

# Taste sensation: Ads work better if all senses are involved

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Corporations spend billions of dollars each year on food advertising. For example, Kraft Foods, PepsiCo, and McDonald's each spent more than \$1 billion in advertising in 2007. A new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research* suggests those advertisers are missing out if their ads only mention taste and ignore our other senses.

Naturally, most food ads mention the taste of the food being marketed. But authors Ryan S. Elder and Aradhna Krishna (both University of Michigan) demonstrate that tapping into our other senses can actually increase consumers' taste perceptions.

"Because taste is generated from multiple senses (smell, texture, sight, and sound), ads mentioning these senses will have a significant impact on taste over ads mentioning taste alone," write the authors.

In the experiments, participants were randomly assigned to view one of two ads. One ad was designed to appeal to multiple senses (for example, a tagline for a [chewing gum](#) read "stimulate your senses"), while the other ad mentioned taste alone ("long-lasting flavor"). After sampling the gum, the participants listed thoughts they had regarding the item and then rated the overall taste.

"The multiple-sense ad led to more positive sensory thoughts, which then led to higher taste perception than the single-sense ad," the authors write. "The differences in thoughts were shown to drive the differences in taste." The results were repeated with potato chips and popcorn.

The authors believe their research can help advertisers reword ad copy to lead to significant differences in taste. "These results are of great value not only to food advertisers, but also to restaurants, as the descriptions contained within menus can actually alter the taste experience," the authors write. "Further, companies can implement the findings into product packaging information to alter the taste of products consumed in the home. In an increasingly competitive marketplace, ensuring positive consumption experiences is critical to success."

More information: Ryan S. Elder and Aradhna Krishna. "The Effects of Advertising Copy on Sensory Thoughts and Perceived Taste." [Journal of Consumer Research](#): February 2010 (published online June 25, 2009).

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