



FOOD COMMUNICATION: The Context

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Why analyze food context?

To understand the context in which our children are involved, the influences imposed upon them by media, industry and advertising is vital to make a truly effective cartoon on healthy food.

Who are our children?

According to Harvard sociologist Juliet Schor:

- Not only they are consumers as adults are, but they also have a strong influence on their parents' shopping habits (kidfluence).
- They have their own money and they also go shopping, often alone.
- They have developed a strong orientation to the symbolic meanings constructed through branding.
- They have dramatically increased their tv exposure.
- In other words they've become a very appealing market, the promised land for food industry.

The new promised land: how to get there

- The growth of this market has led to a dramatic increase in advertising to children.
- Corporate efforts directed at children have become increasingly aggressive.
- Marketing is becoming more and more sophisticated, invasive and insidious. Our children are literally bombarded. The majority of tv advertising dedicated to children is focused on food.

The new promised land: how to get there

Advertisers and marketers have studied a lot of different ways to reach children's minds:

- coolness
- age compression and tweening
- nag factor or pester power
- dual messaging
- transtoying

COOLNESS

- Nowadays it is an all-encompassing quality, something that every product must have and every child must be.
- It is the key to social success, able to define someone's popularity and social acceptability.
- What is cool today will not be cool tomorrow.
- The opposite of cool is loser.

Ingredients for coolness

- Social exclusiveness, in other words owning expensive things not easily affordable by most. Things that are desirable and, at the same time, inaccessible
- Being successful and rich.
- Being cleverer than adults (adults are not cool).
- Reaching limits, without passing them, with regard to what is dangerous and prohibited (by authorities).
- Having older children's tastes and behaviours.
- Feeling older.

Coolness: the expert's opinion

Gene Del Vecchio, Ogilvy and Mather, former CEO, author of *Creating Ever Cool: A Marketer's Guide to a Kid's Heart* :

“Being cool means having something that others don't. It makes a child feel special and pushes him to seek the latest cool product”.

Age compression and Tweening

- Advertisers are redefining age-appropriateness by reducing target ages and creating a more adult-like relationship earlier, or what the industry terms “age compression”.
- This is clear with the process known as “tweening” of the 6-12 year old market, that is advertising products and messages previously intended for teens. A good example of this are the Winx cartoons and food products rich in calories (sugar above all) like breakfast cereals, snacks, drinks.

Nag factor or pester power

- Children's power to pester their parents with continuous requests to buy advertised products.
- Ads now bypass the parents and appeal directly to children. For instance, a cereal high in sugar (unhealthy) will be exclusively targeted to children.
- According to corporate interests healthy food is not cool.

Dual messaging

Differentiation in strategy approach to children and parents. For instance, an advertisement directed at the parents highlights certain features (health, nutritional values, food safety) and hides others (nutritional facts, calories, salt etc). By contrast, the children's version highlights the jazzy features parents disapprove of or prefer not to pay for.

Transtoying

- Increasing market trend in foodspace. Industry transforms food and consequently eating into something to play with (snacks and cereals with funny shapes or strange colours, free gifts in association with the product, etc).
- Question: if a child learns that eating means fun and the games, why should he or she learn to recognize and appreciate the taste of good, healthy food?

Who is producing (and selling) food for our children?

Foodspace in Europe

- The food and drink industry is the second Europe's most important and dynamic industrial sectors. It is made up of about 310 000 companies, and provides jobs for more than 4 million people.
- With an annual turnover in excess of €800 billion, this diverse sector is a strong exporter and is extremely competitive on domestic and international markets.

Communicating (healthy) food: reflections

Until now we have understood that :

- Marketers and advertisers can communicate with children in various ways, directly and indirectly, using different strategies, languages and tools.
- Health, intended as food and lifestyle, is not cool.
- Direct communication on health issues (made by adults and authorities who are not cool) is ineffective.

Communicating (healthy) food: a new strategy?

“Nowadays food is becoming a lifestyle and people eat as they would like to live. This consideration must be at the base of every food strategy. In communicating or in launching new products we must be aware of it”.

“The food market is becoming more aggressive, the consumer more evolved, competition more intense. To win, desire must overcome need ”

Mc Cann Erickson research 2006

Why is it so difficult to communicate the healthy food concept?

The food issue has particular features:

- everyone feels expert for the simple reason he eats every day.
- everyone has personal and well defined preferences and habits due to family and country of origin.
- everyone is linked to a particular gastronomic tradition (granny's recipes, typical dishes).

Different meanings of food

Calories and nutrients are only a small part of what food means to everyone:

- Pleasure and taste
- Emotions (gratification, hunger, comfort, anxiety, relaxation)
- Sociability (sharing food brings people closer)
- Memories (of our childhood, of a trip etc)
- Culture

The right message: what should it be?

