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New Media's Impact on the Fast Food Industry: A Comparative Study of Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A

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NEW MEDIA'S IMPACT ON THE FAST FOOD INDUSTRY:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TACO BELL AND CHICK-FIL-A

by

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B.A., Western Illinois University, 2015

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Science.

Department of Mass Communications
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RESEARCH APPROVAL

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A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

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Approved by:

Dr. Kavita Karan, Chair

Graduate School
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INTRODUCTION

The past ten years has consisted of constant change in the advertising business, and it continues to change because of modern technology. Mobile devices like smart phones and tablets now account for nearly 44% of people's computing time, nearly twice the amount than in 2008. (Duncan, Hazan, & Roche, 2014) Because of changes like these companies and brands are presented with new opportunities almost daily because of our media landscape. Developing media, like social media, allow people to express their thoughts and emotions towards products and services from the content they produce on their own personal social media pages. Agencies have learned to use this content to their advantage when it comes to gaining how the consumer acts and what they think about certain products or services, and they use the content to help their client's brand image. Charmin bathroom tissue is a company that has taken advantage of the consumer's powerful voice online. (Allen, O'Guinn, & Semenik, 2012) Charmin created and sponsored an app, SitOrSquat, to help people find quality bathrooms away from home. People simply rate local restrooms to help other people looking for a quality place to 'go'. Another example of a company harnessing the power of the consumer through new media is the company Threadless. Owners Jake Nickell and Jacob DeHart had a simple business model, let the people decide what clothing the company made. By using a 'like or don't like' system online consumers picked the shirts they wanted Threadless to make and in return Threadless got consumer approved products. (Allen, O'Guinn, & Semenik, 2012)

Taking advantage of new media like this has given new options to companies to reach their consumers, making the buying experience a lot different than in years past, and the more companies that experiment and try new avenues the more agencies have found

the benefits to using these new outlets. Companies like the two mentioned above are engaging their consumers and creating a virtual brand community. The function of an online brand community has been described as a space that allows people to get information, interact with brand owners, and talk to other consumers that use the brand all over the world. (Gabisch & Gwebu, 2011) The more the online world grows the more the value of having a strong virtual brand community becomes. In 2010 it was reported by Boa-Ventura and Zagalo that participation from consumers in these online communities increase up to 15% every month.

New media has found success partially because of the gobs of content created every single day. Businesses have also taken advantage of this content as well as adding to it by creating their own content online and on social media. The advertising dollars used to create content online and on social media are substantially smaller than if you were to create a T.V. spot. Because of this, businesses are finding new ways to create entertaining content, without breaking the bank to do so. Over the past four years social media spending has increased by at least 2 billion dollars annually. Spending for 2017 is expected to exceed 15 billion dollars in North America alone. (eMarketer, 2015) This steady increase in spending comes at a cost though, as there is a lack of measuring tools to find impact of advertising on social media. Agencies can track the success of ads with traditional media and give an accurate RIO report, that can't be said about social media.

A service that has definitely broadened their scope and taken more risks of where they spend their money is the fast food industry. Yum Brand, Taco Bell, increased their online/social media advertising spending to over 20% in 2013. A dominant 70% was still spent on traditional advertising, but the remaining 10% is spent on media where the

company 'can go explore'. (Ad Age, 2013) Decisions like these led to Taco Bell being named 'Marketer of the Year' by ad age (2013), an 8% increase in U.S. store sales, and being in the forefront of consumer's minds. They thought outside the box with their advertising, and it's paid off.

OVERVIEW OF THIS RESEARCH PAPER

This study begins with an analysis of the past ten years of the advertising business, looking for the trends and the developments that have gotten us to where we are now. We will then take that knowledge and analyze new and up and coming media being used in the fast food industry in communities big and small.

The background information was collected from secondary sources from books, journals, magazines and online sources to plan the final portion of this paper, the case study on two food chains. Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A are two very well known food chains that are spread across the United States. Both are successful in the area of food that they sell. So, how are they spending their ad dollars to get the name recognition? Are they experimenting with new media to get more exposure? What efforts are they making to stay up to date with current trends? How these two food chains are using new media, and look into other new media they might want to start using in the future.

Along with background research, surveys and interviews will be conducted in the two Carbondale, Illinois locations of each business. Finally, we will assess the outcome of the survey to find the use and impact of social media.

HOW IS SOCIAL MEDIA BEING USED IN ADVERTISING STRATEGIES?

How is social media being used? And how effective is it? Marketers have struggled in the early years of this form of media because it's immeasurable. With traditional media, agencies can give their clients return on investment reports that show how many people saw their advertising. You could place an ad on television at certain time and get the results you wanted because you had a good idea of the outcome. The lack of knowledge on the success of social media advertising has made businesses more afraid to spend their ad dollars. In 2005, below 5% of advertising budgets was being spent on digital marketing because of this uncertainty (Lambert & Stephen, 2016). As the years passed so did this uncertainty, but by 2010, 70% of North America marketers were using digital marketing, which was a 14% increase since 2008 (Beer, 2010). There was a reported 56.2% increase in social media advertising spending between 2013 and 2014. The increase in spending has paid off for marketers, as the social media engagement has driven sales (eMarketer 2015; Ogilvy & Mather 2011).

