

# Taco Bell Wages War on Breakfast, Takes No Prisoners

For months everyone in the office had been laughing about the Waffle Taco, but it was finally time to see what Taco Bell's gimmick would actually taste like. On a warm Monday morning in March our office manager embarked on a journey to buy one of each item off Taco Bell's new breakfast menu.

The bags were dropped in the center of a group of our hungriest employees while plates and silverware were fetched from the kitchen. When the rabbit ears holding the bags closed were finally untied, the Waffle Taco boxes that were pulled out were soggy with grease, and a harsh scent of cooking oil filled the surrounding area and then persisted to hang in the air.

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What was found under the wrappers vaguely resembled the items on the posters. The egg creation in the Waffle Taco looked as far from natural as could be imagined, and the cheese glowed a neon orange. At first, two of our testers didn't even want to look at the food, let alone taste it. However, after our first tester bit into a Cinnabon Delight and then exclaimed, "oh my God, it's glorious!", the hold-outs quickly came around.



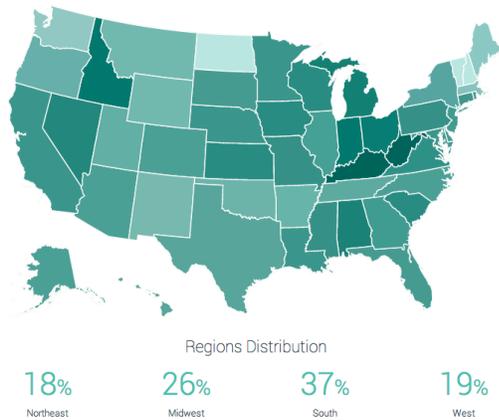
The taste test turned into a spectacle with more and more employees joining a circle around the table to watch and listen. There were murmurs of disgust that their fellow colleagues were even trying the food. Despite the poor initial reception and the disdain from their co-workers, general consensus was that Taco Bell's breakfast tastes very good, at least as far as fast food is concerned. Turns out, this in-office experience closely resembled the sentiments of the general population. So far, consumers either love, hate, or are completely repulsed by the very idea of Taco Bell's breakfast.



[www.infegy.com](http://www.infegy.com) +1 816-494-1650 [frontdesk@infegy.com](mailto:frontdesk@infegy.com)  
4151 N Mulberry Dr., Suite 240, Kansas City, Missouri 64116

# Consumer Profile

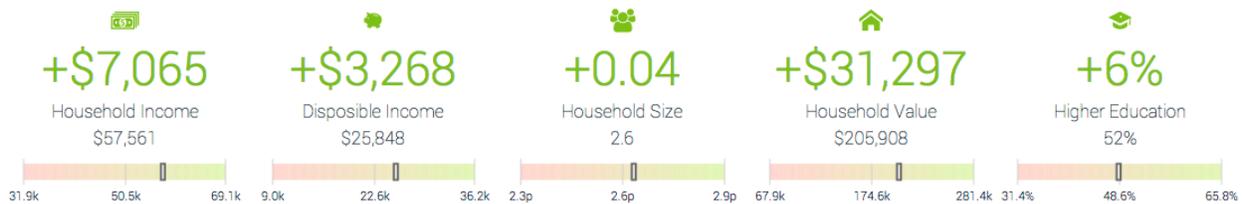
There was a clear divide in consumer opinion between the segment of fast food consumers who expressed purchase intent and the general population. Focusing just on the fast food consumer segment, positivity rose 8 percentage points overall.



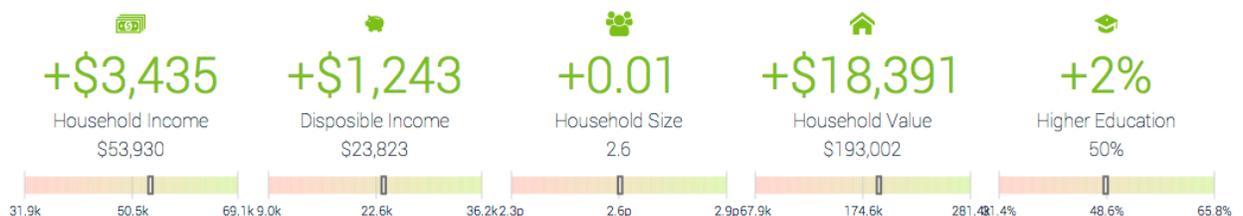
Just who were these fast food consumers? The most vocal purchasers of Taco Bell breakfast leading up to, and after the launch, were southern males and the highest concentration of conversations took place in Kentucky. Women accounted for 47% of the conversation pre-launch and just 37% afterwards. Men and women tended to agree in equal numbers about their opinions of Taco Bell's breakfast with 67% expressing favorable attitudes before and 63% following the release.

