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### Chipotle's Farmed & Dangerous Pioneer's Invisible Branding

*Study finds exposure to the unbranded online drama series increases purchase intent and changed beliefs about ethical issues relating to the environment, nutrition and gene technology.*

AUSTIN, Texas – A new study by MediaScience® examined the impact of Chipotle's award-winning cause marketing online video series, Farmed & Dangerous, to determine its effects. The study, which is featured in this month's edition of the [Journal of Marketing Communication](#), found that the exposure to unbranded cause marketing in Farmed & Dangerous changed beliefs about ethical issues relating to the environment, nutrition and gene technology.

Chipotle aired the four-part Farmed and Dangerous series in 2014 to dramatize and raise awareness of two opposing methods of farming: industrial versus sustainable. The series, which won a CLIO and three Cannes Lions, was part of an unconventional campaign by Chipotle to get consumers to think about where their food comes from. Using a pre- and post-test experimental design, MediaScience® examined Chipotle's online series for heuristic cues to determine the impact of invisible branding. Results of the study show that when consumers were exposed to unbranded content in the online video series, it changed beliefs about ethical consumption and increased intentions to buy. For individuals already familiar with Chipotle, purchase intention increased 64-69%; while those not familiar with the brand had purchase intent increase 16-37%.

By creating characters that people could empathize with, Chipotle was able to challenge misconceptions about industrial farming, ethical fast food and increased purchase intent toward the product—all without using the brand in the story. Millennials, a notoriously difficult demographic for advertisers to target, were found to be persuaded by the cause marketing presented in the show, without exhibiting defensive ad avoidance techniques. As reaching target audiences becomes more complex, traditional advertising relying on brand recognition may not be necessary.

Dr. Varan, CEO of MediaScience®, says the implications of the study may be important for the broader world of advertising. "What's most significant about this study is that it shows how brands don't have to be loud to get attention. Chipotle demonstrates that you don't have to shout to promote your brand. Invisible branding opens advertisers to a new frontier, where you can see brand level results without even using your name," said Dr. Varan.

Article: Bellman, S., Rask, A., Varan, D. (2017). How Chipotle used unbranded content to increase purchase intention by changing beliefs about ethical consumption. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, DOI: [10.1080/13527266.2017.1381860](https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2017.1381860)

#### **About MediaScience®**

MediaScience® is a leading provider of lab-based audience research, incorporating a range of neuro-measures including biometrics, analysis of facial expression, eye tracking, response-latency testing and more. With state-of-the-art labs across Austin, Chicago and New York, MediaScience® is creating key insights on emerging digital technology, media and consumer trends.

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