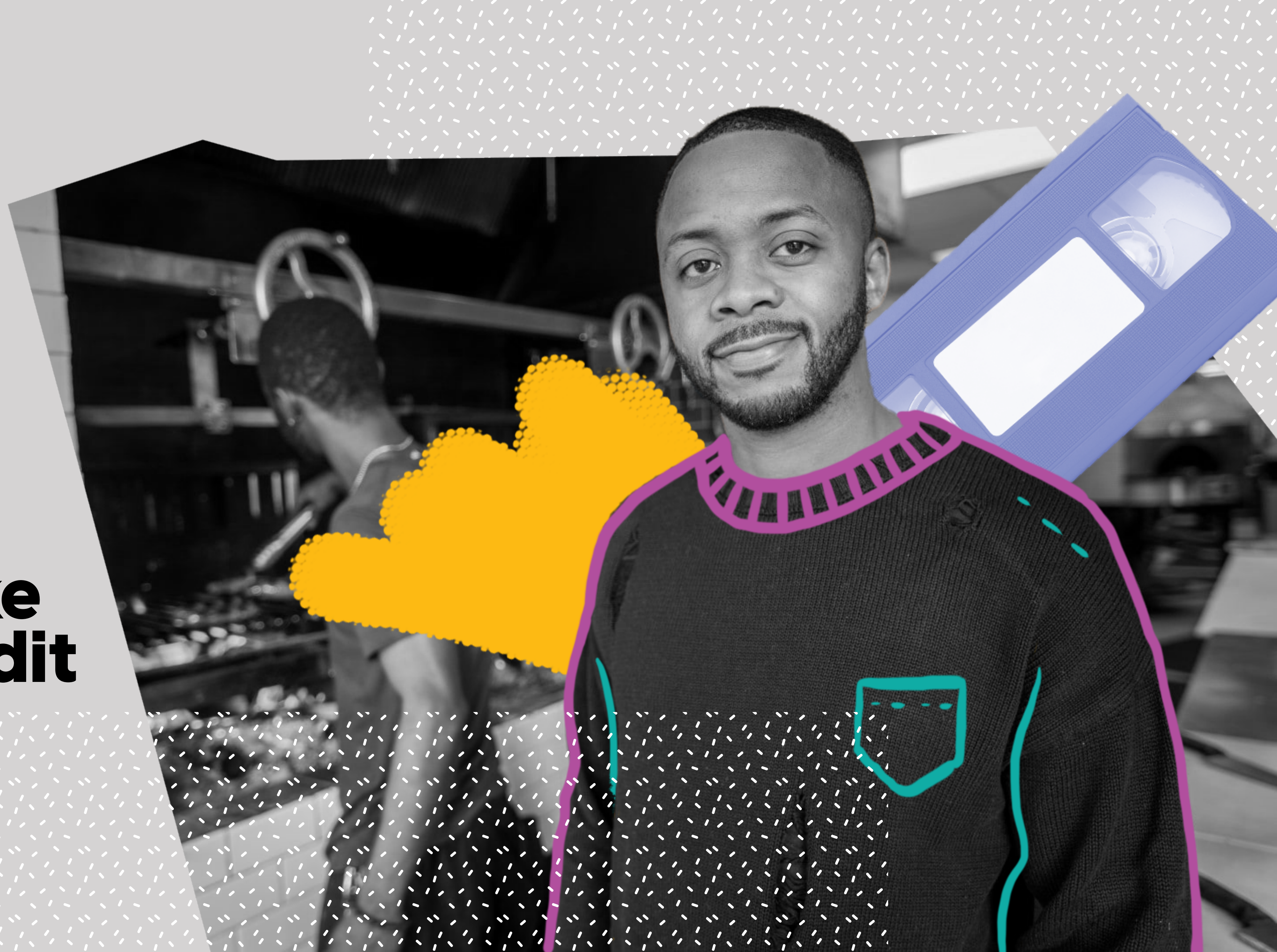


HalfSmoke Brand Audit

May 8, 2020

Prepared by

THE BRAND GUILD



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COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