Even though data can't be calculated by how successful social media advertising is, that doesn't stop marketers from finding benefits in the medium. In the early 2000s the Internet showed marketers that there was a lot of potential to find out consumer behaviors through how they expressed themselves online (Lambert & Stephen, 2016). The new online platforms were places anyone from anywhere could express their thoughts and sell anything. What was being posted was a free look into the consumer's mind and marketers quickly realized they could use it to their advantage. The online community could be understood by how they communicated with others online. Word of mouth communication

online was affecting all media platforms, including television consumption (Godes & Myzlin, 2004).

Word of mouth advertising/marketing wasn't all social media and the Internet was able to produce. Finding out the customers behaviors through available market data also helped marketers understand the buying habits. Shopping decisions became better when consumers began using the Internet as a tool for accessing information about products and service. Haubl and Trifts (2013) research found that consumers that used the Internet made lower search costs and better choices than those that did not use it to shop. In return companies were able to track consumers as they online shopped online. Once a sizable amount of data was collected marketers were able to help consumers make choices based on past buying and interests. The predictability of consumer preferences helped pair consumers with products that matched what they were looking for, and helped companies generate higher level of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Search engines played a key role with the development of marketing intelligence as long as they progressed as the Internet use behaviors did (Bradlow & Schmittlein, 2000). Decision aids in the online/social marketing world have remained essential as technology progressed (Lambert & Stephen, 2016).

As time passed the online world also became an essential tool for consumers to shop. It wasn't that uncommon for people to have Internet in their homes and a cell phone by the mid 2000s. People began increasing their activity online and it showed the amount of money was being spent on online purchases. Internet penetration in 2005 was at 50% and has increased each year since then (Pew Research Center 2014) and was becoming a normal part of people's lives. This jump made the online consumer recommendations more

prominent when it came to the buying experience, and brands expanded their consumer bases. The increased online activity also made start up companies into more stable businesses. Companies like yelp, twitter, and Facebook, went from niche markets to being mainstream (Lambert & Stephen, 2016). Reason being was this was the era (2005-2010) where everyone began using these platforms as marketing content channels. Marketers and buyers were shaping these platforms and laying the groundwork for future marketing and advertising strategies.

As marketers laid the groundwork for social and online advertising, a gradual shift was taking place in where people began viewing online content. The smartphone and tablets changed society in terms of online shopping. People were spending 44% of their computing time on their mobile devices. (Duncan, Hazan, & Roche, 2014). That number has doubled since 2008. The convenience of having a portable device that you can access at anytime anywhere is slowly becoming the norm for online activity. This shift has caused marketers to focus on how people are viewing the content from a mobile device. Mobile marketing has opened new doors for targeting consumers geographically and behaviorally. It also helped businesses build relationships with their consumers, always giving them an opportunity to communicate with them. The last door that mobile opened is the ability to make fun timely content. Being able to manage when and even where consumers would see content allowed marketers to truly get certain messages across to people.

A Deloitte study found that \$600 billion of in-store purchases were influenced in some way by smart phone devices (Haims, 2015). Three years ago the smart phone was attributed to \$159 billion of consumer spending. The increase of \$441 billion in consumer spending in a three-year period directly shows where people are going for help with buying

decisions. This success is baffling when marketers and business owners look at it. These numbers are strong enough for any business to start pushing funds into mobile marketing. But, are we using this new medium to its fullest potential? In 2013 a study showed that 43% of 745 business leaders polled said they had not yet determined the correct strategy for mobile marketing (StrongMail, 2013).

The problem facing marketers has now become that they know that social media can work, but there is no playbook or formula to correctly connect to the consumer like in other forms of media. Social media sites have noticed this and are beginning to help them out. Facebook changed their policies back in 2014 to filter out unpaid promotional material. Users' news feeds were no longer showing businesses posts, and more paid content could be seen (Loten, Janofsky, & Albergotti 2014). This changed things for advertisers. It not only gave paying customers that wish to advertise on the social media site, but also gave Facebook a better advantage among other social sites.

Some areas that businesses are looking for improvement in are as follows: bounce rate (looking at only one page on a website then leaving), add-to-cart rates, shopping cart abandonment, completion rates, and average order value from a mobile device compared to a laptop or desktop (Berman, 2016). In Berman's article he also discusses the three things any business must do to be successful in social marketing.

1. Take advantage that mobile devices are always connected to the consumer.
2. Mobile Marketing has the ability to create location orientated offers.
3. Personalize your marketing messages. You are marketing to an area, or maybe even a particular type of person living in the area, take advantage of the knowledge you know and apply it to your content.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

After researching how companies are expanding their presence through online applications, I've formulated these questions.

1. How are Food businesses using social media for advertising?
2. What kind of changes have happened to companies since online ordering has become more common?
3. What are the various ways that consumers are using online media for buying food?
4. What are the products and particularly food products that are mostly bought online?
5. What is the impact of the use of Social Media by Chick-fil-A and Taco Bell?
6. Do consumers prefer using applications over in store ordering?
7. How much influence do company's social media applications, along with their own personal mobile apps, have on consumers when they are making meal decisions?
8. Are social media applications like Twitter and Facebook more beneficial to companies or a company's personal mobile app?
9. Is Taco Bell or Chick-fil-A more popular among consumers? Does their popularity transition over to their social media accounts?
10. How are Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A viewed on social media? As a brand or just as another advertisement?

