

Project brief

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Working title: Decoding Cravings

A/B Manifesto influencers:

Problem solving-problem finding、anti-art -applied art、research for design- research through design、training-education

Design goal:

This project aims to break and decode the simplistic linear logic in traditional concepts that "appetite = hunger". In the mainstream cognitive framework, appetite is often reduced to a purely physiological demand signal. However, this mechanical causal theory obscures the complex essence of the human desire system - our appetite is actually a multi-dimensional emotional interface, and it is an encrypted language for the dialogue between the subconscious and the conscious mind.

In the future context of virtual and real life, people are increasingly responding to various emotional states by "eating": eating sweets when stressed, ordering takeout when lonely, and repeatedly opening the snack drawer when bored. These behaviors seem to satisfy physiological needs, but in fact they are substitute responses to inner emotions. What is "eaten" is often not food, but the missing companionship, sense of security, meaning or love.

The aim is to reveal: When people long for a certain type of food, it might be expressing a need for a certain emotion; when there is an irrational urge to overeat, it might be an attempt to confront existential anxiety. In fact, appetite is the tactile extension of the emotional spectrum.

Theme(s) make a list from your research:

Emotion decoding、Non-food satisfaction、Emotional substitution

The act of eating is gradually evolving into an emotional regulation mechanism - when people suddenly crave chocolate, it might be that their bodies are seeking a quick dopamine compensation; while their obsession with crispy snacks might suggest that the unexpressed anxiety needs a tactile outlet. What people "consume" is often not the food itself, but the absence of companionship, security, meaning, or love.

If the essence of appetite is a metaphor for emotional needs, then satisfying it does

not necessarily require actual food. This project aims to make people realize that appetite is a misinterpretation between the body and the mind. When the fork reaches for the food again, perhaps we should first ask ourselves: "What am I really trying to swallow? Are they calories, or unacknowledged emotions?" Through decoding, transformation and reconstruction, the act of eating will rise from a mechanical metabolic activity to a ritual of self-awareness and healing of existence. When the basic survival needs are met, "eating" will completely transform into a ritual of existence confirmation. By deconstructing appetite, it helps humans rediscover - not by filling the stomach with food, but by filling the soul with meaning.

Insight(s) List up to 3:

1. People don't eat junk food because they are greedy, but because their bodies are asking for help - what they lack is emotional satisfaction, not calories.
2. People use eating to delay life decisions but become increasingly confused because they confuse the needs of their mouths with the needs of their hearts.
3. People reward themselves with high-calorie foods but become increasingly exhausted because what they really crave is recognition, not calories.

People's addiction to junk food, overeating or emotional eating is not usually due to "gluttony" or "lack of self-control", but because their bodies are sending out distress signals - what they need is not calories, but emotional satisfaction. For instance, people who have been deprived of love for a long time may have a preference for sweet foods, as the sweetness is subconsciously associated with the memory of being cared for; anxious people may crave crispy snacks because chewing can relieve tension. The brain mistakenly interprets "I need comfort" as "I need food", leading to emotional problems manifesting in the form of appetite. People mistakenly believe that "eating enough can solve the problem", but in reality, after binge eating, they often feel even more empty because the real problems have not been resolved. The stomach is filled, but the heart is still empty, causing a vicious cycle of "eating more makes one more anxious, and being more anxious makes one eat more".

POV(s) according to insights (one sentence each):

Emotional eaters need to rethink their cravings because they often mistake psychological needs for hunger.

For instance, "After working overtime today, it's worth having a big meal" or "After successfully losing weight, reward yourself with a piece of cake". However, the problem lies in that what we truly desire is not food, but recognition. People who have been overworked for a long time may overeat, possibly in an attempt to make

up for the "neglected sense of self-worth". After losing weight, having a craving for high-calorie foods might be due to the psychological rebound caused by long-term suppression. The deep-seated need is actually "allowing oneself to relax". Food cannot truly "reward" the soul. After a brief taste sensation, it is often accompanied by a sense of guilt or physical discomfort, thereby exacerbating the psychological burden. The true rewards should be "rest", "being listened to", "a sense of achievement", etc., rather than just calorie intake. When one understands the psychological mechanisms behind "binge eating, overeating, and emotional eating", one can treat oneself more gently - it's not that there is a lack of willpower, but rather that one has not yet learned how to directly nourish one's emotions.

HMW(s) (1 main plus a secondary HMW if you want):

HMW help people identify and decode the true emotions and needs behind their cravings?

HMW turn the desire data behind "food choices" into personalized care?

These two sentences directly address the most hidden psychological predicament of contemporary people - we are facing a collective "emotional aphasia" phenomenon. When people are unable to accurately identify and express their inner needs, appetite becomes the final distress signal system. This is not merely a dietary issue; it is a systematic failure of the emotional expression mechanism of modern people. Every emotional eating is a situation where the body is forced to bear the burden of the soul. In the long run, it not only leads to metabolic diseases but also causes the degradation of emotional cognitive abilities - people increasingly fail to distinguish between "the needs of the stomach" and "the calls of the heart". Everyone's appetite code is unique. By decoding these personalized metaphors, we can achieve truly precise psychological care.

Decoding lies in:

Reconstructing the channel for the dialogue between the body and the mind

Transforming daily behaviors into an opportunity for self-awareness

Generating therapeutic value