

MAD SPON

SELF-SERVED CEREAL BAR

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To Mom and Dad —

Thank you for always believing in my wildest dreams.

What started as a simple dream between cereal bowls became my college journey's most meaningful project. From an idea that stemmed when I was little, bringing a vision we once shared to life has been the project that reminded me why I pursued this degree in the first place. Mad Spoon is more than a thesis; it's a tribute to every morning we shared stories over breakfast, every late night you encouraged me to pursue my passion, and every moment you reminded me I could do anything I set my heart to.

This project is for you — my biggest inspirations, my loudest cheerleaders, and the reason I chase creativity with courage.

With all my love,
Reagan



06 INTRODUCTION

07 RESEARCH

22 HISTORICAL RESEARCH

27 ACTIONS TAKEN

31 CONCLUSION



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, 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 meaningful moments of connection.

THESIS STATEMENT

This project centers around the branding and marketing of 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.

RESEARCH 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 and secondary research validate and deepen the case studies and observations used to conduct this research. Observational studies systematically observe and record behaviors, interactions, and patterns without direct interference, providing valuable qualitative and quantitative insights into consumer habits in natural settings. Case studies offer in-depth insights into individuals or groups, often leading to hypotheses and future design ideas based on 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. 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 apparel, advertising material, and social media presence, reinforcing the importance of aligning brand aesthetics with specific details on 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 both quantitative and qualitative data to study consumer behaviors. Quantitative data captures measurable trends, while qualitative observations focus on characteristics and interactions. In this study, I observed consumer behavior in self-serve environments, such as frozen yogurt shops, to draw parallels with a serve-yourself cereal bar concept. I examined topping selections, serving portions, and spatial flow to understand user preferences and experiences. These authentic insights help inform branding, product offerings, and layout design, creating a nostalgic and inviting environment tailored to customer habits.

Extensive secondary research was conducted to support and validate the findings, including books, articles, videos, and other publications. 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 in the completion of this project.

BUSINESS MODELS

Each business evaluated showcases the diversity and creativity of modern food business models, each uniquely tailored to consumer preferences and market trends. This section analyzes 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. This alignment fosters deeper consumer engagement and long-term brand affinity. Ultimately, these companies prove that storytelling and strategic innovation are essential for success.



YOGURTLAND

OVERVIEW

Entrepreneur Phillip Chang found success in the food industry after transforming his Boba Loca tea franchise into a self-serve frozen yogurt shop. Yogurtland opened in 2006 in Fullerton, California, introducing a self-serve dessert concept that quickly expanded nationwide with 300 storefronts and 200 rotating flavors (Garfinkle, 2023; Persons, 2022). Its innovative model gave customers control over portions and flavor combinations, offering a healthier, customizable dessert option that stood out in the crowded market.

BIG IDEA

Yogurtland's mission centers on delivering a personalized snacking experience through a self-serve model. This approach, combined with a focus on quality ingredients and dietary inclusivity—including dairy-free, sugar-free, and plant-based options—strengthens consumer loyalty, especially among Gen Z (Persons, 2022; Cobe, 2023).

DEMOGRAPHIC

Yogurtland appeals to a wide demographic, particularly families and younger generations. With flavors ranging from cotton candy to blackberry tart, it attracts consumers aged 4 to 55. Gen Z, more inclined toward “away from home” frozen treats, makes up a significant portion of customers—51% compared to 21% of Baby Boomers (Olsen, 2024). Seasonal promotions and customizable options support broad consumer appeal.

MISSION STATEMENT

Yogurtland's motto—“in the community for the community”—reflects its commitment to offering an inclusive, customizable experience (Yogurtland's website). The brand empowers customers by letting them control flavors, toppings, and serving sizes, building community through personalized desserts.

IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

Yogurtland's self-serve model allows customers to choose how much they want, promoting convenience, satisfaction, and value (Kneiszel, 2023). This control encourages experimentation and return visits. Priced at 33 cents per ounce, with over 20 flavors and 65 toppings, the experience appeals to all socioeconomic groups. Psychologically, this model builds confidence and fosters long-term brand loyalty (Larsen, 2023; Kneiszel, 2023). The serve yourself option allows for endless possibilities on frozen yogurt combinations.