Compared to the general population commenting on Taco Bell's breakfast, consumers that reported actually buying the chain's breakfast items were found to have 4% less higher education as well as lower household and disposable income.

## General Population Sample of Taco Bell Commentators



## Taco Bell Breakfast Consumers

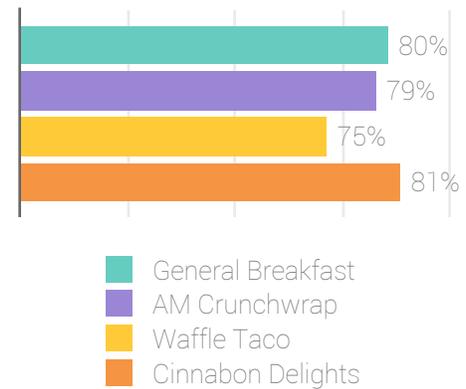


# Consumer Feedback

On to the burning question, do people actually like how the food tastes?

Consumers who specifically referenced purchase indicators as well as taste, gave Taco Bell's breakfast impressive marks with 80% of all taste related comments being positive. The Cinnabon Delights were Taco Bell's taste winner with 81% of posts related to taste being positive. The A.M. Crunchwrap followed closely behind with 79% favorability. Finally, the controversial gimmick that is the Waffle Taco received a surprising 75% positivity rating. However, not surprisingly, the Waffle Taco also received the highest number of disgust related comments with 7.4% of consumers who tried the item expressing this sentiment.

Breakfast Item Taste Favorability



*Taco Bell's breakfast [received] impressive marks with 80% of all taste related comments being positive*

## % of Respondents Who Would Purchase an Item Again

Breakfast General	82%
AM Crunchwrap	50%
Waffle Taco	63%
Cinnabon Delights	73%

OK, so we know purchasers were positive about Taco Bell's breakfast overall, but were their impressions enough to get them to come back? Within this same audience segment, purchase intent was mentioned in 12% of all posts, 82% of which expressed positive desires. What this means is that for every 5 posts about buying breakfast at Taco Bell in the future, roughly 4 of the consumers indicated that they would purchase again, while just 1 indicated that they would not.

In regards to repeat purchases, the Cinnabon Delights were the clear winner. Strangely, while the A.M. Crunchwrap scored highly for taste, few consumers expressed that they intended to purchase the item again.



# Marketing Performance

In a clever and calculated attempt to build momentum leading up to the launch, Taco Bell mailed 1,000 smartphones to consumers that had been identified as influencers for Taco Bell on social media. The phones reached doorsteps as early as March 19th and came with text messaged instructions for recipients to keep the phone on them at all times.

The reason? Taco Bell might call at any given moment with a secret mission that only members of this elite group could participate in. Of the 1,000 smartphones sent, 579 individual sources reported to Facebook or Twitter that they received the package.



*In a clever and calculated attempt to build momentum leading up to the launch, Taco Bell mailed 1,000 smartphones to consumers that had been identified as influencers ...*



Within these reports there were a few fakes, parodies, and hurt consumers who felt they should have received a phone. Taking these types of responses into account, the true recipients that could be accounted for numbered 522.

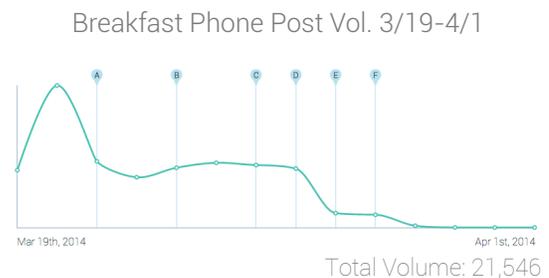
There's no doubt that Taco Bell's marketing team must have performed extensive research to separate this group of 1,000 influencers from the millions of other consumers that talk about the chain on social media. So how did they do? Did they pick the best influencers?



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# Marketing Performance

Interestingly, the number of Twitter followers of each influencer that broadcasted receiving a phone ranged widely from as low as 110 to more than 300,000. The calculated potential reach on Twitter of these 522 individuals came in at approximately 20 million. Of that potential 20 million impressions, there was engagement by approximately 21,500, giving an engagement ratio of .11%. The breakfast phone was a short term engagement to build enthusiasm prior to launch. The impact of the campaign lasted from March 19th through March 29th, with peak volume of 5,100 posts occurring on March 20 and then rapidly declining to 33 by March 30.



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To kick off their public facing marketing assault on McDonald's, on March 27th, the day of launch, Taco Bell began airing a commercial featuring real people named Ronald McDonald proclaiming just how much they love Taco Bell's breakfast. This ignited a war of sorts between the two chains with McDonald's firing back tweets and images in response.

