Emerging and novel food safety risk communication tools and approaches: Social media and secret shopping

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Financial disclosure

• **Current projects:**
  - USDA NIFA
  - USDA ARS
  - Center for Produce Safety
  - NC Department of Instruction

• **Past projects**
  - NC Tobacco Trust Fund
As of now, Chipotle has released a statement saying that employees should not come to work if they are sick. This comes after reports of illness spread on social media.

One user, @Izzy_tweets, tweeted: "If I do get sick, my medical records will say "Chipotle and Adriana induced illness"."

Another user, @71LaAlina, commented: "I agree. Chipotle and Adriana induced illness!"

Gillian L-G de M tweeted: "Funny how everyone gets over their illness fears when there are free burritos. Just as safe as yesterday, but longer lines today. #Chipotle"

Eric Bielich commented: "Mile-long line at Chipotle. Go figure, they give out a Free Burrito coupon & every cheapskate in town comes running to redeem it."

Jim Kent tweeted: "After going to Qdoba for all this time, I've now realized how much better it is than Chipotle."

Anthony Randall tweeted: "For real though it's all about cheese pizza with sriracha or chipotle tabasco #Luv4Social #lv4pizza"
According to Ketchum, this population generates up to 1.7 billion conversations about food weekly and do not see themselves as activists with entrenched beliefs around issues; they are an interested public. They have expectations that food companies work interactively to engage the eating public in dialogue and share information proactively and transparently.
Risk communication

Scientific Assessment of Risk

Information Vacuum

Public Perception of Risk

Powell, D. 1997. Mad Cows and Mother’s Milk
From the literature

Using stories and narratives better than statistics alone
  o Cole, 1998; Cole, 1997; Howard, 1991; Leventhal, 1970; Morgan et al., 2002; Slater and Rouner, 1996
  o Frewer et al.,

Put food safety into context
  o Leventhal et al., 1965; Lordly, 2007

Generate dialogue
  o Ajzen, 1991; Bohm et al., 1993; Digenis, 2001; Schein, 1993

Surprising messages
  o Shannon, 1948
CDC director of the National Center for Health Marketing, Dr. Jay Bernhardt, explained that the effectiveness of the agency’s communications through social media is dependent upon public trust, which is developed by speaking the audience’s language.
Create.
Participate.
Engage.
Listen.
It’s hard.

Despite coverage in the New York Times in 2009 and on ABC TV in 2011, public outcry over the product did not force buyers of the product to respond until online populations, largely young mothers, began sharing concerns through social media networks.
*In compliance with new food code regulations, we remind you that consuming raw or under cooked meats, poultry, seafood, shellfish or eggs may increase your risk of food borne illness.

Above Entrees Served with choice of potato, salad & bread

**NC PIT COOKED BBQ Plate** $9.95

**KNOCKWURST** 2 grilled knockwurst on a bed of sauerkraut, mustard, horseradish & french bread $9.95

**STIR-FRIED VEGGIES** over rice or pasta with marinated chicken $8 with grilled shrimp $12.95

**FROM THE GRILL**

Angus Beef ground on site. Order it RARE! * Comes with Horseradish

$3 **PHILLIE DOG** mustard, chilli, bacon

4 oz. $6.25 6 oz. $7.50 **CHEESEBURGER** 4 oz. $6.25

American cheese, chilli, mustard, onions 4 oz. $6
Burger ordering

• 30 Secret shoppers visited 265 restaurants in 7 locations across the U.S.
  o Ordered medium rare burgers
  o Collected risk information on restaurant menus and from server responses to questions relating to measuring doneness and safety

• Major gaps in server knowledge and risk communication literature
The majority of servers indicated an unreliable method of doneness (67%, n=177) related to hamburger doneness and safety.

Found statistically significant differences between chain and independent restaurants with chains providing better communications.
Examples of Server Responses

“Eating medium rare burgers is perfectly fine and not a problem…" Told us a story about her sister eating barely browned beef (raw in middle) while she was pregnant and she is just fine.

“The ingredients used are good quality and so it's not risky…as long as the outside of the burger is cooked it is safe because that is where most of the bad bacteria is.”

“Medium rare is safe. It will be cooked to about 135.”

“I was actually going to tell you about that- we have to remind you that there is a risk when you order undercooked food. You can still get medium rare, just need to let you know about that.”

Assurance of safety, even for at-risk groups

Temperature mentioned, but not safe

Incorrect information about meat

Good risk communication
The end