CEREAL KILLERS CAFÉ

OVERVIEW

Founded by twins Alan and Gary Keery in London, Cereal Killer Café was born from a craving for cereal after a night out. With limited space in their apartment and a love for variety, they launched a café offering over 120 cereals, flavored milks, and toppings (Goorwich, 2019). More than a food spot, it tapped into childhood nostalgia, targeting customers seeking comfort and memories through cereal.

BIG IDEA

The Keery brothers built their business around the emotional connection to cereal—symbolizing childhood independence and comfort. Seeing a gap in the London market for cereal-centric dining, they created not just a café, but an immersive experience celebrating creativity, tradition, and nostalgia (Millington, 2019).

DEMOGRAPHIC

Before closing during the COVID-19 pandemic, the café targeted young adults and families, offering sugary indulgence and playful decor from 7 am to 10 pm. Though located in a gentrified area of London and criticized for high prices, it attracted middle to upper-class consumers drawn by the nostalgia-rich experience, complete with vintage boxes, retro cartoons, and curated playlists (Rhys-Taylor et al.; Millington, 2019).

MISSION STATEMENT

Cereal Killer Café aimed to evoke joy and childhood memories through cereal. This emotional branding resonated with customers seeking comfort and belonging, building strong loyalty among a younger, emotionally-driven audience (Millington, 2019; Kenan, 2024). It wasn't just about food—it was about the feeling behind it.

IN-STORE EXPERIENCE

Known for its “cereal cocktails” like the “Lon-Don-Done,” the café let customers mix over 100 cereals, 30 milks, and various toppings—at a premium price of \$5.50 per bowl (Cereal Killers menu). The experience-focused model emphasized fun and nostalgia.

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, still holding value to the brand's mission (Kunert, 2020).





MAGIC SPOON

OVERVIEW

Founded in 2019, Magic Spoon is a high-protein, low-carb, no-sugar cereal that blends the nostalgia of childhood favorites with modern health standards. Co-founders Greg and Gabi launched the brand to recreate the feeling of Saturday morning cartoon cereals, but with a 21st-century, health-conscious twist (Magic Spoon website). Initially sold online, Magic Spoon gained popularity by mimicking classics like Rice Krispies treats while using a high-protein, sugar-free formula. Its success with health-focused consumers has since earned it a spot on mainstream cereal aisle shelves.

BIG IDEA

Magic Spoon's "Big Idea" is to reinvent cereal by combining nostalgic flavors with healthier ingredients. With help from nutrition scientists, the brand offers a fun, guilt-free snack for health-conscious consumers, proving that eating well doesn't have to be boring (Magic Spoon website). Each serving includes 130 calories, 11 grams of protein, 7 grams of fiber, and 0 grams of sugar, appealing to cereal lovers seeking better nutrition without sacrificing taste with a nostalgic attitude (Watrous, 2023).

DEMOGRAPHIC

Magic Spoon is considered a premium cereal brand due to its health-focused ingredients and nearly \$10 price point—almost double that of Honey Nut Cheerios (Waldow, 2023). Its consumers prioritize nutrition over cost, often substituting traditional snacks like protein bars and Greek yogurt with Magic Spoon (Waldow, 2023). Co-founders Greg and Gabi note that many customers hadn't been eating cereal at all before, as Millennials and Gen Z favor nutrient-rich options (Beer, 2020). With 30% of Millennials willing to pay more for healthier ingredients, brands like Magic Spoon can successfully charge premium prices (Raphael, 2019).

MISSION STATEMENT

Magic Spoon's mission is to deliver guilt-free versions of nostalgic childhood cereals with a health-conscious twist. Featuring vibrant packaging and flavors like Fruity, Cocoa, and Peanut Butter, the brand appeals to both memory and modern nutrition needs (Beer, 2020). While the average American eats 100 bowls of cereal annually, most options lack nutritional value. Magic Spoon challenges this with addictive yet protein-rich recipes designed to fuel the body and avoid energy crashes (Magic Spoon website), positioning itself as "kids' cereal for grown-ups." Magic Spoon bridges the gap between indulgence and intention.



Cheerios



milk
MILK BAR



MAGIC
SPOON

jenie's
ICE CREAMS

BRANDING 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 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

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. Milk Bar's playful yet edgy visual identity mirrors its bold culinary experimentation, helping it stand out in the market.



