

Dave Ernest

Every Bite Counts: Analysis of Restaurant Influence

*R*estaurants have long been regarded as centers of romance and excitement.

When people think of a restaurant many ideas come to mind. It is the collection or aggregate ideas of restaurants in general that create the thought of just *eating* at a restaurant a delicacy. Around the world, there are restaurants with much esteem, and there are those that are barely noticed for their delicious condiments. Either or, the goal of each restaurant is to make customers happy in an attempt to increase sales; whether it is through the savory foods they have to offer or the types of marketing that they use. It's not an easy task to do; however, with perfect planning, every restaurant is capable of keeping loyal customers. Menus and restaurant design—which are usually the first impressions that customers make—are important sales tools for restaurants (Bowen and Morris). But that's not all. Those are merely a couple of the many sales tools that restaurants this day and age are currently using.

A genre is how a person responds to a situation in order to solve it (Braziller & Kleinfeld, 17). Let's look at it this way, instead of a person we will be analyzing a restaurant and what such restaurant does in order to solve their problems. We won't simply analyze just a few restaurants, there will be about a dozen to analyze. Recently, there was a great expansion in the University of

Central Florida's Student Union. Many well-known restaurants from across town have been introduced into the Student Union. Not only in the student union, but also in many locations around campus, that have opened recently. Panda Express, Steak 'n Shake, Which Which, Qdoba, Huey Magoo's, Smoothie King, Café Bustelo, Pollo Tropical, Mrs. Field's Bakery, and Knights Stop & Sushi.

Generally speaking, restaurants usually implement figurative language such as imagery in their marketing strategies. In doing so, the students will be able to picture themselves eating such foods without actually eating it. This will influence the students' decisions dramatically. The claim that is centered around my research is the use of imagery. Most of the restaurants on campus are using imagery in order to give students the paradox of fantasy. Through this, a student will picture themselves eating such foods, which ultimately will allow them to buy it.

In a study conducted by Boonme and several other authors, the addition of heart symbols and visual cues in menus were used to analyze the effect of restaurant decision making. The author found that the use of visual information that depicted healthy lifestyles resulted in participants making these choices more often than those without visual cues. Visual information is the key to a customer's heart, but not every marketing strategy should have to be visual; which is where imagery plays an important role in a restaurant's marketing strategy.

There are many new restaurants that have opened on campus, these restaurants are all in an attempt to entice students to buy their products while also attempting to convert them into loyal customers; however, how is this done? This is not an overnight operation. The restaurants can not simply post a menu with prices, and just hope that the students will become frequent customers of their products. This has to be done through complex marketing and decisive

language. To my knowledge, no prior research has been done on this particular topic. The genres that the new and former University of Central Florida's campus restaurants are using in order to appeal to the students and sell their products come in many forms, they can't just be labeled by one sticker. It is through the many forms which make each restaurant different from each other in terms of marketing.

Although, even if the students were told by the restaurants that they will receive free food for a whole semester, many students would not come. In an experiment by Darren Piercey and Steve Joordens, the two examined decision making. In their experiment, they found that using phrases that contained ambiguous words with multiple meanings allowed participants to fixate longer on the phrase to make a complex decision, as compared to using phrases which included words with only one meaning, which made the participants make decisions that were not too decisive. The use of words in decision making is vital. Restaurants who are aware of this will capitalize on such words and phrases in order to influence the audience, and if the audience is sixty thousand university students, the task is harder.

If the food is unhealthy, too expensive, or just unappealing to the student, the student's opinion will not change by merely seeing a menu or a poster. The students at UCF are all well-educated university students, and a nice poster wouldn't be able to sway their decisions easily. Decisions are based on advantages and disadvantages. To change a student's decision is very hard, and that's where my research question comes to light; "What are the genres that the new university restaurants are using to influence the students and make them frequent customers".

The restaurants on campus are filled with influencing elements. I visited every restaurant on campus to note the different methods that are being used to influence university students. Through my visits, I took many photos that will be used as primary data for analysis of influencing. The photos were selected based on many qualities. The first method that I looked for was food enticement. Through this genre, the restaurants could possibly use figurative language in their menus, materials, and posters to give students a thoughtful depiction of the foods and or beverages that they are offering. Not only of the food but the restaurants could also possibly use imagery to allow students to imagine a sense of bliss after they have consumed the item. For example, the energetic feeling of finishing a cup of coffee. The next method that I looked for was the promotion of good health. Through this promotion, the restaurants could possibly entice students to choose their products in an effort to live a healthy lifestyle. Nothing feels better than eating a healthy meal. The later series of photos that I took came from many different methods that I will explain.

Analysis:

Let's take a look at how the restaurants use imagery in their bagging. A restaurant bag is an item that the student will keep in their possession long after they have left the restaurant. The bag will either be thrown out or left somewhere to sit; and a plain paper bag sitting at a students desk will not make him or her want to go get another bite after class tomorrow afternoon. A bag that is intricately designed to make the student seek more of what they have just experienced is a bag that creates sales for the restaurant. Simply put.

Figure 1&2: On the left is Mrs. Fields Bakery's paper bag, and on the right is Qdoba's paper bag.

These two photos were taken by me on campus. The reason that I decided to include these photos is to highlight the type of influencing that is exhibited through the use of paper bags. Mrs. Fields Bakery designs the bag with words that bring positive connotations of food. The words “sugar”, “sweet”, “oven”, and “treat”, along with the cartoons of cookies, baking utensils, and hearts are meant to give the student an idea of a delicious oven



treat. Thus, merely having this bag in a student's

possession will make them seek more of what they just bought. Qdoba, on the other hand, uses connotations of excitement to give students the idea that their food is surprisingly amazing. The use of phrases such as “It’s about to get spicy”, “Life is flavor”, and “Revel in the unexpected” will intrigue students to try different items from their menus to fulfill the anticipation of curiosity.