Call Your Mother

Busboys & Poets

Ben's Chili Bowl

801

HalfSmoke

Matchbox

Ted's Bulletin

Shaw's Tavern

DCity Smokehouse



LOCAL COMPETITORS

Shaw's Tavern

520 Florida Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001

shawstavern.com

"American tavern with southern flair"

What They're Known For:

- Events (drag brunch, Schitt's Creek watch parties, live music, piano bar nights)
- Bottomless brunch
- Outdoor patio
- Happy hour deals

Yelp Review Themes:

- Friendly but inconsistent service
- Fun events
- Good happy hour deals
- Decent but inconsistent food



LOCAL COMPETITORS

801

801 Florida Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001
801dc.com

“Good Food, Good Drinks, & Good People in a ‘Good Vibes Only’ environment”

What They’re Known For:

- Rooftop bar
- Nightlife
- Brunch and bottomless “build your own” mimosas
- Hosting large parties/private events
- Mega Mules (giant shareable Moscow mules)

Yelp Review Themes:

- Good, but at times bland, brunch menu
- Upbeat, dancey weekend destination
- Good happy hour deals
- Younger crowd



LOCAL COMPETITORS

DCity Smokehouse

203 Florida Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001

www.dcitysmokehouse.com

“Welcome to DCity! Home to DC Style BBQ!”

What They're Known For:

- Smoked meat selection
- Outdoor seating
- Being an African American-owned business

Yelp Review Themes:

- Friendly service
- Good smoked meat and sauce selection
- Large portions
- Tasty sides



REGIONAL CHAINS/LOCAL COMPETITORS

Ted's Bulletin

14th Street | Capitol Hill | Ballston Quarter | Mosaic District
tedsbulletin.com

“Welcome to Ted’s. Your go-to place to savor The Every Day.”

What They’re Known For:

- Ted’s Tarts (homemade pop-tarts)
- All-day breakfast
- Milkshakes/boozy shakes
- Family-friendly environment

Yelp Review Themes:

- Upscale diner vibe
 - Art deco interiors, high ceilings
- Large, diverse menu
- Delicious baked goods (particularly Ted’s Tarts)
- Friendly, but sometimes slow service



REGIONAL CHAINS/LOCAL COMPETITORS

Ben's Chili Bowl

U Street | H Street | Rosslyn | Reagan National Airport
benschilibowl.com

"At Ben's Chili Bowl, Everyone's Family"

What They're Known For:

- Being an African American-owned business
- Rich history/pillar of the community/iconic DC business
- Chili dogs
- Ben's "legendary" half-smoke

Yelp Review Themes:

- A true DC staple
- Delicious chili dogs
- Quality half-smokes
- Friendly service
- Iconic and unpretentious
- Tourist attraction
- Good late-night spot



REGIONAL CHAINS/LOCAL COMPETITORS

Matchbox

14th Street | Capitol Hill | Penn Quarter | Bethesda | Rockville | Silver Spring | Charlottesville | Merrifield
One Loudon | Pentagon City | Sawgrass Mill, FL | Preston Hollow, TX
matchboxrestaurants.com

“Food that brings people together”

What They're Known For:

- Wood-fired pizzas
- Mini burgers
- Apps/dips/bar food
- Convenience
- Bottomless brunch

Yelp Review Themes:

- Spacious floorplans
- Efficient & friendly but somewhat inconsistent service
- Inconsistent food quality
- Good happy hour + brunch deals
- “Pretty good for a chain”



SUCCESSFUL MULTI-LOCATION REGIONAL BRANDS

Call Your Mother Deli

What they do well:

- Delicious, high-quality, and unique menu items
 - Bagels described as a “hybrid between sweet Montreal types and broiled New York styles”
 - Distinctive/unusual but delicious sandwich combinations
- Customer service
 - Long lines, but they move quickly
 - Friendly staff + involved co-owners
- Thoughtful employer
 - Supporting staff + keeping them employed and paid throughout the pandemic
- Not trying to be something they’re not
 - “We want to be a casual bagel shop with Jewish inspiration”
 - Fully leans into the fact that their menu is almost exclusively carbs
 - Takes a classic recipe/menu item + adds their own twist