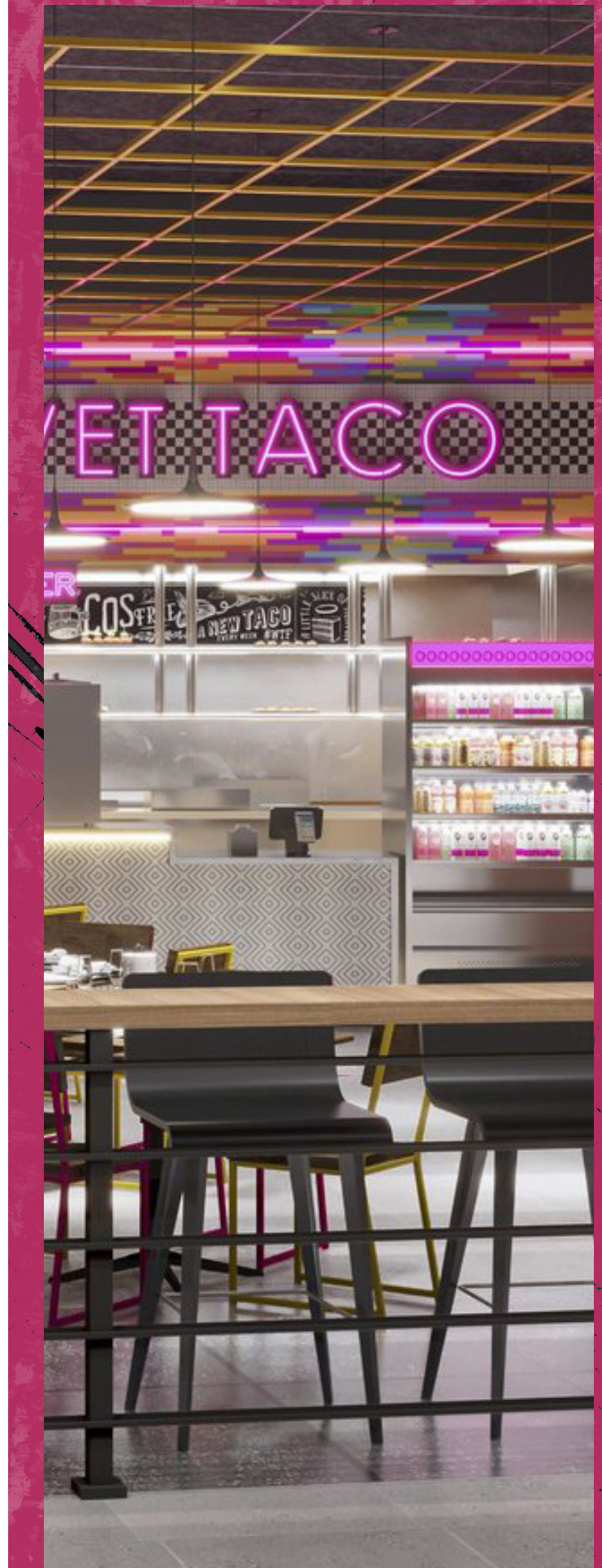
Velvet Taco

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 Killer Café

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. Its brand identity taps into a shared sense of rebellious nostalgia, making it both emotionally resonant and visually distinct. By turning a childhood staple into a full-blown cultural aesthetic, Cereal Killer Café redefined cereal.



TRENDY & YOUTHFUL

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. They gravitated toward brands that reflected their values, such as sustainability, inclusivity, and authenticity. As a result, successful companies adapted their design strategies to meet these evolving expectations and digital-first habits.

"GENERATION Z CALLS FOR DIVERSE, INCLUSIVE BRAND IDENTITIES—RESHAPING THE RETAIL LANDSCAPE WITH VALUES LIKE SUSTAINABILITY, AUTHENTICITY, AND PERSONALIZATION AT THE FOREFRONT."



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.



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.



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 to come.



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 evokes positive emotions in consumers, with research showing that those who eat it tend to have a better mood, improved memory performance, and feel calmer (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). Brighter, more saturated colors are associated with greater freshness and flavor intensity. Since people are conditioned to judge food visually, packaging color directly impacts taste perception and a product's first impression. The emotional and sensory expectations created by color can determine whether a consumer feels drawn to or turned away from a product. Therefore, thoughtful use of color in branding can significantly influence a food product's popularity and emotional response.