Answering my research questions was done through a survey and two interviews with Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A marketing departments. The two research methods were chosen to get a sizeable response sample to evaluate the productiveness of Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A's efforts through social media marketing, as well as knowledge of those exact efforts being made by the two businesses.

The interviews conducted were with managers of Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A that were knowledgeable of the fast food's local and national marketing/advertising efforts. They were conducted separately, and were asked questions to gather information on their local and national marketing strategies. The questions chosen helped obtain a sense of how the two restaurant chains were using the social media applications when marketing to consumers. The information was then implemented in the survey questions and was compared to the results of the survey's answers.

The survey was 19 questions and distributed on Facebook and was shared by my friends and family on the week of March 19th. The questions were primarily in a multiple-choice format, with some short answer and 'check all boxes that apply' questions in between. Facebook friends and family had three days to answer the questions and submit their answers before the survey was shut off. Upon completion, all answers were compiled in Google forms that could only be seen by me. Different types of responses were received due to the format of the questions, resulting in percentages for each answer in each question. This feature allowed me to get a more precise idea as to how people were using their social media. The survey covered everything from eating habits, to social media use, to attitudes toward Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A specifically. The goal of the survey was to obtain a consumers view of how companies are using social media to market their businesses and to see how well it's working.

HOW BUSINESSES USE SOCIAL MEDIA

The different ways that social can be used companies; many have been able to create an image that best suits the brand image they want to achieve. Old spice (OS) uses humor and feeds off the emotion of potential viewers (Patel, 2016). The cologne company uses short quick videos that can be shared on social media and to respond to people that tweet at them (Bullas, 2011). The videos are part of their advertising scheme, but the videos themselves are more like personal messages. An example of this is when “The Ellen Show” tweeted at Old Spice. OS responded with a video message of their spokesman coming out of the shower wearing a crown. Another company that uses social media well, but in a different way, is Starbucks. The coffee company isn’t known for a comedic voice or brand image like Old Spice and that is even apparent in their social advertising. Starbucks uses the medium to assist their customers with their personal accounts with the company, help them find nearby coffee shops (Starbucks only), and apply for jobs at their shops (Patel, 2016).

Probably one of the more interesting businesses that use social media well and very differently from the two businesses above is Denny’s. When you think of Denny’s you immediately think of food, maybe breakfast in particular, that you can get around the clock and is quite good. That image is immediately shattered when you look at their social media advertising. What Denny’s has done is given themselves a unique identity from their competition. An easy out in the food business would be to post their menu items and to ask their customers how they like certain types of food to get engage their audience. But, that’s a not what Denny’s doe. Because of their target audience (teens and young adults) the restaurant tweets and posts in a weird manner (Patel, 2016). A good example that can be

found on their twitter page read, “sure, trees can’t eat like us, but if they did? Boy would salad freak them out.” Another tweet that gives you an idea of the brand image they are after read, “fun fact: at least one booth in every Denny’s is possessed by spirits. It’s pretty easy to tell though cause it’s usually glowing.” This is a classic example of a business that took the opportunity that social media presents and is making the most of it. Their twitter page currently has over 354 thousand followers.

In an article by *Business to Community*, Jake Camacho analyzes five social media practices that the fast food industry is currently using. The first example is of Taco Bell and how they use the poll feature on Twitter. With the poll feature you are allowed to ask the followers a question and give them options, just like a multiple choice question you would see on a test. Taco Bell will ask questions regarding like what Doritos Locos Taco would you choose if you could only choose one? This specific example received nearly 17,000 responses and Taco Bell was able to get a small sample size of what specialty taco was well liked among their consumers (Camacho, 2016).

One of Taco Bell’s competitors, McDonalds, has found success on a different application. The fast food giant has taken the Instagram world by storm with their clever use of their menu items and backdrops. McDonalds isn’t posting classic pictures of burgers and fries on their page; they are getting creative and having fun. A good example of this is one of their posts during the summer. In the picture you see one of their apple pies on top of what looks like a pool raft wearing sunglasses, enjoying a day at the pool. The post generated over 25,000 likes and nearly 1,000 comments (Camacho, 2016).

West coast chain, In-N-Out burger uses the two social media above, but they truly take advantage of Facebook. Other fast food companies typically use Facebook to announce

new locations and adding the occasional photo, causing very little activity (Camacho, 2016). What In-N-Out does so well is how they respond to their fans. The burger restaurant uses the application as a way to create dialogue with their fans answering as many questions posted to their page and informing them on what ever they want to know. Not only are they answering, but they also tailor each response to each individual (Camacho, 2016).

Kentucky Fried Chicken takes a different approach on their social media accounts, using customized videos for certain times of the year and even certain regions of the world. During the last holiday season KFC Philippines crafted a video that centered on family and giving. The video demonstrated how the chain values its employees and how they know the importance of family. The short video was posted across their social media and totaled more than 900.000 views and more than 15 thousand engagements (likes, comments) (Camacho, 2016).

