



TGIF Fridays Frozen Snacks Customer Insights

Driving Growth for TGIF Frozen Snacks by Activating Beliefs and Goals

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Executive Summary

TGIF has been a historically de-prioritized Kraft Heinz brand, representing a clear growth opportunity in the highly competitive frozen bite-sized snack category. While TGI Fridays benefits from strong awareness rooted in its restaurant heritage, consumers often lack a clear understanding of what differentiates the brand in the frozen aisle. As a result, core products such as mozzarella sticks, jalapeño poppers, potato skins, and chicken bites are losing share to both branded competitors and lower-priced private-label options.

To address this challenge, the Yale Center for Customer Insights (YCCI) team partnered with Kraft Heinz to apply behavioral science and uncover how Millennial and Gen X consumers choose and consume frozen indulgent snacks. Using Yale's Beliefs–Goals–Choices framework, we explored the underlying beliefs, emotional and functional goals, and contextual cues that shape purchase and consumption decisions, seeking to identify the most effective levers to rebuild differentiation and brand affinity for TGI Fridays Frozen Snacks.

Our research followed a multi-phase, mixed-methods approach. We began with secondary research, including online ethnography, social media analysis, consumer reviews, and existing category research, to surface prevailing tensions and beliefs in the frozen snack landscape. We then conducted in-depth qualitative research with both high-frequency and lapsed users of TGI Fridays frozen products across Millennial and Generation X cohorts, using behavioral interviewing and projective techniques like ZMETs to uncover motivations, barriers, and consumption occasions. Finally, we translated these insights into behaviorally informed positioning and messaging concepts, which were quantitatively tested and prioritized through a large-scale survey.

Our findings indicate that frozen snack choices are influenced by both convenience and perceived indulgence. While category skepticism around quality and processing persists, TGI Fridays Frozen Snacks retains latent equity associated with restaurant-style taste and social occasion appeal; however, this TGIF positioning is fragmented and under signaled at the moment of consumer choice. By clearly activating occasion-based consumption; reinforcing emotional rewards such as social connection, convenience, and self-reward; and employing simple heuristics through packaging and messaging; TGI Fridays Frozen Snacks can reassert a distinctive role in consumers' frozen snack repertoires and reignite appetite and loyalty in the frozen aisle.

Project Challenge and Objectives

TGI Fridays Frozen Snacks faces several structural and perceptual challenges that limit its competitiveness in the frozen snack category. Despite strong brand awareness, consumers perceive TGI Fridays' products as priced at a premium relative to competitors without consumers understanding the value difference. Additionally, the brand is less strongly associated with frozen chicken items, such as wings and bites, compared to category leaders in this space. Packaging also emerged as a barrier: current formats and messaging do not clearly signal suitability for social or party occasions, nor do they provide clear guidance on serving sizes, making it difficult for shoppers to assess whether products meet their needs for group consumption.

The objective of this project was to apply behavioral science to uncover how TGI Fridays can overcome these barriers and strengthen its role in the frozen aisle across its core product lines - Mozzarella Sticks, Jalapeño Poppers, Potato Skins, and Chicken Bites/Wings. Specifically, the YCCI team aimed to identify the goals, triggers, and consumption occasions that motivate frozen snack usage; uncover the beliefs that act as enablers or barriers for Millennial and Gen X consumers; and assess how brand beliefs differ between TGI Fridays, key competitors, and private labels. Finally, the team sought to test and validate how these beliefs, goals, and occasions can be translated into actionable positioning, packaging, and marketing strategies to drive preference and loyalty for TGI Fridays frozen products.

Methodology

This project was conducted over three distinct research phases, grounded in the Yale Beliefs–Goals–Choice framework, which examines how consumer beliefs, emotional and functional goals, and contextual cues interact to shape choice behavior. Our methodology combines qualitative depth with quantitative validation to uncover and test the drivers of frozen snack consumption and brand choice among Millennial and Gen X consumers.

Secondary Research

In the first phase, we conducted extensive online ethnography to surface early hypotheses around frozen snack consumption and brand perceptions. This research analyzed social conversations, reviews, and user-generated content across platforms, including Amazon, Reddit, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and other online forums. These sources provided insight into category-level beliefs, pain points, usage occasions, and language consumers use when evaluating frozen snacks, informing the design of subsequent primary research.

Primary Research

In the second phase, we conducted 20 in-depth interviews with pre-screened consumers (10 Millennials and 6 Gen X participants), complemented by 18 shopper intercepts in retail

environments such as Stop & Shop, Target, and ShopRite. Interviews explored beliefs, goals, and consumption contexts across key TGIF product lines. Participants were also invited to submit ZMET-style visual collages, with 15 collages collected, to uncover deeper, often unarticulated associations with frozen snacks and the TGI Friday's brand.

Insights-Driven Testing

Insights generated from the qualitative phases were translated into 52 hypotheses, which were tested through large-scale A/B testing using an online survey, all containing one control and 5 possible treatments. Across multiple testing rounds, we gathered responses from 4,051 survey respondents. Each participant saw a single control or treatment and rated the appeal and likelihood of purchase. Results were analyzed using top-two-box comparisons to identify the most impactful, behaviorally informed levers for strengthening TGI Fridays' relevance in the frozen aisle.