YELLOW

Many cereal brands incorporate yellow into their color schemes to evoke happiness and a cheerful breakfast atmosphere (Lohrey, 2017). Brands like Cheerios, Blue Bell, Little Man, Velvet Taco, and Cereal Killers use yellow to create this uplifting mood. However, when used as a primary color, yellow can appear naïve or untrustworthy, as it triggers analytical instincts and skepticism in consumers (Howell, 2023). To avoid this, brands often opt for muted yellow tones, like beige, which suggest warmth and joy without overwhelming the viewer—resembling the morning sun and working best as a secondary color.

BLACK & HIGH CONTRAST COLORS

Black is a bold, elegant choice in food packaging, used by brands like Velvet Taco, Cereal Killers, Milk Bar, and Bored Cow to convey power, sophistication, and strength. Its high contrast enhances legibility and creates a sleek, minimalist look (Howell, 2023). Menu engineer Gregg Rapp even claims black is the most impactful color for food brands. When paired with white, it simplifies design, while still appearing intense and chic (Magalhães). Brands like Milk Bar and Velvet Taco balance black's masculinity with vibrant pinks, adding energy and femininity to attract younger audiences (Howell, 2023). This high-contrast pairing supports a brand's mission through both style and emotion.

GEN Z & 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 through the use of social media 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 colors resonate with Gen Z's expressive nature. Additionally, the 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.

“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.”

— COLIN WHEILDON

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.

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 Gen Z. On their packaging, animated characters tell the brand story while evoking youthfulness. The simplicity of the flat illustrations helps communicate the brand's playful, approachable tone. What sets Magic Spoon apart is its clever use of gradient textures, adding depth and energy to an otherwise minimalistic design. These color transitions create a sense of movement and dimension, making the design dynamic and engaging. The combination of flat illustrations with bold gradients catches the eye, aligning with Gen Z's preference for clean yet visually complex designs that stand 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. Jeni's use of patterns in their packaging design tells a vibrant and artisanal brand story within the ice cream industry, throughout every season and design with its placement.



ADVERTISING

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

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 influencers 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"

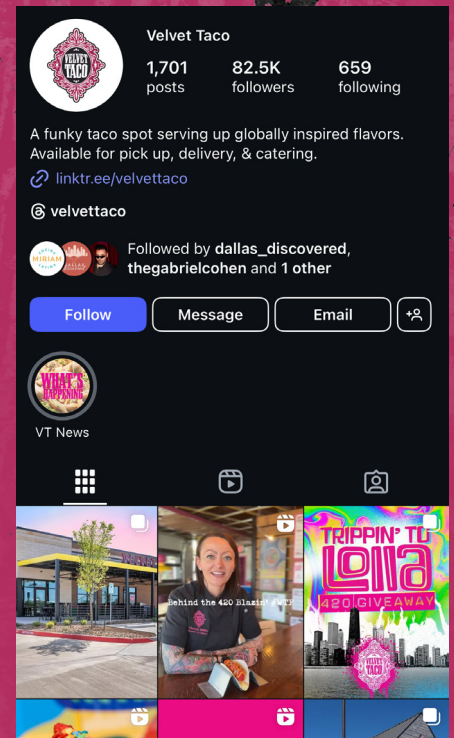
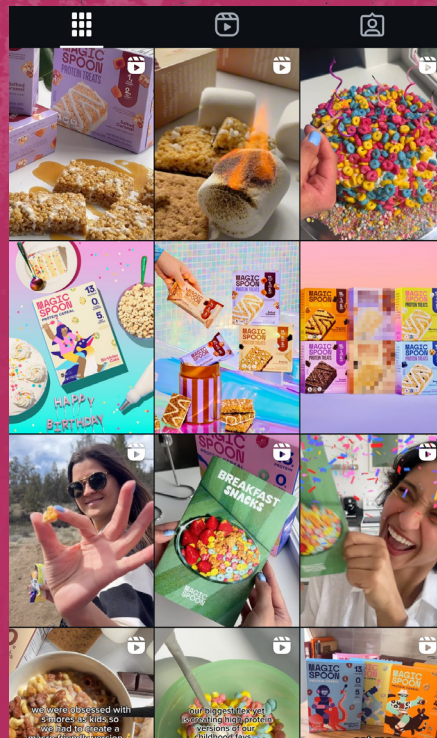
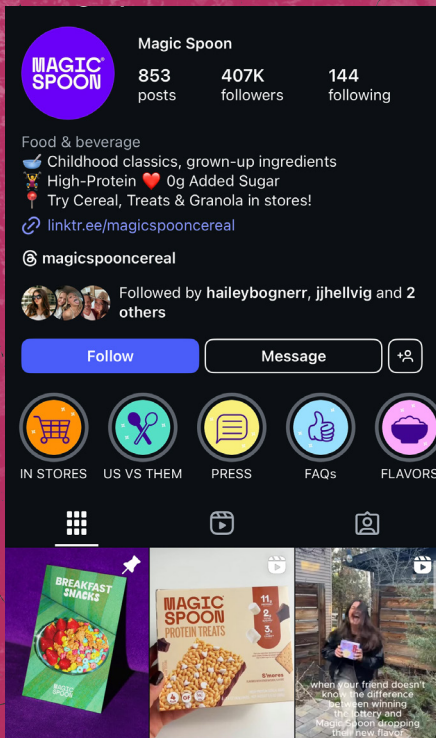
Cheerios tugs on the heartstrings of millions of Americans through its unique storytelling and campaign promoting Cheerios' nutritional benefits and commitment to its values. With more than 100 million Americans having heart disease, Cheerios focuses this campaign strategy on acknowledging and understanding 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.