In 2017 it was reported that 81% of the United State population (318.9 million) had a social media profile of some kind (U.S. population, 2017). Not only do they have social media accounts, but the average American spend more than two hours a day on them (Haselmayr, 2014). Businesses view this high social media traffic as opportunity to create more individualized content and loyalty with their own mobile application. Businesses as big as Walmart to small local businesses are creating mobile apps for their brand. This is to not be confused with a mobile friendly website. The applications that being created are downloaded from app stores like Apple and Google play. Businesses' mobile apps are creates more visibility to the consumers and a more direct marketing channel. Also, like social media, the mobile apps are another channel for companies to improve customer engagement, getting feedback on products and services as well as informing them on new offerings (Haselmayr, 2014).

The fast food industry is also inserting their brand on other online ordering applications. Yahoo Finance (2017) says the global online food delivery and takeout market is forecasted to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 16.25% during the next four years (“Global Online Food Delivery”, 2017). The growth in the industry has sprouted new companies that offer online food ordering. *Foodjunky* and *Grubhub* are two companies that are emerging, being the first two to advertise on television. Both online food-ordering companies offer similar services. When you first arrive on their site or mobile application, you are asked to type in your address to help locate businesses in your area. A list of restaurants will pull up on your screen that you can order from. Most restaurants that pull up on both sites for the Carbondale area are seated establishments. However, *Grubhub* and *foodjunky* both say that fast food restaurants (Taco Bell, Chick-fil-A) are ‘Coming Soon!’ when you search for them.

HISTORY AND OVERVIEW OF TACO BELL AND CHICK-FIL-A AND TACO BELL

Taco Bell first started out in 1954, but it wasn't known as Taco bell. Creator, Glen Bell opened a 'Bell's Drive-In and Taco Tia' in San Bernardino. It wouldn't be till the 1960s until Taco Bell was put on the outside of their restaurants. The chain caught traction among people quickly, having over 100 different locations by 1967. In the 1970s Bell made a huge move, joining forces with PepsiCo Inc. Bell became a shareholder in exchange for 868 Taco Bell Restaurants (Welcome, 2017)

As time went on Taco Bell tried new marketing techniques to gain more brand recognition. In 1989, the chain did promotions with major movie blockbusters, most notably with the movie 'Batman'. The innovativeness in promotion didn't stop there. The very next year Taco Bell began offering a value initiative that included menu items at 59, 79, and 99 cents. They later partnered this initiative with Taco Bell Express. Express was designed for people that were constantly on the go and didn't have the time to wait for food. This truly changed the 'fast' food game, bringing convenience fast to their consumers (Welcome, 2017).

The 1990s were an active time for Taco Bell, as they continued to get their name out there in ways the business had not done before. Sponsorships are one example of that. In 1995, Taco Bell sponsored the ESPN X Games, which is a sporting event that features extreme outdoor sports. Since then they have upgraded to being one of two sponsors for the NCAA College Football Playoff (Welcome, 2017). Again, Taco Bell used creative tactics to reach their audience, college students. They wanted to connect to this audience because there were over 20 million students enrolled in college, and those millions have purchasing

power of 417 billion. So, in order to get noticed by this crowd the chain got creative. Taco Bell gave away 1,000 tickets to students who attended the colleges and universities that were competing in the playoff (four total teams/schools). Students that received the ticket sat in the Taco Bell student section, and also received other perks such as tickets for on site concerts. In the first year of the playoff, students received admission to the game and to a Zac Brown Band concert, and a road trip kit (Welcome, 2017)

In recent years TB has also begun running promotions for other sporting events, even though it were not a major sponsor. The Super Bowl is the most televised event of the year, averaging over 115 million each year. Taco Bell positioned itself as a go-to place for food to eat while you watch the big game. On the day of the big game they offered tacos for the price of whatever number Super Bowl it was. This past year was Super Bowl LI (51) so they were selling tacos for 51 cents. The promotion was only offered at select locations (Welcome, 2017).

By the 2000s people were more connected because of the Internet and smart phones. Taco Bell used this shift in communication to their advantage. When the MIR space station was falling to earth, TB offered up a free taco to everyone in the United States if the station landed on the giant floating Taco Bell target (Welcome, 2017). Probably a more popular promotion that TB started offering in this time period (and still do today) is Mountain Dew Baja Blast. The soda is exclusively offered at the fast food chain, giving customers more of a reason to eat at their establishments. There have been times over the years since they introduced the special Dew in 2004 that consumers could purchase Baja Blast at grocery stores, but it has been limited. Never has it been offered at another food chain.

One of the more recent additions to Taco Bell's operation is the creation of the Taco Bell application. The app can be downloaded through the Apple App Store or through Google play. Like Taco Bell's social media accounts, their application has the most updated content and promotions. Not only that, but on the app, new promotions are broken down what is in each of their new products. For example, Taco Bell has a new burrito on their menu. The app tells you (with pictures) that there is beef, cheese, and lettuce and so in the burrito. As a consumer, I find this valuable because when you see a 30 second commercial on television you aren't given a full explanation of what's in their new menu items, just a couple quick shots of the food. The application also shows the full menu, broken down by type of food (tacos, burritos, specialties). Along with the food, you can find the nearest Taco Bell's to your location and even a specialized tab called 'My Bell' that suggests menu items for you based on your food interests. The most important function of the application (that you are reminded about in every tab) is that you can order food. All you have to do is select the food that you'd like to order, hit submit, and it's sent to the Taco Bell you selected to pick up your order at. You can even pay for the order through the app, so, when you get to the location that has made your order all you have to do is pick it up.