Insights and Findings

Occasions and Goals

Happy Hours at Home

Happy hour was continuously brought up throughout our live interview sessions, but it manifested in two different forms: either an evening home with friends or a private date night at home. For example, in our interview with Alfredo, he said: *"Sometimes we'll take an evening and we put some snacks together...a happy hour theme, and maybe have ourselves a couple of drinks and pick at some frozen snacks"...* 'let's treat ourselves'. Another example came from internet reviews, where a Reddit User said: *"The boyfriend and I are doing more staying and pretend we're at a bar night versus going out... We're trying to recreate different bar foods for a fraction of the price."*

When we tested the power of this occasion in messaging, we asked individuals "how likely [they were] to have TGIF snacks in the next 2 weeks" based on the receipt of either the control image, or the test image which increased the salience of the "Happy Hour" occasion. In responses, we identified a notable lift when presenting images representing a cozy night in with frozen snacks and alcoholic beverages (+9%). The most significant lift observed was for the comparison below, where a couple in sweatpants enjoys mozzarella sticks and potato skins on their couch with a drink of their choice.



Family Movie Nights

Movie nights were a common occasion that was also brought up often in interviews. Katrina said: *"It's what I call movie mania. Friday nights I'm watching Netflix and binge-watching, but I have my popcorn or my [frozen snacks]"*. On a more family oriented note, Freddy mentioned that movie nights are: *"our most common bond we have together. all the time...oh, Daddy, can we heat up some wings, and... put a movie on."* Across instances, we also identified that kids were often, but not always, an important element of many the movie night setups. This was manifested in our testing for the power of movie night related messaging.

When asked our standard two-week purchase window question, both the overall cohort and those with kids had significant lifts, but the group of individuals with kids had an even stronger lift relative to the general cohort (+13%). Our most effective treatment was of a family of 4 enjoying mozzarella sticks and chicken bites with the tag line, *"Family movie nights taste better with TGIF"*. This was compared against a control of the frozen snacks alongside a simple tag line, the same control used previously in the happy hour test.

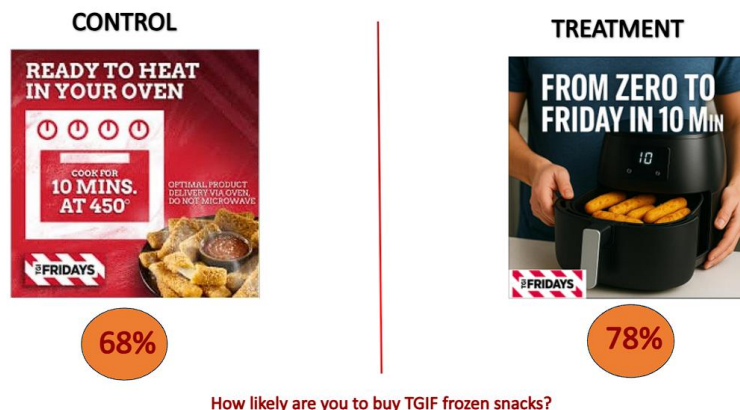


Convenience Satisfies Cravings Without Slowing You Down

Consumers often turn to frozen snacks when they are time-constrained but still want something indulgent and satisfying. Interviews revealed that busy professionals and parents rely heavily on

fast-prep options, especially air fryers, to fit snacks or meals into packed schedules without sacrificing enjoyment. As one interviewee explained, *“I’m a vice president... I work probably about 60 hours a week... it’s just easier than making a whole meal and planning everything.”* This positions TGIF frozen snacks as an ideal solution for moments when consumers want restaurant-style indulgence that keeps pace with their lives.

This insight was also validated quantitatively through our A/B testing, where convenience-forward messaging significantly increased purchase intent. When TGIF was framed as a quick, effortless option that fits into busy routines, likelihood to purchase rose from 68% in the control to 78% in the treatment, confirming convenience as a powerful behavioral lever.



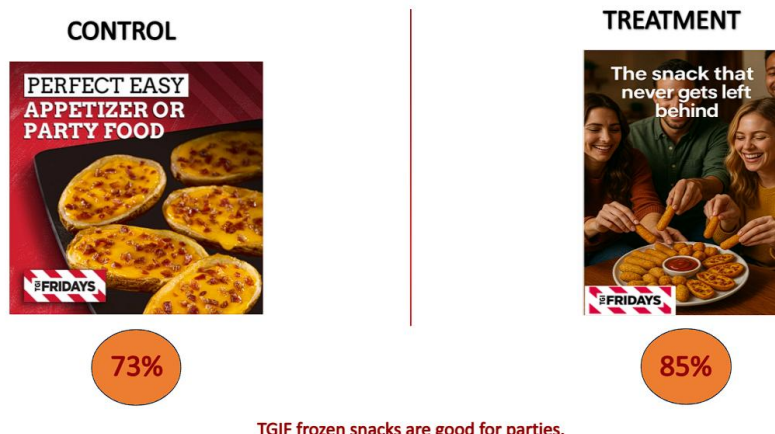
Nostalgia Drives Emotional Connection and Purchase Intent

Frozen snacks evoke strong feelings of nostalgia, often tied to childhood routines, family moments, and 1990s food culture. Interviews highlighted how these products act as emotional shortcuts, allowing consumers to relive comforting memories from earlier life stages. TGIF’s restaurant heritage uniquely positions the brand to tap into this nostalgia and re-anchor itself in emotionally meaningful moments. One participant shared, *“Mozzarella sticks really do make me feel nostalgic... my dad used to make them, so I will get things that remind me of my childhood.”* A/B testing showed that nostalgia-driven messaging meaningfully increased purchase intent. When TGIF was framed as a reminder of familiar, comforting experiences, likelihood to buy increased from 67% to 76%, demonstrating that emotional resonance can be just as influential as functional benefits in driving choice.



