better because it is a healthy, high-protein snack that resembles memories and flavors from the consumer’s childhood. Using illustrations and playful typography



represents the nostalgia and comfort of Magic Spoon’s brand identity while utilizing product photography to recognize the product. This impactful campaign resonates with Gen Z by blending nostalgia with health, creating a memorable brand connection through magazine advertisements.

Email Marketing

Email Newsletters are a powerful advertising strategy due to their ability to foster direct and personalized communication with consumers. Unlike social media, email marketing allows brands to tailor content to specific audience segments, enhancing relevancy and engagement.

This subscription-based strategy is personalized to the brand's message and has been shown to boost open and click-through rates, ultimately driving higher consumer engagement. Bored Cow mainly utilizes the power of email marketing by reaching customers directly in their inboxes, where they are more likely to spend time reviewing content.

Their 'Moosletter' campaign taps into the playful side of brand communication while positioning the brand as an innovative choice in the dairy alternative market. These 'Moosletters' range in information and content but mostly engage subscribers through updates on their animal-free dairy products, sustainability initiatives, and product launches. The lighthearted tone and cow-inspired humor

build an approachable brand identity, attracting their audience through their positive and dedicated community through their 'Moosletters.' The integration of their soft color palette, quirky illustrations, and trendy use of type highlights Bored Cow's personality while communicating valuable information about the brand. This advertising strategy effectively strengthens brand loyalty by merging humor and eco-conscious messaging, making Bored Cow stand out and engage with its dairy alternative audience.



ART HISTORY

Saul Steinberg: A Master of Visual Wit

Saul Steinberg was one of the most prolific artists of his era. He could merge humor with the harsh realities of the world around him. His cartoons blurred the lines between illustrations and modern art, often employing humor, satire, and keen social commentary to challenge perceptions of reality. His quarry was a brilliant, selective, yet sizable audience: a few who would sit down, open the latest issue of *The New Yorker*, and tumble into his labyrinth. Saul Steinberg remains an artist who influences the merge between humor and impact through cartoons and illustrations.

Steinberg took part in moving to Ellis Island from Italy to seek refuge. He was a Jew whose life was deemed “unworthy of citizenship rights in his previous government” (Solomon). After completing a degree in architecture, Steinberg began submitting cartoon illustrations to weekly Manhattan magazines. For nearly six decades after that, Steinberg would define the presence of *The New Yorker*, with covers, cartoons, features, and illustrations, creating a witty yet satirical humor that those in tune with the harsh realities of the world grew fond of his visual communication. Steinberg’s distinctive style, characterized by whimsical lines and surreal imagery, earns him a place amongst the most influential artists of the 20th century.

Steinberg’s contribution to *The New Yorker* started in 1941, during a period in world history when politics and war were at the forefront of everyone’s minds. There was global turmoil, but Steinberg’s early illustrations, marked by surrealism and wit, provided an innovative means of commenting on contemporary issues that resonated with people internationally. Steinberg approached illustrations in a different context; he was not confined by humor, but his work often straddled the line between satire and fine art (Smith, Joel, et al). His ability to distill

complex ideas into deceptively simple drawings made his contributions uniquely engaging. In *The New Yorker*, the cover “View of the World from 9th Avenue” exemplified his talent for capturing cultural attitudes, humorously using exaggerated perspectives to depict the American worldview. Through these illustrations, Steinberg entertained readers and encouraged reflection on world issues.



In the cover, *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, Steinberg exaggerated New Yorkers' perception of their city's importance in the rest of the world. Beyond the Hudson River, past the Avenues of New York, Steinberg intentionally depicted the world with minimal details fading into the horizon with only a few labels like “Chicago,” “Los Angeles,” and “China” (Solomon). His

distinctive use of perspective characterizes this artistic style, minimalism, and humor, demonstrated in his unique line work. The strokes of Steinberg's illustration style are both precise and expressive, creating a balance between realistic architectural elements and abstract art. Scale is also a notable application to Steinberg's work. The exaggerated scale in the piece, *View of the World from 9th Avenue*, exemplifies Manhattan's perception of its dominance over the landscapes beyond New York. This clever distortion of geography encapsulates New Yorkers' egocentrism on their beloved city, especially in times of war and development. *View of the World from 9th Avenue* remains a defining piece of visual satire, demonstrating Steinberg's ability to merge fine art with social commentary in a way that resonates today.