- Based on the awareness that food is not only a question of calories, but also of culture, pleasure, emotion, sociability.
- Economically sustainable
- Not pretending to completely overwhelm lifestyles and habits
- Not educational
- Positive and motivating
- Easy to apply in everyday life

Communicating healthy food in Europe

- Food is also the product of nature (environment and climate), culture (man's capacity to elaborate earth products) and history (this process took centuries).
- In Europe there is a great abundance and variety of foods, traditions and cuisines, while there are many varying habits concerning food

A continent of differences

Bulgaria

- Great variety of vegetables, herbs and fruits.
- Bulgarian cuisine is based on meat, potatoes, beans and salad (required at every meal) and is featured by hot and spicy flavours. It is also noted for the diversity and quality of dairy products (yoghurt characterized by *Lactobacillus bulgaricus* was born there).
- Great importance has the bread, prepared in many shapes and flavours, considered a real holiday food.
- Light breakfast, full lunch, light dinner

A continent of differences

Belgium

It's famous for mussels and frites (French-fried potatoes), waffles, chocolate, endive and Brussels sprout. Charcuterie, a basket of bread, and beer often make a meal. Meat, fish and seafood are important. Hearty soups play a big role. Almonds and spices are used in abundance, and fresh herbs lace appetizers, salads, meats, and even desserts.

A continent of differences

Poland

- Meat, potatoes, cereals, fish soup are at the base of polish cuisine.
- In no other European countries cuisine spices has a such important role.
- Big breakfast, full lunch (served very late), light dinner (eggs, sandwiches), often concluded with a cup of hot chocolate.
- Potatoes are like bread and they must be on the table.

A continent of differences

- Potatoes: very important in Poland, Ireland, Germany, Belgium
- Spices: Bulgaria, Poland, Belgium
- Sweet and Sour: Germany, England
- Meat: Germany, Bulgaria,
- Vegetables: Italy, Spain, Bulgaria

A continent of differences

- Soup: a very common way to eat vegetables all across Europe
- Big breakfast: Poland, Great Britain
- Big lunch: Bulgaria, Poland
- Big dinner: Italy and Spain

The right message in Europe

How can one manage so different a target?

Generally speaking: when talking about breakfast, we should remember that in Europe we have a lot of possibilities, heavy or light. We should underline the importance of having a good nutritional breakfast.

The right message in Europe

Gathering data and information on other countries' food and eating habits. After an accurate analysis we are able to define an easily applicable universal message. However one should take into account the different meal times all over Europe. For instance, in some countries lunch can be a light snack while in others it is a full meal.

The right message to children

- Children (and their families) usually know the right things to do and eat, but don't always behave accordingly.
- We should give them not only the knowledge of food, but also the insight, a real life moment in which our target can identify with strong emotional participation.
- Giving insight allows children to totally accept our position and thus modify their behaviour.

Communicating the right message to children

How can we win over the children?

- Being appealing to them
- Getting in touch with them
- Being reliable sources
- Not betraying their trust
- Not being arrogant

Communicating the right message to children

The laugh power

- Entertainment is the easier approach, laughter the prize for having grabbed their attention, and making them more willing to listen.
- No fear
- Never generate fear or anxiety in children. If you give the problem, you must also give the solution

Communicating the right message to children

- To be on the same plain, so they can recognize and identify their reality with something more attractive and modern.
- Characters that children can easily identify and that inspire a desire to make friends. They must not inspire feelings of indifference, competition or superiority

Communicating the right message to children

Of course, you can!

- Teaching them the possibility of changing their reality.
- Convincing them to be protagonists.

Communicating (healthy food): the challenge

- Our challenge is to apply successful strategies to food issues, opening new perspectives where traditional campaigns have failed.
- Edutainment, with its long successful worldwide history, has proved to be an extraordinarily effective *medium*, able to promote social values and correct behaviour.
- The results are measurable.

Why does edutainment work?

- Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory
- Human beings can learn new behaviour through observation and imitation of other human beings
- Our self-confidence increases when we see other people perform our same tasks with success

How does edutainment work?

- 3 kind of characters
- Positive: public love them. Their lives and their stories are guided by the values we want to promote
- Negative: public hate them. By contrast with the positive ones they represent all the behaviour to biase

How does edutainment work?

- Transition: public identify with them. They're attracted from negative values but choose positive ones. In this way transition characters obtain important advantages or something good happen to them. Therefore public become convinced that doing the same will be convenient for them.

Edutainment's mission

“Telling stories, saving lives”
PCI-Media Impact

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