TGIF Frozen Snacks as Ultimate Crowd Pleasers

Consumers strongly associate certain frozen snacks with social occasions like parties, gatherings, and casual hosting. Interviewees emphasized that these products feel “safe,” universally liked, and easy to serve, making them a reliable choice when feeding groups. As one interviewee noted, “[Chicken bites are] pretty universally liked... it’s not something everyone dislikes... everyone likes to walk by and pop a couple nuggets.” This positions TGIF frozen snacks as a dependable solution for social occasions where pleasing everyone matters. Quantitative testing reinforced this insight: positioning TGIF frozen snacks explicitly as party-friendly crowd pleasers increased agreement from 73% to 85%. The results suggest that framing TGIF as the go-to option for group settings can significantly strengthen its role within consumers’ snack repertoires.



Serving Picky Eaters and Children Is a Key Use Case

For families, frozen snacks often serve as a practical solution to feeding picky eaters, particularly children. Interviews and online reviews revealed that parents value familiarity, simple flavors, and ease of preparation, especially when juggling busy schedules. These snacks were seen as

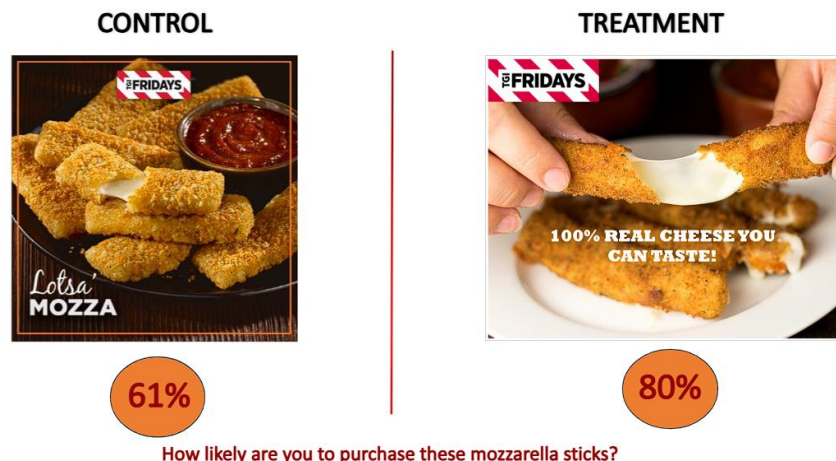
“safe bets” that reduce friction at mealtimes. One parent explained, *“Picky Kid Approved: These are a total lifesaver for a busy mom... my 5-year-old, not hard to convince them to eat that.”* A/B test results confirmed that highlighting kid-approval and family utility increases purchase intent. When TGIF frozen snacks were framed as reliable options for children and family, likelihood to purchase for family use increased from 62% to 71%, validating this as a meaningful household-driven occasion.



Mozzarella Sticks

Mozzarella Sticks Are Defined by the Cheese Pull

For mozzarella sticks, perceived quality is strongly tied to the sensory experience, especially the cheese pull. Interviews revealed that consumers actively look for stretch, melt, and visual drama, often treating the cheese pull as both a quality signal and a moment of shared enjoyment. This sensory expectation is deeply ingrained and emotionally charged. One reviewer recalled, *“When we were younger, we used to have a game where we’d see who could get the longest cheese pull... that’s what everyone wants when eating a mozzarella stick.”* This belief translated into one of the strongest test results. When messaging emphasized “the love of the pull,” purchase intent increased dramatically from 61% to 80%, and we did not see meaningful differences between Gen X and Millennial consumers. The result underscores that leaning into visceral sensory cues can substantially increase appeal for TGIF mozzarella sticks.



Jalapeño Poppers

A Tempting Flavor Profile

Jalapeño popper interviewees highlighted that one of the most appealing parts of a popper is its unusual flavor profile: the cheesy inside (often cream cheese or cheddar cheese) and the spiciness of the jalapeño pepper. One interviewee, Christine, described how these flavors play off of each other for a more satisfying snacking experience, *“The spiciness counteracts the cream, so it’s not overwhelming, so it’s not like you’re just biting into a jalapeño.”* The cheese cuts the spice of the jalapeño, making it less “overwhelming.” Consumers had varying opinions on the correct amount of spice within a popper, but they all agreed that spice is an important part of the experience: *“A little spice from the cheese [or] get it from the jalapeño. If the jalapeño doesn’t have spice to it, I definitely want the cheese to have some spice.”*

A “Low-Carb” Option

Some online commentary indicated that consumers see jalapeño poppers as a low-carb snack option compared to other frozen snacks. One online review said that they were *“a great choice if you’re on the keto diet,”* and a Reddit user said jalapeño poppers are: *“one of my go-to dinners when my kids are at their mom’s and I want something easy and low-carb.”*