Steinberg's illustration style was distinctive for its economy of line, whimsical yet precise execution, and the ability to convey profound meaning through minimalistic compositions. He used free-flow, sketch-like strokes and structured geometric forms to create visually engaging narratives. His use of perspective and abstraction allowed him to distort and exaggerate reality, making his work humorous and deeply insightful. By integrating architecture, typography, and caricature elements, Steinberg's drawings transcended traditional illustration, influencing generations of artists and reshaping how visual storytelling could be a powerful tool for social commentary (Smith, Joel, et al).

The collaboration between Steinberg and *The New Yorker* was mutually beneficial. The magazine provided him with an unparalleled platform to reach a sophisticated audience that appreciated the intersection of art and commentary. Steinberg's work helped define *The New Yorker's* visual identity, reinforcing its reputation as a publication that valued intellectual and artistic depth. His illustrations, which often blended text and imagery, pushed the boundaries of

traditional magazine art, influencing future generations of illustrators and designers. His ability to convey narratives through minimalist yet expressive lines became a hallmark of *The New Yorker's* visual language (Smith, Joel, et al).

Saul Steinberg's legacy endures through his vast work, which continues to be studied and celebrated today. His ability to capture the complexities of human experience through deceptively simple lines remains unparalleled. Institutions like MoMA and the Saul Steinberg Foundation preserve his contributions, ensuring his artistic innovations inspire future generations. Steinberg's unique blend of humor, intellect, and artistic brilliance transformed how people perceive illustration and modern art, solidifying his historical place as a true visionary (The Saul Steinberg Foundation).

Evolution of Cereal Boxes: Reflection of Pop Culture

The cereal aisle reflects cultural trends throughout decades of American history. Since the design of cereal boxes in the 19th century, when Dr. John Kellogg produced the first version of cornflakes, it has reflected periods in history that resonate with the demands of the public and their purchasing practices. Evolving alongside the shifts in pop culture, cereal box designs reflect artistic movements, advertising trends, and consumer preferences from the early 20th century to today. While studying the designs and evolution of cereal boxes, consumers can better understand the public's needs in reflecting pop culture trends.

Early Cereal Production and Packaging

In the early ages of cereal packaging, an emphasis on its functionality was the focus of cereal brands. The rise of cereal originated in the Industrial Revolution when the nature of the

workforce took a shift in individuals' personal lives and habits. In the colonial period, the working class tended to eat leftovers from the night before for breakfast or indulged in large breakfast spreads to fuel their day. As economic situations changed, the working class was spending more time in factories, shops, or offices, which ran on standardized schedules that left workers with less time to prepare and consume food during the demands on the workforce (Puritt, 2019). The need for a fast, convenient, and healthy breakfast took charge during the American Revolution, sparking the popularity of cereal.

Dr. John Kellogg changed the game for breakfast consumption with his development of cornflakes, a light breakfast that could be consumed immediately. Although its plain brown cardboard box was not the most visually appealing, it set the tone that cereal was for the working class ("The Story of the Cereal Box," 2020). The simplistic design and the nature of the product set the stage for the iconic cereal box design to take off and evolve throughout the decades.

The Rise of Branding and Character Design

After World War II, cereal consumption increased with the baby boom and the rise in prosperity, with revolutionized advertising strategies within cereal branding. With the emergence of the Gilded Age, television stole the hearts of the American people, opening an avenue for cereal companies and brands to capitalize on their stories to the public through the television screen.