CHICK-FIL-A

Chick-fil-A first opened back in 1946 under the name *Dwarf Grill*. Founder, Truett Cathy, wanted her restaurant to be a full service eatery. They sold typical items that you can still find on their menus today like chicken sandwiches and chicken strips. Today, there are 12 locations in the Atlanta area that still operate the same way the first Dwarf Grill operated back in the 1940s. Those twelve locations also sell specialty items like ham and cheese "Midnight Sandwiches" and coconut icebox pie (Taylor, 2016).

Truett Cathy's claim to fame, and a big reason why Chick-fil-A made a name for itself, is the boneless chicken sandwich. Cathy and CFA are credited for making the boneless sandwich in the 1960s. The idea for the sandwich originated because the process to make fried chicken was too time consuming and their customers had to wait too long for their orders. So, Cathy decided to use a pressure cooker one day and the rest is history (Taylor, 2016). Fast-forward to today and you can find a boneless chicken sandwich on menus at McDonalds, Wendy's, Sonic, Hardees, and Burger King to just name a few.

The 1960s were busy decades for Cathy. After having success and breaking through in the chicken market, she decided to open the first ever Chick-fil-A. She felt that she had perfected her chicken recipe by 1967 and decided to open a restaurant based around her chicken sandwich. The first restaurant was a 384 square foot establishment at Greenbriar Mall in suburban Atlanta. It had little seating for customers and was designed as more of a 'to-go' eatery (Taylor, 2016). Cathy decided to call the spot Chick-fil-A as a play on words for 'chicken fillet' and the 'A' on the end symbolizes the high quality they produce. The first freestanding, not inside a mall, Chick-fil-A came 19 years later on North Druid Hills Road in Atlanta (History, 2017).

Since the first Dwarf Grill back in 1946 the company has always been closed on Sundays. Cathy began the tradition of being open six days a week to let her employees spend time with their family or go to church. As the company evolved in the conglomerate that it is today they kept to their roots and remain closed on Sundays (Taylor, 2016). No other fast food chain uses this practice.

In today's media run society you will occasionally see cows talking about chicken.

Chick-fil-A first launched their 'Eat Mor Chikin' campaign in 1995. The ads featured Holstein cows telling people to eat more chicken using signs (History, 2017). The company still uses this campaign 22 years later, using real cows in their commercials. In 2007, *Advertising Week* recognized the campaign as one of America's most popular advertising icons. The success and iconic ads placed Chick-fil-A and their cows on the Advertising Walk of Fame (History, 2017).

Chick-fil-A has branched out in to sports advertising a year after starting their 'Eat Mor Chikin' campaign by sponsoring an annual college football bowl game. The company became the name sponsor of one of the longest standing bowl games, the Peach Bowl (History, 2017). Till this day two collegiate football ball teams play in the 'Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl'.

The fast food company is currently operating in 46 states and continues to grow. It was reported in 2006 that Chick-fil-A surpassed two billion dollars in system wide sales, making them a billion-dollar brand (Chick-fil-A). McDonald's is the No. 1 fast food billion-dollar brand, followed by Subway. Other companies that are in the top-ten are Kentucky Fried Chicken, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell (Said, 2013).

As profits continue to grow, so does Chick-fil-A's online presence. In 2016, Chick-fil-A launched an application that can be downloaded in both the Apple and Google stores on your tablet and smartphone. The home screen shows the chicken head logo the company uses along with the word 'one'. The word play symbolizes the personalization and individualization you receive when using the application. On the app you can order your food ahead of time and pick it up when you arrive. Like Taco Bell, you can view the entire Chick-fil-A menu and you can view your recent order history. The one thing that differs the

two apps is the focus Chick-fil-A puts on the rewards you earn when you use the app. After a certain amount of spending you earn 'Treats' or free food that is credited to your account.

RESULTS FROM INTERVIEWS, SURVEY, AND CONCLUSION

I was able to answer the first few research questions through the background research and came away with two main points on question. There isn't one way that businesses use social media and online applications, and there is an audience for everyone no matter what kind of content you produce. Companies are using this form of media to help strengthen their brand image. Whether it is through humor, how they appreciate their employees, or by just being prompt with answering questions sent their way. Companies are developing an online image for consumers, and social media users, that they want to be seen by the public. That being said, they are also reaching out to consumers that click or can identify with the same brand image. Not everyone follows the same accounts and is friends with the same people on social media, and everyone uses a different collection of online applications. People have different interests, so, as a business using social media, there is a niche audience out there that wants to hear you.