We found this insight interesting for two reasons: 1) most jalapeño poppers are not truly low-carb snacks, so there appears to be some misconceptions about the nutrition of jalapeño poppers; and 2) these online statements about low-carb positioning driving consumption appeared to be at odds with our initial finding that health isn’t a major driver of purchase intent or consumption behavior when people are considering frozen food options. When tested though, we found that emphasizing both the spiciness and low-carb appeal of jalapeño poppers did indeed drive increased purchase intent (+16%). We also saw that this effect was stronger among Millennial consumers than Gen X – we saw a 9% lift compared to control for Gen X consumers, and a 16% lift compared to control for Millennial consumers.

It does seem that nutritional attributes can be used to drive consumption intent, through activating a health associated frame and reducing retrospective perceived guilt for frozen snack indulgence.



Potato Skins

Potato Skins are Real Potatoes

Consumers constantly use the association with “realness” or “fakeness” when describing their interactions with frozen snacks, and potato skins are no exception. An online review from Costco stated, *"The potato skin did taste like a real potato and not very processed which is one bonus."*

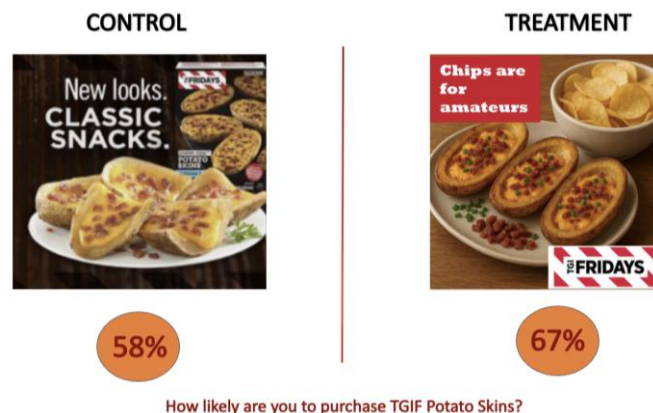
As a result, we saw an opportunity to align potato skins as more “real” given their closer similarity to the traditional form of a potato. When evaluating how likely individuals were to purchase TGIF potato skins, we saw a strong lift (+14%) within the treatment that leaned into the idea of the potato skins using real potatoes, using the phrase, *“Real potatoes. Unreal flavor.”*

When evaluating the data across Millennials (1981-1996) and Generation X (1965-1980) we found the difference in performance between the control and treatment was significant across both groups, with the control resonating even less with Generation X and the treatment below resonating more with Millennials. Generation X was more significantly drawn to another treatment that had all the same characteristics as the one below but read, *“Made with real potatoes”* which conveys the same messaging but in a more literal sense.



Potato Skins VS Potato Chips

A continued theme that emerged regarding potato skin “realness” was the intriguing comparison between potato skins and potato chips. Tiffany, an interviewee, said, *“I’m more of a potato person. I’d rather have a real potato than I would a chip.... A lot of people get burned out of chips at parties.”* When evaluating how likely individuals were to purchase TGIF potato skins, we saw a lift in our treatment that included the phrase, *“Chips are for amateurs”* with an image of both a bowl of ordinary potato chips and a plate of potato skins (+9%).



Potato Skins: A Go to Side Dish for All

Another belief we uncovered was that potato skins are an easy and versatile side dish. Throughout our interviews, many individuals hinted at this idea. Tiffany said, *“We usually have [potato skins] when we have chicken or if we’re using pizza and wings.”* while Christine mentioned, *“I make [potato skins] more often as a main side dish because we like to have that whole balance of a protein, and a carb, and a vegetable.”* When evaluating how likely individuals were to purchase TGIF potato skins when conveyed as a side dish, we saw a significant lift in comparison to the classic potato skins control. Our treatment read, *“Potato skins go with everything, literally.”* alongside 2 different pictures featuring potato skins as side

dishes which drove home the idea that potato skins can be paired with any food dish. This messaging change led to a strong 17% bump in consumers' purchase intent.



Potato Skins as a Personal Canvas

Throughout our interviews, many individuals were bringing up the idea of enjoying and seeing value in adding a myriad of toppings to their potato skins that varied from person to person. Some would pile on more cheese, others would layer in extra meat or even reach for a variety of dipping sauces. Alfredo said, *"And sometimes, with the family night, I'll dice up some scallions, and have a little sour cream on the side"* and Tiffany reconfirmed the idea when she said, *"We do it extra...[we] put a little bit of dip out and let you deck them out any way you want them."*

We tested how consumers responded when we leaned in to this attribute through creating a treatment that increased customizability salience. Our treatment selected an image of multiple potato skins surrounded by a selection of addons with the phrase: *"Personalize how you want."* This messaging significantly outperformed the control (+13%) when we surveyed individuals to see how likely they were to purchase TGIF potato skins.



Consumers Focus More on Quantity than Serving Size

Across interviews and online reviews, consumers consistently messaged that purchasing decisions are driven more by units and how many people can be served than by any stated

serving size on the box. Consumers appear to have built up scar tissue regarding how unhelpful and non-representative listed serving sizes are, and they consistently have to translate serving sizes into the units they actually want to know.