Look/feel:

- Pink + turquoise exteriors + interiors
- Consistent logo + bagel motif
- Pop culture + Jew-ish references (photos of Drake + his mom at Park View location, bagel sandwich names, etc.)
- “Boca meets Brooklyn”/“Miami Vice meets Montreal.”
- Intentionally small to “feel like a factory,” because they also have a farmers market and wholesale presence

Tone/voice/vibe:

- Irreverent
- Fun + indulgent
- Casual/millennial
- Community-focused



SUCCESSFUL MULTI-LOCATION REGIONAL BRANDS

Busboys & Poets

What they do well:

- Thoughtful, community-enhancing event programming
- Considers the personality/art/energy of the neighborhood
 - Has seven locations, and each feels consistent but tailored to the community
 - Acts as a “community gathering place”
- Clearly articulates their origin, mission, and vision

Look/feel:

- Bookstore
- Eclectic
- Cultural/artistic
- Menus + collateral incorporates prominent human rights activists, artists, writers, musicians, social justice icons, etc.

Tone/voice/vibe:

- Activist
- Your neighborhood cafe/restaurant
- Progressive + inclusive
- Embracing diversity
- More than a restaurant – it’s a community



SUCCESSFUL MULTI-LOCATION REGIONAL BRANDS

Founding Farmers

What they do well:

- High-quality, farm-to-table ingredients
 - Large inclusive family-friendly menus
 - American comfort food cooked from scratch
 - "Inspired by rich culinary tradition"
- Maintain the "values of the American farmer"
 - 47,000 family farmers majority own their restaurant group
 - "Mindfulness, honesty, and accountability are ingrained in us because it is the farmer's way"
- Transparent about sourcing + processes
- Clearly articulate their origin story
- Give each restaurant a distinctive but cohesive design
- Highlight farmers/chefs/artists

Look/feel:

- Modern farmhouse
- High-end casual
- Americana
- Unique artwork

Tone/voice/vibe:

- Honest + transparent
- Wholesome
- Family-friendly
- Community-minded
- Sustainability-focused





**WHERE
HALFSMOKE
IS TODAY**



What People Are Saying

HalfSmoke Yelp/OpenTable Review Themes:

- Fun ambiance
 - Good music, playful nostalgic touches (trapper keepers, VHS tapes)
- Delicious milkshakes
- Good brunch deals
- Friendly service, but sometimes inconsistent and slow
- Inconsistent food quality
- Noisy environment
- Questionable value (some customers expected larger portions)
- "The vibe is killer, but the food is meh"



What's Cooking

Biggest Differentiators

- Playful 90s/early-2000s vibe
- The experience (the games, photo booth, events)
- Nostalgic touches (trapper keepers, VHS tapes, board games)
- Indulgent menu items and deals
 - Signature sausage menu
 - All-day brunch
 - Unlimited "beat the clock" happy hour
 - Extravagant boozy shakes
- African American-owned business
- Irreverent, young tone & voice