Question two was trickier than the first, as the online ordering systems are not as established as social media. In 2013 *Fortune* reported 2.8 billion dollars was invested in to food-related startup companies (Denning, 2013). A study done by Morgan Stanley analysts (2016) valued the food delivery slash online ordering market at 30 billion and has the potential to worth over 200 billion (Chamlee, 2016). This is a market that is growing rapidly. Examples from above like *FoodJunky* and *Grubhub* are gaining clients daily that want to put their business on their online site and mobile application. The reason being is who drives the market now, millennials. *Adweek* reported that this market is 'an untapped market for lifestyle content' (Moses, 2014). With that being said, the answer to my question is that the food industry is changing to become more mobile and online friendly, and

businesses everyday are exploring new routes through new media to get there. However, they are exploring these options with creating things on their own and erasing the middleman.

The next set of research questions were answered through the interviews conducted. The answers received in the interviews also helped shape the survey conducted later on.

Interview one was with Chick-fil-A. After contacting their main office I was redirected to a marketing director in Springfield, Illinois. The marketing director discussed their current efforts at the local and regional area. Most of the national ad campaigns, primarily use the thirty-second commercials, were done out of their headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. She informed me that the local markets used these ads when possible in their social media strategy in their area. The company currently can be found on Facebook and Instagram. She stressed that they were currently working on getting a Twitter account and that it was a priority for them, as they wanted to start reaching that social media audience.

The marketing director later went on to discuss how they are using the social media platforms they are currently on. Their main focus was to push a current event that week, promoting the current offers. She explained that the basic function they use their social media accounts is to talk about the restaurant's current promotions and deals. An example she gave me was a campaign that they have been running since the beginning of the year and are going to run through the rest of 2017. Chick-fil-A in Springfield is currently offering free breakfast on Fridays. What they do is highlight one of their breakfast items every week on social media to encourage people to eat their first meal of the day at their restaurant or

get it to go. The director later went on to tell me that she produces these promotions and ideas and then translates them to their social media coordinator.

The Springfield location also talks about giveaways through their social accounts. The marketing director says that their social media coordinator will create little blurbs about the giveaways and then blast it out on all their online media, excluding the Chick-fil-A mobile application. None of the content that her location produces can be found on the mobile app. The app is completely managed by their headquarters and is kept primarily 'plain' so the user can create their own favorites and likes. Also, the offerings in one area may not be the same in another, so they try to keep the information simple to not confuse their consumers that use the app.

Taco Bell's strategy was very different from Chick-fil-A's. In a conversation I had with one of Taco Bell's marketing people, I found out that the fast food chain takes a more 'brand image' approach to social media. By this I mean that they don't push products as much and focus more on their image on their online accounts. The content they produce on their social media platforms is funny and trendy. The marketing department stressed that they try to produce media that appeals to their audience, which is millennials. They stay up to date on trends and constantly monitor online activity to create fun current posts and tweets. When they are posting more advertisement based content they don't give everything away at once. They tease new products and deals in a witty way to engage their audience and to start a conversation.

Outside of the wit and teasing of new deals, Taco Bell also promotes on their online platforms about their social responsibility. The fast food chain spreads the word on their scholarship programs and on contests for students to enter to help further their education.

When it comes to how the marketing is handled, the corporate headquarters does everything. All campaigns are from the national level and none is done locally. Every online platform is done in house to maintain a consistent image Taco Bell has worked years to create, the marketer told me. They also do this to constantly monitor all accounts, that way they can respond quickly for anyone that issues a complaint or is just looking to chat.

This mentality also transferred over to how they manage their mobile application. I asked if Taco Bell was exploring new media that was coming into the picture, like *Grubhub*, and the marketer told me no. She explained that they are bypassing other applications because they believe that they already offer everything you would need on their own mobile app. She went on to say that in doing this strategy they build more brand loyalty and are able to promote themselves better. They believe that building a strong fan base through their own app was more valuable moving ahead, than getting extra exposure elsewhere. To further her point even further, she explained that Taco Bell's current strategy was shifting into a more digital format. If they push their own media now, they will be better off as our media landscape advances in the future.

SURVEY RESULTS

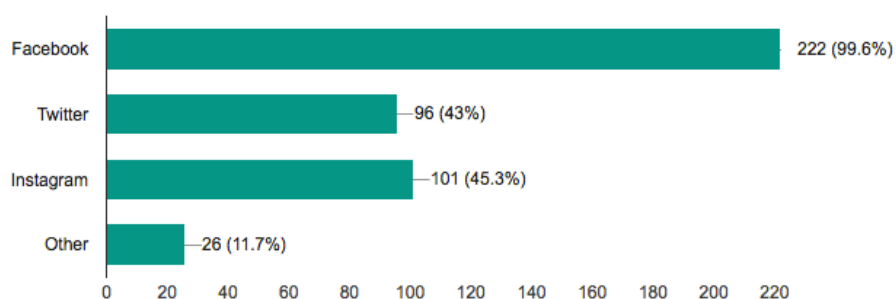
A majority of my research questions were answered through my survey. The survey was live from Saturday afternoon until the end of Monday. The total amount of responses received in that window was 224.

There was a split down the middle of people 18 to 35 and people 36 and older that answered the survey, giving me perspectives of both older generations and the millennial generation. First I identified what types of social media that people were currently using to get a sense of where they were exposed to online advertising. The number one response

was Facebook at 224, which was everyone who answered the survey. Following right behind was Twitter, which was four votes shy of 100 at 96, and then Instagram, which was just over 100 at 101. There were 16 people that filled in other, and the main answer received was Snapchat.