In the 1960s, the explosion of cereal mascots occurred, primarily



attributed to the use of television as an advertising strategy. Kellogg's invented Frosted Flakes to appeal to the sugar consumption behaviors of baby boomers, with Tony the Tiger as their pitchman (Severson, 2016). Tony's roar on television, "They are GRRRR-EAT," became an iconic reference and mascot that shaped cereal advertising for years. The introduction of other characters, including Katy the Kangaroo, Elmo the Elephant, and Newt the Gnu, continued to shape the storytelling of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes and increased the love of America's beloved brand (Taylor, 2023). With catchy slogans and playful attitudes, cereal became personal as these characters made products feel familiar and fun.

Other cereals and brands adapted the use of characters in their packaging design for their cereal, as Lucky Charms introduced Lucky the Leprechaun and Rice Krispies embraced the characters of Snap, Crackle, and Pop. Mascots became a staple in cereal box designs due to the emotional connection individuals experienced with their mascots ("The Power of Brand Mascots: Why They Still Win Hearts," 2025). Mascots are an effective form of advertising due to their emotional connection with their audiences, memorability with catchy slogans and attitudes, and versatility within different eras and phases of their brand.

Cereal box design continues to reflect shifts in pop culture, advertising strategies, and consumer preferences. From the post-war baby boom to the rise of television advertising, cereal brands have adapted their packaging and mascots to capture the imagination of each new generation. The introduction of animated characters in the 1960s revolutionized how cereals were marketed and solidified the emotional connection between consumers and their favorite brands.

The Digital Age and the Influence of Technology

In this new dawn of the digital age, cereal mascots and packaging design face challenges in resonating with their audience's needs and declining cereal consumption. While new mascots emerge from brands like Magic Spoon, most brands learn about the nostalgic value of their classic mascots while reintroducing them to new generations through digital games and online advertising.

Cereal boxes and their advertising strategy now take on new forms. With digital platforms, these businesses can interact with their audience in a new, engaging manner rather than relying on a 30-second TV ad to convey the brand's message and point of sale. Brands like Kellogg use QR codes on their Special K and Krave cereals to offer an augmented-reality promotion on the back of Corn Pops sold in Canada (Corn, 2025). The innovation of these boxes demonstrates how pop culture influences advertising strategy and packaging design overall.

Not only are brands in the cereal industry capitalizing on the digital age of technology through their packaging design, but they are also evaluating their brands to serve this new generation of consumers better. Cereals like Cheerios are performing minimalist rebranding but focusing on nostalgia-driven packaging and health-conscious redesigns. With 80 years of Cheerios, the "Cherrioats" campaign launched a limited-edition box that is nostalgic but focuses on the health-conscious consumer, telling the story about how Cheerios has always been made with wholesome ingredients like oats ("The Cheerios O Has Always Stood for Oats," 2021). Rather than attempting to rebrand themselves, Cheerios embraced the goodness of the yellow box, which has remained a consistent healthy option for whole grains at the breakfast table for years.

Additionally, new cereal brands have entered the market in this digital age, emphasizing healthy consumers. With its high-protein, 0-gram sugar, and keto-friendly recipe, Magic Spoon caters to its cereal box design to address the 21st-century consumer (“High Protein, Keto-Friendly, 0G Sugar Cereal: Magic Spoon Cereal”). The brand's nostalgia centers



its design strategy around the Saturday-morning cartoon enthusiast, with the color palette and illustration style of the 21st century. This unique combination allows new brands to emerge in the cereal industry while still holding to the design elements familiar in cereal packaging, like mascots and bold typography.

As cereal packaging continues to evolve in the digital age, brands are finding new ways to engage consumers while adapting to changing dietary trends and media consumption habits. The rise of interactive elements, such as QR codes and augmented reality, reflects the shift from traditional advertising to immersive brand experiences. Meanwhile, nostalgic rebranding strategies—like Cheerios’ return to its roots and Magic Spoon’s modern take on classic cereal aesthetics—demonstrate how packaging design balances innovation with familiarity. As technology advances, cereal boxes will likely continue to serve as a bridge between past and present, merging digital engagement with the emotional connections that have long defined breakfast culture. Through these evolving strategies, cereal brands remain a visual and cultural staple, adapting to each generation while preserving the legacy of this beloved household product.