"CHEERIOS TURNS BREAKFAST INTO A HEARTFELT REMINDER TO LIVE WELL."

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

Social media messaging and audience engagement rely on intentional, targeted tactics that help brands attract and retain consumers through aesthetically driven content and consistent brand recognition. In the food industry specifically, platforms like Instagram and TikTok have become essential for marketing success. High-quality product photography, influencer reviews, and promotional campaigns generate the most traction, with visual appeal and authenticity leading the charge. Before launching a social media campaign, a brand must understand the aesthetic preferences, behaviors, and values of its target audience to create relevant and engaging content. Interactive strategies—such as Instagram Reels, story polls, Q&As, direct messages, and comment section replies—boost engagement while keeping the brand relatable and present within a collection of diverse online communities.

Magic Spoon serves as a standout example of using social media effectively to reach its Gen Z demographic. Known for its colorful, health-conscious cereal, the brand fills its feed with vibrant product photography, behind-the-scenes glimpses, and influencer-led content, all designed to spark interest and foster emotional connection. Rather than relying on generic or overly polished stock imagery, Magic Spoon highlights real customer experiences to create social proof and build trust. This authenticity resonates strongly with Gen Z consumers, who value transparency and relatability over perfection. Magic Spoon also stays on top of pop culture trends, frequently integrating trending sounds, memes, and challenges into its content to improve its visibility within platform algorithms and reach wider audiences (Dublino, 2024).

Similarly, Velvet Taco has successfully built its online presence by incorporating pop culture references into its branding. For instance, during National Taco Week, Velvet Taco's marketing team posted a now-viral video featuring customers holding oversized newspapers with the company's slogan—a playful twist on a trending visual style. This type of creative, timely content allows Velvet Taco to remain relevant and drive engagement among younger users, that are more likely to engage with Velvet Taco's business model. Businesses that commit to staying informed on current social trends and adapting their strategy accordingly are more likely to experience increased visibility, community growth, and long-term customer loyalty across social media platforms.

OUT-OF-HOME ADVERTISEMENTS

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, the executive chef curates daring seasonal flavors and unexpected combinations, aligning with their adventurous customer base. The use of ChatGPT made the campaign timely and expanded its appeal to tech-savvy audiences, adding a fresh twist to their established menu. With playful copywriting, vibrant visuals, and cultural relevance, the billboard reinforces Velvet Taco's edgy, innovative brand identity.



“OUTDOOR SIGNAGE CAN EFFECTIVELY DRIVE FOOT TRAFFIC AND INCREASE BRAND RECOGNITION, WITH COPYWRITING.”

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.



HISTORICAL RESEARCH

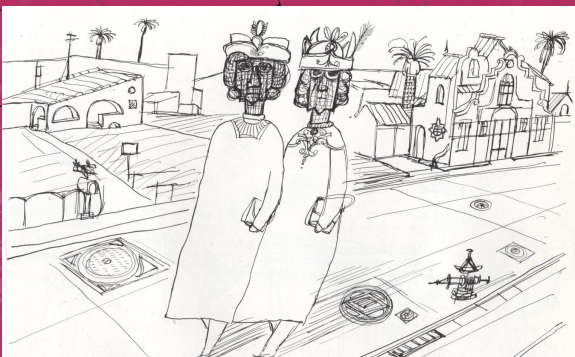
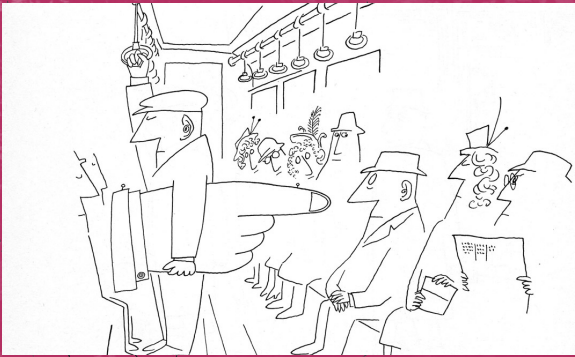
SAUL STEINBERG