Table 1

What Social Media do you currently use? (223 responses)



With this information now in mind I transitioned to how people were using online media to buy food. This question was made as a short answer question, allowing the survey taker to be as descriptive and thorough as possible. It was important to not narrow their options down to a multiple choice type question. The reason being is the different types of media that you can use to order food online with. Popular answers received were the restaurant's online menu, restaurant apps, and applications in general, and healthier food that was not available locally.

When it came to how often people used their methods of online ordering answers varied. Only eight people answered with multiple times a week, which was the second smallest amount. The three most answered time tables were a couple times a month, few times a year, and I've never ordered online. The largest quantity of people (34%) answered

a couple times a month, followed by 26.5% a few times a year. The time frames asked in this question set up the next question, which was how long have they been using the online ordering systems. The number one response, with 79 people, answered that they had been using online ordering for more than three years. A total of 144 respondents (65%) had been using online ordering of some kind for more than a year.

How long have you been using apps and the web to make online food orders?

(221 responses)

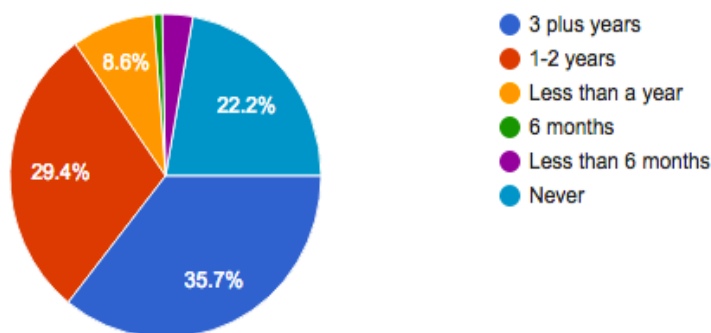


Figure 1

The survey then narrowed down what food people were primarily ordering online. The number one answer was pizza places with Dominos, Papa Johns, and Casey's Pizza being among the most popular. The next two answers were both more vague, not being as narrow of a food product like pizza. Fast food and sit down restaurants both pulled around 20%, getting 40 and 41 answers, respectively.

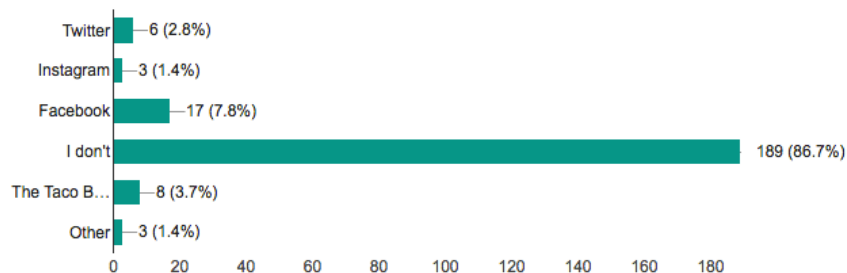
More than half of the people that had used social media or online media also gave the applications used a high level of satisfactory. There were 167 people that rated their

online food ordering experience at a seven or higher, ten being extremely satisfied. The level of satisfaction translated over to whether or not they had recommended using an app to someone else. A little more than 50% of the people said that they had. A mere 44% of people also said they preferred ordering ahead with the media options opposed to ordering in person at the restaurant.

After gaining a little background information on the survey takers eating habits and how often they used media to help them with those habits, I asked more questions related to Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A. For starters I asked how often they ate at these restaurants. Taco Bell received the popular vote, as 51.4% of the people answered that they eat there at least five times every few months. Chick-fil-A came in at 44.5%, having 97 people saying they ate there around five times every few months. The amount of people that ate at each restaurant transferred over to following the businesses on social media. Forty-nine people said they followed Chick-fil-A on social media, with the most being on Facebook at 26 people. Right behind in second place was the Chick-fil-A mobile app at 18 people. Taco Bell's following was more spread out. Facebook again grabbed the top spot with 17 people, with Twitter and the Taco Bell mobile app coming in at second and third. A total of 37 people followed the taco chain on a form of social media, which was 33% of the people that ate their food at least five times every few months.

Table 2

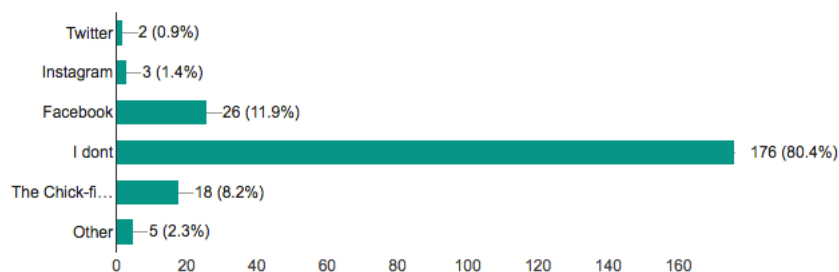
What social media do you follow Taco Bell on? (218 responses)



Chick-fil-A came in at a much higher percentage of 55%, having 54 of 97 people follow them on a social/online media and eat at their establishment at least five time every few months.