The evolution of cereal box design is a testament to the ever-changing landscape of pop culture, advertising, and consumer behavior. From its utilitarian beginnings in the Industrial Revolution to the rise of mascots and television-driven branding in the mid-20th century, cereal packaging has continually adapted to cultural shifts. In the digital age, brands embrace technology, nostalgia, and health-conscious trends to remain relevant. Whether through interactive QR codes, minimalist redesigns, or modern takes on classic mascots, cereal boxes reflect innovation and tradition. As consumer habits and marketing strategies evolve, cereal packaging will remain a dynamic and influential piece of visual culture, preserving its role as a breakfast staple and a cultural artifact for future generations.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research details a population's summary and the phenomenon of its characteristics by collecting qualitative, quantitative, and research case studies. Analyzing audience preferences, visual trends, and brand perceptions allows the gathering to draw general conclusions about a branding and marketing strategy that resonates with the design preferences of a target audience. The methods and techniques of observational studies, case studies, and secondary research validate and deepen the case studies and observations used to conduct this research. Observational studies are research methods that systematically observe and record behaviors, interactions, and patterns without direct interference. They provide valuable qualitative and quantitative insights into consumer habits, allowing researchers to understand real-world behaviors in natural settings. Case studies offer in-depth insights into individuals or groups, often leading to hypotheses and future design ideas based on studies of patterns within the current industry.

Throughout this research, case studies were analyzed involving the business models of various business types within the food industry. These businesses included Cereal Killers in the United Kingdom, Magic Spoons, and Yogurtini. Extensive research was conducted into their patterns and business models, including articles from various news channels about the company, mission statements, and company website reviews. This analysis provided valuable insights into the successful food industry models and practices, helping to shape a more informed approach to developing a self-served cereal bar.

Branding samples were gathered to analyze and identify common elements among similar brands and logos. This case study examined color choices, typography, and the overarching tone of brand identities, categorized as nostalgic, trendy, or grunge-focused. By comparing these design elements, valuable insights emerged on how design elements shape brand perception, offering guidance for creating a distinctive and resonant identity. Furthermore, this analysis highlights how these design elements translate into their apparel, advertising material, and social media presence, highlights vital visual trends, and reinforces the importance of aligning brand aesthetics with target audience expectations.

Advertising data and collateral were used to analyze how the food industry and cereal brands reach their target audiences practically and uniquely. Advertising strategies varied in emotional connections with consumers, ranging from sentiment to joy. Research was conducted analyzing the cereal campaigns of Wheaties – “Breakfast of Champions,” Cheerios – “Heart Healthy,” and Cinnamon Toast Crunch – “Crave those Crazy Squares.” These advertisements showed how cereal brands developed promotional materials for their product, which was impactful in building a cereal brand that reinforces its mission and audience values.

The observational method uses quantitative and qualitative data to study behaviors and patterns. Quantitative observations focus on numerical data, while qualitative observations naturally capture characteristics. Additionally, qualitative observations on consumer interactions with self-served environments were also conducted in researching and finding quantitative studies on portions of the population that consume and purchase cereal. Using the observational method to examine a serve-yourself cereal bar involved watching how potential customers interact with similar self-service setups and observing their preferences and behaviors in a similar setting of frozen yogurt shops. Naturally, researcher observed the choice of toppings, serving portions, and flow within the space to identify this project's user experience and interaction aspect. This approach provides authentic insights into customer behavior, which can inform branding choices, product selection, and potential store layouts to create a nostalgic and inviting environment that aligns with user habits and preferences.

Extensive secondary research, including books, articles, videos, and other publications, was conducted to support and validate the findings. These resources provide a solid framework for enhancing the study of this subject and offering additional insights. This paper's bibliography cites all secondary materials, underscoring the depth of research involved.