Comments like dismissing “4 servings” as implausible or joking that “no one just eats one” highlight this widespread skepticism toward serving labels. In contrast, brands perceived as offering visibly more pieces for the same price are celebrated, as consumers equate higher unit counts with better value, fairness, and satisfaction. Consistent with these insights, our test showed that a mozzarella stick box featuring a clear callout of “21 sticks” and “Serves 7 people” outperformed the control, which only displayed “7 servings” in perceptions of price value (+13%).

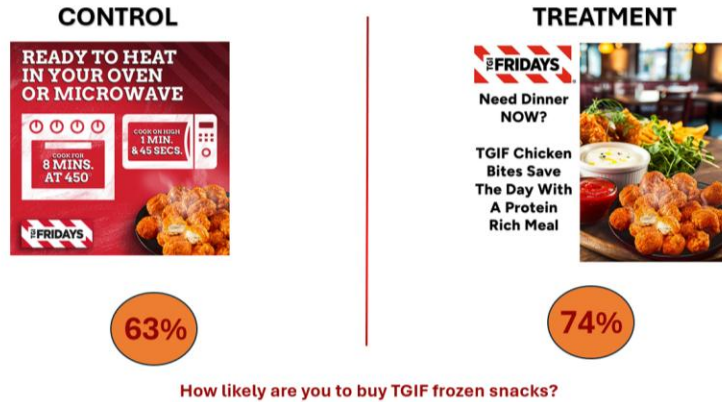


Chicken Bites

Chicken Bites are More of a Meal

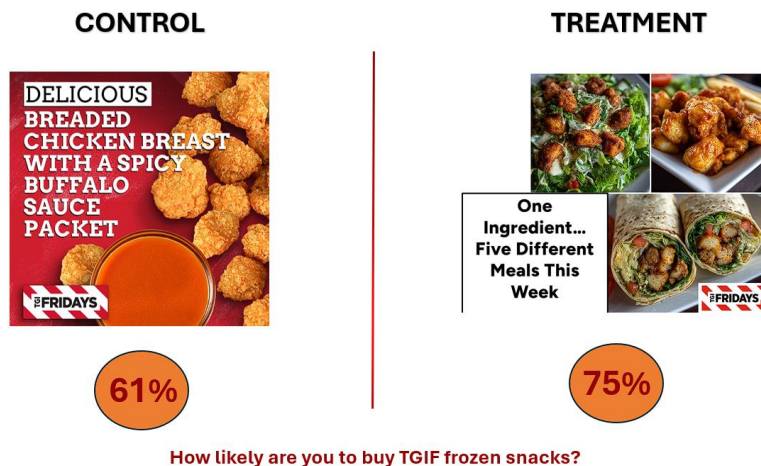
In our secondary research, we queued into the repeated use of the word “meal” for some frozen snacks far more often than others. This led us to an intuition that frozen snacks can be suitable as a meal substitute, with some snacks viewed as more or less suitable than others. This was confirmed in interviews, where Chicken bites were the most frequently noted as a meal substitute. Erin gave an interesting reason why it was true for her: “*[it’s the] protein, the meat’s the biggest factor that I can convince him that It’s dinner. I can just throw together a side and kind of call it a meal, even though it’s probably technically an appetizer.*”

We decided to test this Chicken Bite & meal-substitute occasion by leaning into the protein-rich meal use case to see if it drove purchase intent. For our control, we selected an element of marketing collateral from the Walmart online listing for TGIF chicken bites that noted its rapid cooking speed and changed the tagline to signal around a protein rich meal. When we did this, we saw a lift of 11 percentage points.



Chicken Bites are Adaptable

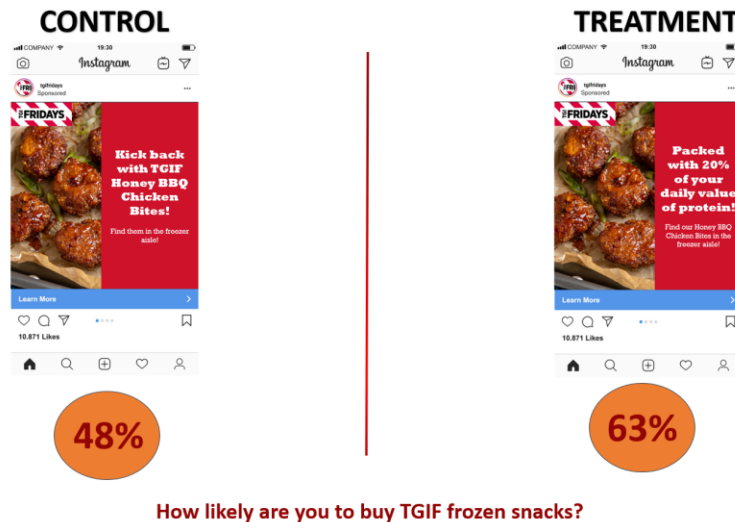
Another interesting use-case which came up in interviews was using Chicken Bites which aren't pre-sauced various other meals throughout the week. Nicole was one such consumer: *"We'll try to put them on a salad or put them in a wrap instead of always just serving them with a side of fries."* When we went to test this idea, we selected an un-sauced image and made the versatility more salient in our treatment by visually showing the three use cases described, along with the tagline *"One ingredient...five different meals this week."* When we did this, we saw a 14-point lift in purchase intent.



