

= Where 's Herb ? =

Where 's Herb ? was an advertising campaign for the fast food chain Burger King in 1985 and 1986 . The television commercials featured a fictional character named Herb , who was described as never having eaten a Burger King burger in his life . They called on fans to visit their local Burger King in the hope of finding Herb and winning a prize . The campaign also included an " I 'm not Herb " promotion , in which customers could get a discounted Whopper by including the phrase in their order . At first , people were confused because they did not know what Herb looked like . When his appearance was revealed , however , many people lost interest in the promotion . The promotion was poorly received and was the last campaign that the J. Walter Thompson firm was hired to design for Burger King .

= = Campaign = =

When the commercials were created , Burger King was suffering due to their marketing efforts . The promotion was designed to counter the marketing efforts of McDonald 's , which was spending an estimated US \$ 80 to 100 million to promote the McDLT (McDonald 's Lettuce and Tomato) , and Wendy 's , which had found success with its " Where 's the beef ? " commercials . The Herb commercials , launched in November 1985 , were created by the J. Walter Thompson advertising firm at an expense of approximately US \$ 40 million . Donald Dempsey , J. Walter Thompson 's Executive Vice President of Marketing , oversaw the creation of the campaign , and it continued under the direction of Tom Sawyer , the company 's Vice President of Marketing . Before settling on the name Herb , the firm considered such names as Mitch and Oscar .

The campaign began with three weeks of " cryptic " messages designed to create interest in the promotion . Herb was mentioned in newspaper advertisements , on banners at football games , and in flyers distributed to the public . On November 24 , 1985 , the first commercials were aired on CBS , NBC , and ABC . The premise of the commercials was that Herb was the only person in the United States who had not eaten a burger from Burger King . The advertising agency created a fictional biography for the character , claiming that he was raised in Wisconsin , had worked in a cheese factory , and had also sold decoy ducks . The character is commonly referred to as " Herb the Nerd " .

The Herb character was played by actor Jon Menick , who would randomly appear at Burger King restaurants nationwide . Herb 's identity was not revealed until Super Bowl XX in January 1986 ; he was shown to be wearing white socks , black " flood pants " , and thick @-@ rimmed glasses . If a customer spotted Herb at a Burger King , he or she would win \$ 5 @,@ 000 . Everyone in the restaurant when Herb was discovered was also entered into a draw for the promotion 's grand prize of \$ 1 million . The draw was won by Christopher Kelly of Louisville , Kentucky , who was present when Herb was spotted at the Burger King in the city 's Oxmoor Center mall .

In addition to encouraging people to search for Herb , Burger King added an " I 'm not Herb " promotion to their marketing campaign . Because Burger King claimed to be angry at Herb for not eating at their restaurants , they offered a 99 @-@ cent Whopper hamburger to everybody except Herb . To get the discounted price , customers had to say , " I 'm not Herb " while ordering . Customers named Herb were told to say , " I 'm not the Herb you 're looking for " .

= = Reception = =

The campaign led to controversy in early 1986 . A 15 @-@ year @-@ old boy spotted Herb at the Burger King restaurant in Bessemer , Alabama and believed that he had won \$ 5 @,@ 000 . Because he was under the age of 16 , the minimum age for participating in the promotion , the prize money was given to the boy 's older friend , who was with him at the time . Burger King defended their decision , stating that the restriction was intended to dissuade students from skipping school to search for Herb . The boy 's parents complained to their representative in the Alabama State Senate . The matter was then brought before the full State Senate , which passed a resolution condemning

Burger King 's actions as " consumer fraud " .

The World Wrestling Federation had Herb appear as a guest timekeeper during the boxing match between Roddy Piper and Mr. T at WrestleMania 2 at the Nassau Coliseum on April 7 , 1986 . Clara Peller , the star of the " Where 's the beef ? " commercials from Wendy 's , also appeared at the event , working as guest timekeeper during a battle royal .

The promotion met with some positive reviews . Time called it " clever " , and a columnist for the Chicago Tribune stated that Herb was " one of the most famous men in America " . Ultimately , however , the Herb promotion has been described as a flop . The advertising campaign lasted three months before it was discontinued . One Burger King franchise owner stated that the problem was that " there was absolutely no relevant message " . Although some initial results were positive , the mystique was lost after Herb 's appearance was revealed during the Super Bowl . Burger King 's profits fell 40 % in 1986 . As a result of the poorly received campaign , Burger King dropped J. Walter Thompson from their future advertising . The US \$ 200 million account was initially given to N. W. Ayer . After 18 months it went to another agency , as Ayer was having problems , and Burger King wanted to improve the bottom line .

Other restaurants , including Wendy 's , capitalized on the promotion by advertising that Herb ate at their locations .