ACTIONS TAKEN

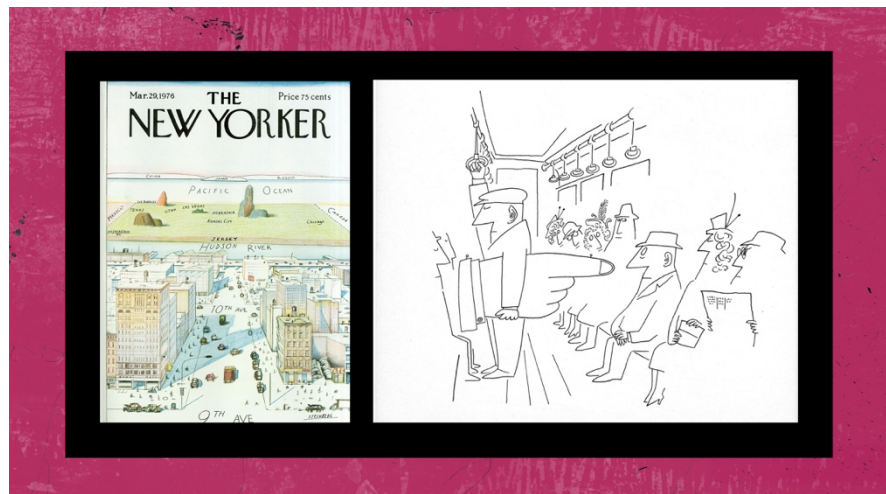
In the heart of Brooklyn, New York, a new kind of breakfast experience is changing the game — bold, unapologetic, and brimming with nostalgic charm. Mad Spoon is a cereal bar branded and marketed for the dreamers, the rule-breakers, and the nostalgia-seekers. With a serve-yourself model, a rebellious identity, and an immersive branding strategy, Mad Spoon invites customers to play with their food, break away from the ordinary, and create something

uniquely theirs. The actions taken explore the concept's branding, marketing, and advertising strategy—a holistic design system built on art history, consumer behavior, and strategic disruption.

Research

Mad Spoon was born from a deep dive into the cereal industry, art history, and contemporary retail experiences. Studying books, scholarly articles, and industry trends made it clear that cereal is more than just a breakfast staple — it has built an emotional connection with consumers for decades. To understand the evolution of cereal branding, particular attention was given to the use of mascots and character-driven packaging. These elements, rooted in pop culture, have long been used to forge emotional connections and lasting impressions on consumers.

Inspired by these findings, Mad Spoon's visual language draws heavily from the expressive, line-based illustration style of Saul Steinberg, one of New York's most iconic illustrators, best known for his work in *The New Yorker*. Steinberg's quirky line illustrations laid the groundwork for the characters and hand-drawn elements throughout Mad Spoon's brand identity. Influenced by his loose, expressive line illustrations, his illustration style embodies the attitude of New York.



Additionally, in-person field research at coffee shops and yogurt bars provided insight into how weigh-and-pay models function in the real world. This directly influenced the user experience and layout of Mad Spoon's retail space, from navigating cereal dispensers to customizing toppings and weighing bowls to implementing a payment system.

Brand Identity

Mad Spoon's identity is anchored in its name — a spoon gone mad, playful yet defiant, signaling chaos in the best way possible. The logo embraces this spirit with a high-contrast, chunky typography that evokes childhood cereal boxes but with a grown-up, rebellious edge. The stacked "o"s mimic the energy of cereal bouncing into a bowl, while the grounding slab base brings structure to the fun. The logo is not just a visual mark — it is an invitation to pour, spill, stir, and mash to your heart's content.



Color plays a vital role in reinforcing Mad Spoon’s brand personality. The core palette of pink, black, and crème is unexpected in the breakfast world. Pink injects playfulness and attitude, black adds sophistication and edge, and crème nods to the milk in your bowl. A secondary palette of accent colors, including honey havoc, midnight marshmallow, and crimson crunch, keeps the brand full of surprises. Adding these secondary colors gives the identity a sense of brightness and joy. These tones act like toppings — bold, bright, and layered in personality.