Protein as a path to guilt-free snacking

Similar to our previous discussion on the "low carb" attributes of Jalapeño Poppers above, consumers often mentioned that they associate chicken bites with being a higher protein snack. This high-protein association in turn reduced consumption-related feelings of guilt which often accompany a frozen snack indulgence. One interviewee mentioned *"at least with chicken, you're like, well, this is protein...I probably feel better eating the chicken than I do the mozzarella"*

sticks.” When we tested this idea with ads that emphasized the amount of protein in TGI Fridays chicken bites, we saw a strong lift (+15%) with no significant difference between Millennial and Gen X consumers.



Crunchiness as a Platonic Ideal

When asked to describe the attributes that consumers love about chicken bites, a common refrain was around the crunchiness of their exteriors. It was also listed among their pain points when they were unable to achieve that crunchy texture: *“It no longer cooks up crispy, no matter what way I cook it, unless I vastly overcook it based on [the bag times]”* said an Online Reviewer. We realized that since a traditional restaurant wing is often double fried, and then tossed in the sauce at the end, this crispiness signal makes sense as a challenge to replicate in sauced frozen snacks. When we went to test this idea, we noted that nearly all of the sauced chicken bites examples lost focus on the breading texture. As a result, we selected an un-sauced image that called out the chicken breading, and contrasted it with one where we highlighted the texture alongside the tagline: *“Golden Crunch In Every Bite.”* When we did this, we saw a 19% lift in our sample.



Breading to Chicken Ratio is a Quality Heuristic

More breading isn't the solution to the crunchiness problem though. Though more breading can help to address crunchiness concerns, over-indexing on breading represented a common pain point of consumers. Indeed, higher quality brands like TGIF are seen as performing particularly well on this index, perhaps revealing a cost-cutting measure of value aligned brands. Alfredo said in his interview: *"One of the other brands may give you a little more ounces in the quantity, but are you really getting value out of it? Most of it is breading... you just paid for a bunch of dried dough you know?"* Consumers also seem to link this ratio problem to the expected benefit of protein, not carbs: *"All breading and little meat! 75% breading and 25% meat... a bag of carbs, not protein"* said an Amazon Review.

Gelatinous Chicken Texture Ruins the Experience

When asked to describe poor interactions with chicken bite consumption experiences, a common refrain after value associated concerns was that of the textural experience. Beyond crunchiness as described above, the texture of the chicken itself could also ruin the moment. In secondary research, we were cued into the problem through this Walmart.com review: *"Disgusting texture...like there's some kind of gelatin they used to keep the meat bits together. The last bite I took almost made me wretch."* Consumers in interviews also used this association with gelatin to describe what they had visceral reactions to. Freddy noted: *"They're maybe gelatinous or so, maybe a piece of skin. I don't like that. I don't like the feeling in my mouth, or the taste."*

Chicken Competition Happens At The Chicken Case

Product isle placement appeared to matter greatly in the shopper intercepts. Many consumers reported that they do not view TGIF as a competitor to the traditional chicken brands (Tyson, Perdue, Great Value, etc...) because they aren't positioned side by side in the chicken section. For TGIF to break through into the wider chicken landscape and compete on volume with the larger chicken brands. Not being in the isle means not getting a seat at the table when consumers are choosing their chicken.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusions

Based on our research and analysis, frozen snack choice is driven less by abstract brand claims and more by how effectively the brand activates clear occasions, emotional rewards, and simple decision heuristics at the moment of choice. Several recurring themes consistently increased purchase intent across TGI Fridays Frozen Snacks: occasion signaling, sensory reassurance, perceived quantity and value, and emotional payoff through shared indulgence.

These themes manifest differently across occasions. For social moments such as happy hours at home, hosting, and family movie nights, consumers respond most strongly to cues that emphasize togetherness, crowd-pleasing appeal, and ease of serving. Making these occasions explicit through packaging imagery and messaging helps TGI Fridays reassert its relevance as a social snack brand rather than a generic freezer option. In these contexts, clarity around quantity and how many people can be served plays a critical role in reducing friction and reinforcing value perception.

For every day and time-constrained moments, convenience paired with indulgence is the dominant driver. Consumers want reassurance that frozen snacks can satisfy cravings quickly without sacrificing taste or texture. Messaging that highlights fast preparation using air-fryer, and restaurant-style outcomes proved effective in positioning TGI Fridays as a reliable solution for busy schedules, late nights, and quick meals.

At the form level, our research shows that sensory and visual heuristics consistently outperformed nutritional or abstract quality claims. For mozzarella sticks, emphasizing the cheese pull signaled quality and associated the consumption event with family tradition. For potato skins, framing them as real potatoes and a customizable solution elevated them beyond standard snack alternatives. For Chicken bites, textural and meat related cues provided versatility and bridged the gap between a snack and a meal. Across all categories, clear cues around portion size and shared desirable attributes like crunchiness help consumers feel confident in their choices.