Table 3

What social media do you follow Chick-fil-A on? (219 responses)

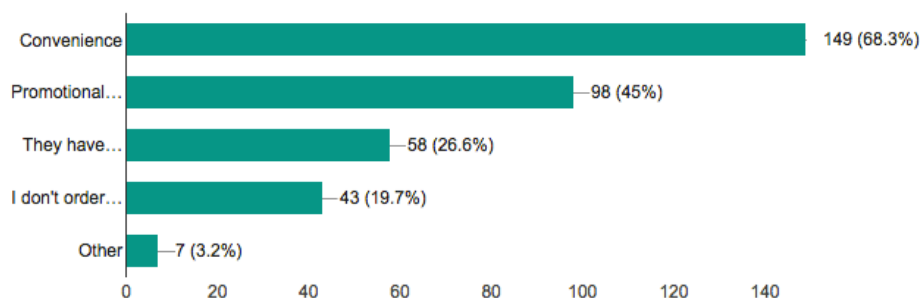


For the next portion of the survey I'd like to bring up a question answered earlier in the survey that becomes relevant in this section. One of the first questions asked about online/apps was why did they use it for making meal decisions. The two most popular answers were convenience (149 people) and promotions (98).

Table 4

Why do you use online/apps for when making meal decisions?

(218 responses)



Moving down to the Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A portion of the survey, I asked the same question again, but more specifically why they followed the two fast food chains on social media. I received many different answers, most of them along the lines of deals, to free rewards when used, to something as simple as 'it popped up on my timeline so I decided to like it'. But, a few people answered differently. Ten people answered from a point of view, not just of what they thought of the food, but how they thought of the company. A few people wrote that they liked what each company stood for or that they were funny. Some even said they followed Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A because they loved them. I found these types of answers very interesting when it came to how the businesses were viewed on social media.

When came to newer media, like each company's mobile application, not many people used it. Chick-fil-A beat Taco Bell in this department, having 26 people compared to Taco Bell's 19 people. When it came to how many times the app had been used, Chick-fil-A outweighed Taco Bell by, having 20 people using the app more than two times.

How many times have you used Chick-fil-A's app to order?
(222 responses)

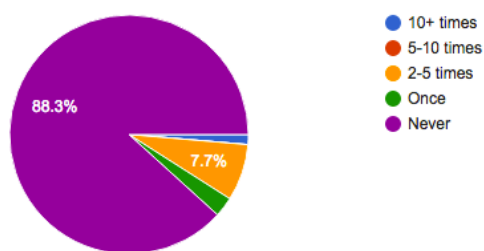


Figure 2

How many times have you used Taco Bell's app to order? (222 responses)

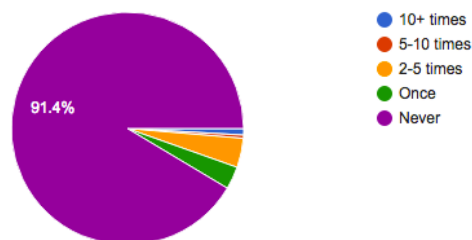


Figure 3

The final question of my survey was, “what impact does Chick-fil-A and Taco Bell’s social media have on your eating decisions?” A majority of the people (more than 100) said that neither company sways them on social media. The other half of people responded with answers that revolved around just seeing them post something that sparks them to get their food, and the deals and offerings.

CONCLUSION

Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A serve very different food. One sells chicken based products and the other serves Mexican based products. Both of them are on social media and have mobile applications, and both of them have followers on all of them. Consumers view businesses on new media like they view them on old media, as advertisements. More than half of the people in the survey claimed they didn't want to see their ads or all they only looked at them for deals. So, despite both restaurant's efforts of creating different non-corporate images on new media, most people can't look past of whom they are outside of the medium.

The other half of the people that claimed they followed Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A on social media viewed the companies entirely different. As I mentioned before a few respondents said they followed them online because they liked what the company stood for. Answers like this prove that people are viewing them more than just a fast food business. They are seeing a brand that shows emotion and has beliefs. So, even though a majority of the people did still view the two companies as advertisements on social media, there still is a portion of people out there that are seeing a different message, a message that Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A are trying to promote.

The conclusions gathered when comparing Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A from the answers in the survey were very similar. The one platform that Chick-fil-A was not in, Twitter, was the one place that Taco Bell had an advantage. When it came to the following, Chick-fil-A had more success because of the deals and offering that were offered, which is something that Taco Bell does not do as much on their social media accounts. Looking at the online food industry as whole, I found that a majority of the people surveyed are

currently involved in some sort online food shopping and have been for more than a year. The products that they are ordering are mostly pizza and food you would order from a sit down type of restaurant. At the same time new media that are making food options more convenient and personalized will continue to pop up, resulting in possibilities for all types of restaurants, including fast food. However, the progression of the new media will also advance the companies own applications, helping them compete in the online food ordering market.

All in all, I believe that new media will continue to grow and provide more opportunities for all restaurants. It will take more time for these companies to create more loyalty on their social media and not just be judged solely on the taste of their food or what they have on their menu. New media will continue to push more personalized options for consumers that will in return make it more convenient for the user.

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New media's impact on the fast food industry: A comparative study of Taco Bell and Chick-fil-A

Major Professor: Kavita Karan