Typography furthers the brand’s expressive duality and adds the boldness necessary for the type system. A modern sans-serif font delivers energy and punch, while a classic serif evokes the feeling of a morning newspaper—a ritual of comfort and quiet. These typography treatments were selected to create a type system that balances the edge of Mad Spoon with a sense of familiarity with the serif pairing.



The illustration included hand-drawn characters—from characters swimming in their bowl of cereal to bananas popping off the screen—adding life to every touchpoint of Mad Spoon’s brand. These characters do more than decorate; they tell a story and invite interaction. Their loose, expressive linework brings charm and



authenticity, while their unpredictability mirrors the creativity of a custom cereal bowl.

Marketing Strategy

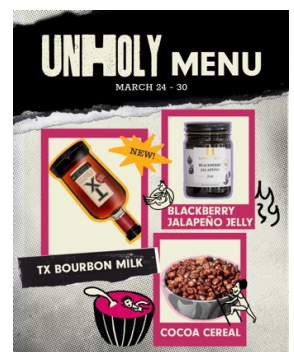
Mad Spoon does not rely solely on branding; it brings the brand to life through immersive experiences and strategic marketing. In today’s culture of personalization, consumers are no longer satisfied with just a good product — they want an experience. Mad Spoon’s entire model is built on this insight. By empowering customers to create their cereal masterpieces, Mad Spoon turns breakfast into a rebellion.

The in-store design ensures a seamless and playful customer journey. I thoughtfully orchestrated every step—pouring cereal, choosing toppings, selecting milk, and weighing the bowl. Visual cues, clever signage, and branded touchpoints ensure the experience is intuitive, joyful, and repeatable.



The physical brand extends into merchandise and packaging. Apparel, mugs, and stickers transform customers into brand ambassadors. Each piece becomes a wearable or shareable element of the Mad Spoon identity, reinforcing its community of rebels and dreamers.

The Mad Spoon website echoes the energy of the physical space. With bold graphics, cheeky copywriting, and animated cereal characters, it offers customers a digital playground to explore the unholy weekly menu drops, book catering events, and dive into the Mad Spoon story. The site serves as a sales funnel and a brand-building platform, giving the experience a home online.



Advertising

Mad Spoon’s advertising takes cues from some of the most iconic cereal campaigns. Brands like Wheaties’ “Breakfast of Champions,” Cheerios’ “Heart Healthy,” and Cinnamon Toast Crunch’s “Crave those Crazy Squares” were analyzed to understand how advertising can create emotional resonance and build consumer loyalty.

Mad Spoon is hitting the streets with a bold, high-impact launch strategy. In the heart of Times Square, eye-catching digital billboards showcase wild cereal combinations and cheeky taglines designed to stop commuters in their tracks. On the subway—where fast-paced New Yorkers need a pick-me-up—posters and train ads remind them that cereal is not just for kids, and Mad Spoon is here to disrupt their routine in the best way.