In the near term, TGI Fridays should focus on making the right use case obvious on shelf and online, using simple, occasion-led language and imagery to reduce cognitive effort. In the medium term, reinforcing consistent brand equities around shared indulgence, nostalgia, and restaurant-style satisfaction can help rebuild emotional connection and loyalty. Over the long term, our insights transition TGI Fridays Frozen Snacks from being a familiar brand with indistinct positioning to a brand at the center of meaningful shared moments in consumers' lives.

By aligning product messaging, packaging, and positioning with the beliefs, goals, and contexts that drive behavior, TGI Fridays Frozen Snacks can indeed reclaim differentiation in a competitive category and reestablish itself as the go-to choice for indulgent, social, and convenient high-quality frozen snacks.

Overall Recommendations

1. Own “Happy Hour at Home” as a Signature TGIF Occasion

Position TGIF Frozen Snacks as the easiest way to recreate bar-style indulgence at home, especially for couples and small groups.

How:

- Use cozy, casual-at-home imagery (couch, casual dress, drinks, shared plates)
- Explicitly call out “happy hour at home” on-pack and in digital
- Pair multiple forms together visually to cue mix-and-match indulgence

Why:

This occasion consistently drove lift by tapping into indulgence and savings versus going out.

2. Make Family Movie Night a Core Usage Occasion

Lean into TGIF as the go-to snack solution for family bonding moments.

How:

- Feature active images of families and kids clearly in packaging and ads
- Use simple, benefit-forward language (e.g., “Family movie nights taste better with TGIF”)
- Bundle kid-friendly forms (mozzarella sticks + chicken bites) in visuals

Why:

This was one of the highest-lift occasions, especially among households with kids.

3. Lead With “Convenient Indulgence,” Not Just Speed

Reframe convenience as *restaurant-style satisfaction that fits real life*, not just fast prep.

How:

- Highlight air-fryer compatibility and quick cook times
- Pair convenience claims with indulgent sensory cues (crunch, melt, flavor)
- Use language like “satisfies cravings without slowing you down”

Why:

Consumers want indulgence that keeps pace with busy lives, and occasions help activate intuitive behavioral thinking.

4. Use Nostalgia as an Emotional Shortcut to Brand Love

Reconnect TGIF Frozen Snacks to comforting, familiar memories tied to childhood and classic Fridays experiences.

How:

- Reference “classic favorites,” “the snacks you grew up with,” or subtle 90s cues
- Avoid overt retro — keep nostalgia warm and familiar around shared experiences

Why:

Nostalgia meaningfully increased purchase intent, differentiates TGIF from private label, and allows restaurant experiences to be positively associated with the snack brand.

5. Signal “Crowd Pleaser” Status to Reduce Hosting Risk

Position TGIF Frozen Snacks as the safest, most universally liked choice for groups.

How:

- Use phrases like “Everyone loves these” or “The crowd-pleasing favorite”
- Show open, shared serving formats (platters, hands reaching in)

Why:

Consumers choose frozen snacks to avoid social risk, and restaurants like TGIF also reduce group food consumption risks through more optionality and higher quality.

6. Replace Serving Sizes With Quantity & People-Served Heuristics

Make value obvious at shelf by showing *how much food you actually get*.

How:

- Call out unit counts (“21 sticks”) and real-world usage (“Serves 7 people”)
- De-emphasize abstract “servings” language

Why:

Serving sizes don’t resonate with consumers, they’ve built up a strong resistance to serving size messaging as un-helpful or inaccurate. Quantity cues increased value perceptions and fairness.

7. Mozzarella Sticks: Make the Cheese Pull the Hero

Anchor all mozzarella stick messaging in stretch, melt, and visual drama.

How:

- Show exaggerated cheese pulls on-pack and online
- Use language like “For the love of the pull” or “That legendary stretch”

Why:

The cheese pull is the primary quality heuristic and drove one of the largest lifts in our overall testing set.

8. Jalapeño Poppers: Frame as Balanced Spice Indulgence

Highlight the contrast of creamy cheese and controlled spice.

How:

- Emphasize flavor balance (“Creamy inside, just the right kick”)
- Carefully reference “low-carb” perceptions without over-indexing on health

Why:

The balance between spiciness and creaminess is the primary flavor driver among consumers.

9. Potato Skins: Elevate Beyond Chips With “Real Food” & Customization

Position potato skins as a more substantial, flexible, and premium alternative to chips.

How:

- Call out “real potatoes” clearly
- Show skins as sides, not just snacks
- Highlight customization (“Make them yours”) with toppings and dips

Why:

This reframes potato skins as versatile, higher-value, and less “processed.”

10. Chicken Bites: Bridge Snack and Meal Through Protein & Texture

Claim chicken bites as a legitimate meal base with many use cases.

How:

- Call out protein and meat-forward ratios to cue consumers into quality and meal use-cases
- Emphasize adaptability across occasions through the versatility of chicken across meals
- Lead with crunch cues and avoid visuals that obscure texture (eg: heavy sauce)

Why:

Meal use occasions ranked strongly in the occasion sizing work, and the protein, crunch, and versatility tests drove some of the strongest lifts in the study.

11. Get TGIF Chicken Bites Into The Chicken Section

TGIF is not considered a replacement brand in the minds of consumers for traditional chicken brands.