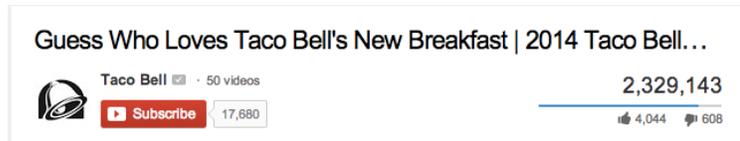
However, rather than seeming to take Taco Bell's actions seriously, McDonald's has been downplaying their rival's significance with retorts that smack of, "Aw, Taco Bell wants to play in our sandbox, isn't that cute?" It seems that so far McDonald's views Taco Bell as a mere annoyance rather than a serious contender.



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# Marketing Performance

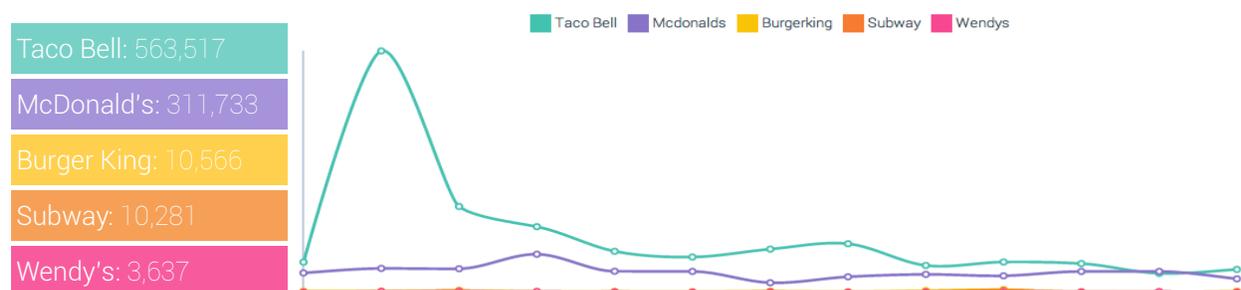
For all the media hype and advertising publication coverage, the Taco Bell ad hasn't engaged people on as large a scale as might be expected. From March 26 through April 7th the Ronald McDonald commercial generated close to 60k posts online and racked up 2.3 million views on YouTube.



The YouTube video has received 4,652 comments, 86% of which have been positive. Across other social channels the campaign has been well received with 78% positivity. Hitting their target market, 69% of comments about Taco Bell's ads have been made by men. To put the performance figures in perspective, Old Spice's Mom Song commercial, another high profile campaign, managed to pick up more than 1 million views in less than 24 hours and generate 275,000 posts online within 5 days.

*... in the context of the fast food breakfast category, Taco Bell managed to take control of the conversation.*

While Taco Bell's campaigns haven't generated the same attention as other recent ads, Taco Bell managed to take control of the conversation in the context of the fast food breakfast category. Looking at conversations about breakfast and the top five QSR chains, Taco Bell overwhelmingly dominated the conversation at launch and for the next week and a half after. Since that time, consumer posts have declined; however, the chain has been able to continually generate slightly more interest than McDonald's.



# Conclusion & Method

Taco Bell has stacked up quite a few wins within the first two weeks of the launch of the company's breakfast menu. Consumers who have tried the breakfast have given the items high marks in terms of taste. Furthermore, 4 out of 5 of those who expressed future intent to purchase indicated that they would, in fact, buy breakfast at Taco Bell again. Taco Bell is also hitting its target market of males, both in terms of who is discussing buying the chain's breakfast items and responses to advertising campaigns.

Within the competitive landscape for fast food breakfast, Taco Bell lit up social media channels right out of the gate and held a strong dominance for first week following launch. The brand has since transitioned to maintaining consumer post volume parity with McDonald's, an impressive feat considering McDonald's market penetration within the breakfast food category.

*The menu has garnered strong consumer support and Taco Bell has been able to quickly establish itself as a serious contender in the breakfast category ...*

Although Taco Bell's clever campaigns may not have had as great a social media impact as hoped for, one thing is for certain, breakfast at Taco Bell is not a flop or a joke. The menu has garnered strong consumer support, and Taco Bell has been able to quickly establish itself as a serious contender in the breakfast category where several other QSRs have been unable to make significant headway.

## Research Methods

This report was created using Infegy Atlas. Infegy Atlas is a social media monitoring and research platform that utilizes proprietary automated natural language processing technology and Infegy's in-house repository of online dialog dating back to 2007. Atlas operates on a simple but powerful query language similar to what you would use for a Google search but with more operators, filters and options. The queries used for this report are available upon request.



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