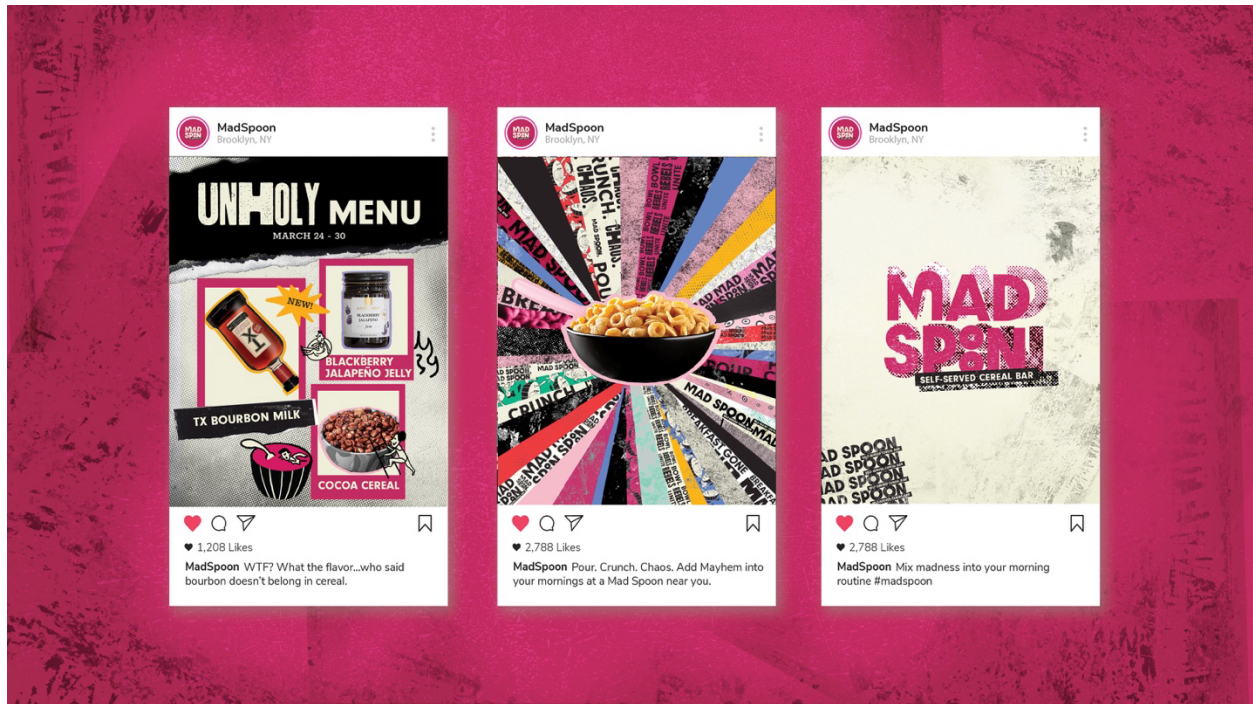
Print advertising appears in culture-forward magazines, using full-page layouts to amplify the brand's vibrant aesthetic. These ads are less about promotion and more about emotional engagement—visual storytelling that invites readers into the Mad Spoon world. Illustrations, bright color palettes, and edgy typography catch the eye of individuals reading their local magazines.



Guerrilla marketing also plays a key role. A Cereal Jackpot machine in high-traffic locations lets users spin for wild cereal topping combinations, sparking curiosity and interaction. This element of surprise adds a layer of fun and virality that connects to audiences beyond traditional channels.



Online, Mad Spoon thrives on Instagram, TikTok, and digital advertising. Animated content, illustrated videos, and behind-the-scenes peeks into the unholy weekly menu create a scroll-stopping presence. User-generated content is encouraged and reposted, building community and hype. Digital engagement is not an afterthought — it is where Mad Spoon’s rebellious spirit runs wild.



CONCLUSION

Mad Spoon is more than a cereal bar—a fully immersive brand experience fueled by bold design, a rebellious identity, and strategic marketing. From art-inspired illustrations to Times Square billboards, every detail reinforces the core message: Cereal is no longer just breakfast—it is a canvas. Combining nostalgia with innovation, Mad Spoon dares customers to play, break the rules, and eat joyfully.

This lifelong connection is what ultimately inspired the creation of Mad Spoon. What began as a playful ritual between my father and me evolved into a full-fledged brand — a space where others could experience that same joy, comfort, and creativity. Mad Spoon is more than a business idea; it is a tribute to our bond over shared bowls and stolen moments. By transforming those memories into an immersive, design-driven experience, I hope to offer others the chance to make their connections, whether with a parent, a friend, or just their inner child. Since childhood, cereal has always been my favorite food – not just because of its sugary greatness, but because I associated my father’s love with a bowl of cereal. The serenity of pouring a bowl of cereal brings me back to the chaos of school mornings, getting ready for soccer practice, and the late-night snacks, moments over which my dad and I built a special bond. Amidst the whirlwind of growing up, he always found time to show his love and support by sharing a bowl of happiness, creating small but meaningful moments of connection.

With its unapologetic energy, Mad Spoon does not just serve cereal—it serves a revolution, one spoonful at a time. It reminds me that dreams can become a reality for my father and me.

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