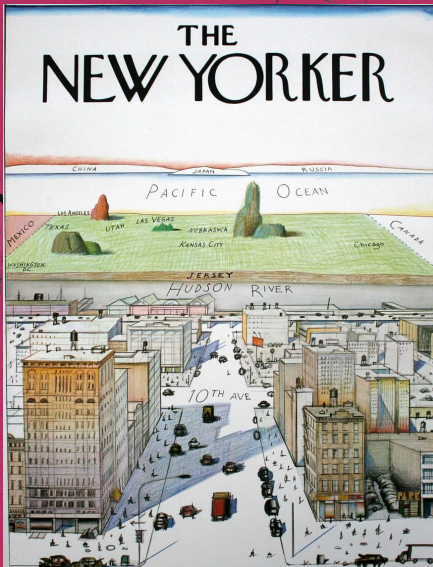
Saul Steinberg was one of the most prolific artists of his era. He could merge humor with the harsh realities of the world around him. His cartoons blurred the lines between illustrations and modern art, often employing humor, satire, and keen social commentary to challenge perceptions of reality. His 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.

“HIS CARTOONS BLURRED THE LINE BETWEEN ILLUSTRATIONS AND MODERN ART.”

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. Beautifully capturing the New York

attitude. 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). Steinberg's work continues to inspire contemporary illustrators, demonstrating the lasting impact of his innovative approach to blending art, humor, and social critique.

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.



EVOLUTION OF CEREAL DESIGN

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 throughout history.

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.

THE RISE OF BRANDING AND CHARACTERS

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, transforming how they told their brand's story.

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 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 "Cherri oats" 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.



ACTIONS TAKEN

In the heart of Brooklyn, New York, a Mad Spoon is a new kind of breakfast experience — 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.

BRAND IDENTITY LOGOMARK

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.

COLORS

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

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.

ILLUSTRATIONS

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. Their loose, expressive linework brings charm and authenticity, while their unpredictability mirrors the creativity of a custom cereal bowl.

PRIMARY LOGO



SECONDARY LOGO



Primary		Secondary				
BERRY MUTINY #b32e60	CHARRED COCOA #231f20	MILK REBELLION #e6ebd7	CRIMSON CRUNCH #da3837	FROSTED ANARCHY #00a7fd	MIDNIGHT MARSHMALLOW #9695c9	VANILLA VANDAL #bb6c62
RGB - 179, 44, 94 CMYK - 36, 96, 43, 6	RGB - 35, 31, 32 CMYK - 0, 0, 0, 100	RGB - 238, 238, 219 CMYK - 6, 4, 16, 0	RGB - 218, 58, 55 CMYK - 9, 93, 85, 1	RGB - 0, 178, 183 CMYK - 6, 33, 9, 0	RGB - 105, 149, 201 CMYK - 40, 40, 0, 0	RGB - 187, 198, 194 CMYK - 27, 15, 21, 0
			DEFIANT STRAWBERRY #e885c4	BLUEBERRY RIOT #5c79bc	HONEY HAVOC #fbd118	
			RGB - 232, 138, 194 CMYK - 6, 33, 9, 0	RGB - 92, 121, 188 CMYK - 69, 51, 0, 0	RGB - 251, 173, 24 CMYK - 0, 36, 100, 0	

MAD SPOON

LOGOTYPE
Dazle Unicase (Modified)

SELF-SERVED CEREAL BAR

HEADLINES
Neuzett Grotesk (Modified)

PARAGRAPH
Rockitt

DECORATIVE INFORMATION
Altonia

ADVERTISEMENT INFORMATION
Thunderhouse Pro (Modified)

POUR. CRUNCH. CHAOS.



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 full-blown 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.

**POUR A
LITTLE
CHAOS
IN YOUR
BOWL**



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