How:

- Work with retailers to define a secondary TGIF location within the store as part of the chicken freezer case.
- Experiment with bag packaging for TGIF in those locations to position as a competitor

Why:

Consumers’ in store flow during intercepts revealed that TGIF chicken in the frozen snack section is an afterthought relative to those brands in the chicken case.

Brand Guardrails

1. Our work suggested that although it's great to involve some human interaction in advertisements, it's also important to keep the food as the hero to provide the audience with the right message to avoid confusion in what we're trying to convey.
2. The "Pick me up" messaging also didn't seem to perform as well as we originally thought it would as it might convey too negative of a picture for consumers to relate to. Sometimes they go to TGIF to feel good or nostalgic. It isn't always because they were feeling bad.
3. Dipping sauces also didn't seem to make a significant impact. We found polarizing opinions throughout our interviews on whether people liked or disliked the included marinara dipping sauce, specifically for mozzarella sticks, which negated these opinions on how important (or not important) the dip was for the quality of the experience.
4. A more subtle theme that emerged from our work was that retailers often have a significant impact on how brands themselves are perceived – some consumers noted that if they saw a brand being sold at a retailer they associated with being "high-quality", such as Whole Foods, they would assume that brand is also a higher-quality brand that may be healthier or have better ingredients. Similarly, retailers with a more negative reputation, such as Walmart, had a negative effect on brands sold there. Accordingly, TGIF should make sure to select retailers for their products that are in line with the brand image they wish to portray
5. On balance, packaging related tests tended to perform more poorly than advertising related tests – they typically didn't move consumer perceptions or behavior as much. It's possible this is because our packaging manipulations may have been too subtle, or otherwise ineffective, but it's also worth considering that other marketing options may resonate more strongly with consumers. Packaging changes that did move the needle tended to focus on information that was very important to the consumer at the time of purchase (e.g. quantity in the box).

Appendix

Brand Familiarity

Please rate your level of familiarity with each of the following brands of frozen snacks, such as chicken wings/bites, mozzarella sticks, jalapeño poppers, or potato skins?

Brand	I have purchased this brand	I have not purchased, but am familiar with this brand	I am not familiar with this brand, but I have heard of it	I have not heard of this brand
Tyson	89	9	2	1
Private label/store brand	79	11	5	6

Great Value	78	16	4	2
Perdue	64	18	8	10
TGIF	60	26	7	8
Farm Rich	48	15	10	26
Foster Farms	35	20	15	30
Market Pantry	29	16	17	38
Snapps	17	13	15	56
Feel Good Foods	11	11	15	64
Del Corazon	7	9	17	67
TASTIEZ	6	9	14	72

Brand Purchase

Which brands of frozen [chicken wings and bites / mozzarella sticks / jalapeño poppers / potato skins] have you purchased in the past month? Select all that apply.

Mozzarella Sticks

Brand	%
Farm Rich	43
TGIF	42
Great Value	32
Private label/ store brand	28
Snapps	11
Feel Good Foods	5
TASTIEZ	3

Jalapeño Poppers

Brand	%
TGIF	49
Farm Rich	27
Private label/ store brand	27
Great Value	26
Snapps	11
Feel Good Foods	6

Potato Skins

Brand	%
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TGIF	63
Great Value	25
Farm Rich	18
Private label/ store brand	18
Snapps	9
Market Pantry	6

Chicken Wings and Bites

Brand	%
Tyson	73
Great Value	40
TGIF	32
Private label/ store brand	32
Perdue	26
Foster Farms	16

Consumption Frequency

How often do you consume [chicken wings and bites / mozzarella sticks / jalapeño poppers / potato skins]?

Product	2 or more times per week	About once per week	About 2-3 times per month	About once per month	Less than once per month
Chicken wings or bites	16	28	35	16	6
Mozzarella sticks	7	18	32	28	15
Jalapeño poppers	7	15	29	29	19
Potato skins	7	13	33	26	21

For each of the occasions you selected, how often did you consume frozen snacks like chicken wings/bites, mozzarella sticks, jalapeño poppers, or potato skins during the past 12 months?

Occasion	Frequency
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Night in by yourself	37
Dinner by yourself on a busy night	34
After work snack for myself	31
Family dinner on a busy night	30
Comfort meal or snack for myself after a bad day	29
Late night snack with your spouse or significant other	26
Late night snack with your friends or family	23
Family movie night	22
Dinner or snack for a child who is a picky eater	21
After school snack for my kids	20
Snack for when you're on-the-go	18
Comfort meal or snack for a family member or friend after a bad day	17
Gameday with friends or family	17
Gameday by yourself	14
Family game night	13
Night in with friends	12
A party or gathering with friends / family	12
Date night in with spouse or significant other	11
Parties or get-togethers for my kids' friends	8

Top 5 group consumption occasions

Occasion	Frequency
Family dinner on a busy night	30
Late night snack with your spouse or significant other	26
Late night snack with your friends or family	23
Family movie night	22
Dinner or snack for a child who is a picky eater	21

Top 5 solo consumption occasions

Occasion	Frequency
Night in by yourself	37

Dinner by yourself on a busy night	34
After work snack for myself	31
Comfort meal or snack for myself after a bad day	29
Snack for when you're on-the-go	18