A method that I did not think of initially came to my attention while visiting the restaurants. In this genre, the motive was to influence students through the means of

environmental awareness. Through this method, the restaurant's used the idea that the students will choose their products because the planet will directly benefit from it.



Figure 3: Panda Express napkin.

Panda express includes a quote on their napkin that states “Save the environment, One napkin at a time”. Through this single quote, the restaurant is able to influence the students through an emotional appeal. Having a napkin like this at one’s disposal while they are eating will make the customer appreciative of the efforts that the restaurant is making. Through this appreciation, the overall approval rating of this restaurant will increase from the customer which in turn will generate in the customer's loyalty to that restaurant.

Nonetheless, let’s analyze the menus of the restaurants. A menu is usually the biggest impact on a customer’s decision. Creating a menu that allows customers to make decisions that are in favor of the restaurant is very important. These menus were created intricately.

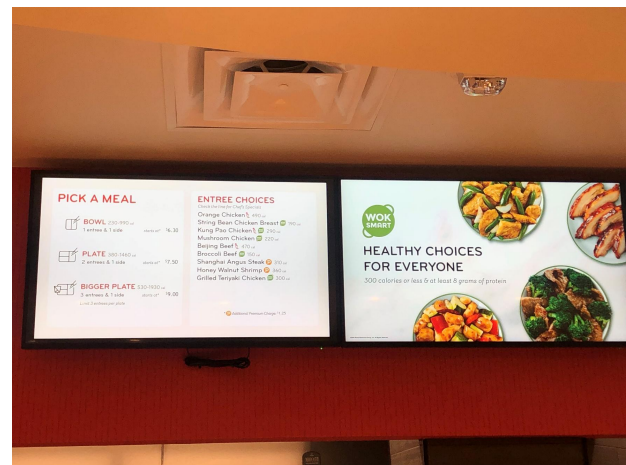
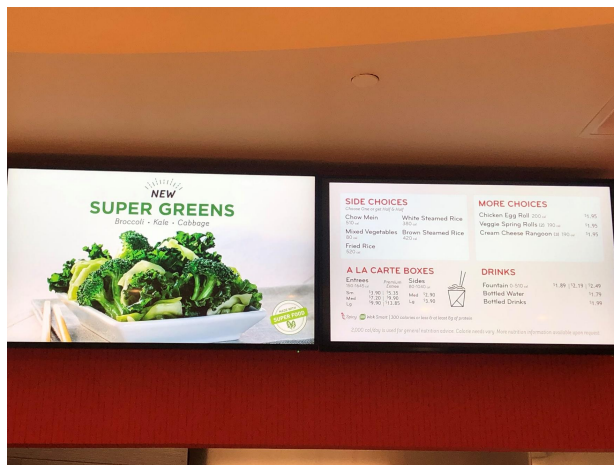


Figure 4,5,6, and 7: On the bottom left is Café Bustelos menu, top right and left are Panda express menus, and bottom left is Steak ‘n Shake menu.

Panda Express orients their menu around a nutritious atmosphere. The use of “super greens” along with an image of broccolis by Panda Express is an attempt to give students the idea of “This place is healthy, I should eat here”, while also using figurative language to give life to the healthy foods they have to offer. To add icing on the cake or should I say dressing on the salad, Panda Express adds three more images of healthy choices along with the phrase “Healthy choices for everyone”. This will attract students who eat healthily as compared to their neighbor, Steak ‘n Shake. Steak ‘n Shake uses the opposite of Panda express. Steak ‘n Shake influence students with the use of images along with wording that has delicious connotations. Across the menu are images of burgers and fries that are staring at students who walk by them. Being a student and seeing these images while reading “Our thick and juicy 6oz steak burger” will most definitely make the student think twice about it. It is the correct use of images and imagery which entice more and more students to buy from this restaurant, which is why there seems to

always be a line of brainwashed customers waiting to get their hands on the prize.

Here is a link to all of the photos that I took. In this album, you will be able to see all of the genres that I believe that the restaurants are using to influence students.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1HowK_MoB6ei-E36YnJvk89W6B0A4gK2gW7ZboFz7exE/edit?usp=sharing

Included in the album, but not in this document are images of many advertisement techniques that are used by the restaurants. I will discuss these methods while referencing the images which are located in the album. Such as these:



Smoothie King has a poster of Drew Brees holding what looks like a brown smoothie along with a quote from Drew Brees which says “Now this is how to start your day”. The addition of a celebrity figure by Smoothie King allows it to influence students through the use of conformity. Seeing Drew Brees holding a Smoothie King smoothie will encourage the student to get a smoothie of their own. If Drew Brees likes it, then it should be delicious.

Conclusion:

The restaurants on campus use many methods to influence students that will increase sales. There are many students on campus who are influenced on a daily by the methods that the restaurants are currently using, and through the use of these methods, the sales of these restaurants will rise. The methods that these restaurants are using are very dynamic, which range from environmental to imaginary to the use of celebrity personnel and also the use of beautiful paintings; however, the method that is being used the most is the use of imagery in figurative language. Many of these restaurants use imagery to give students the feeling that they will receive after purchasing their products, but without purchasing it first, such feelings cannot be attained; which is why imagery is the most effective method in influencing student’s decisions at these restaurants.

Works Cited:

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