Let's Have Another Look

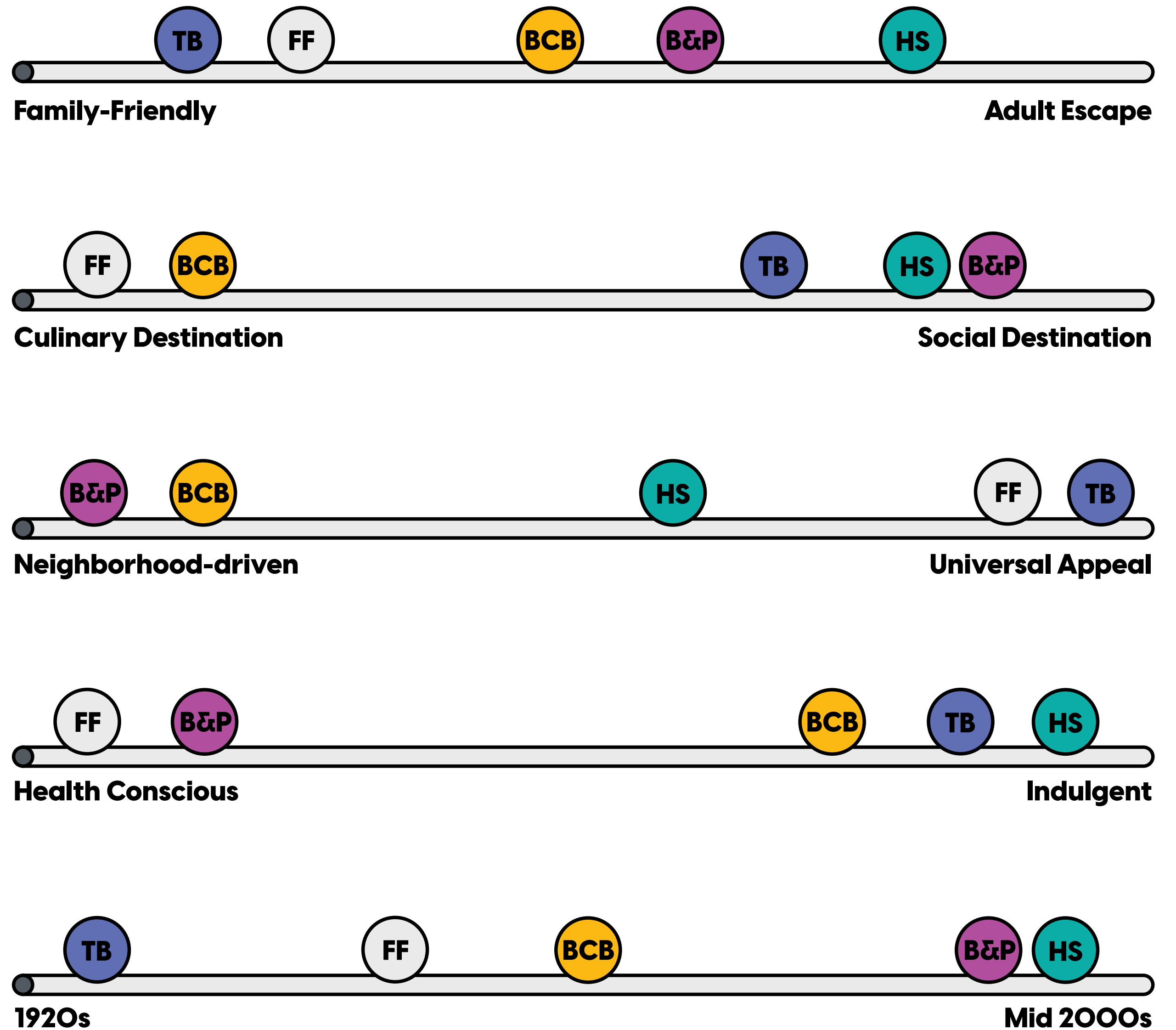
Where there's room for improvement:

Through our research, we found that HalfSmoke's patrons gravitate toward the restaurant's playful, buzzing, and carefree atmosphere, indulgent brunch and happy hour deals, friendly staff, and festive nods to the childhood staples of the 90s and early-2000s. However, we also found that some customers have been dissatisfied with their experience because of reservation mishaps, slow service, noise levels, inconsistent menu item availability and quality, and smaller portions than expected.

Competitive Spectrum

Leveraging its target audience's affection for the 90s and early 2000s, HalfSmoke has the opportunity to distinguish itself as a playful, indulgent culinary destination with broad appeal for customers looking for an escape from the burden and monotony of adult responsibilities.

- FF Founding Farmers
- TB Ted's Bulletin
- BCB Ben's Chili Bowl
- B&P Busboys & Poets
- HS HalfSmoke





Don't grow up it's a trap

BRAND VISION

Positioning

A dining experience rooted in fun, HalfSmoke offers customers a cheeky, engaging social escape where they can indulge in comfort food and embrace their inner 90s child.



Pillars

Food should be fun.

From boozy shakes and all-day brunch to beat-the-clock happy hours and signature sausage combos, HalfSmoke's menu is an invitation to revel in the satisfaction of uncompromising, indulgent comfort food.

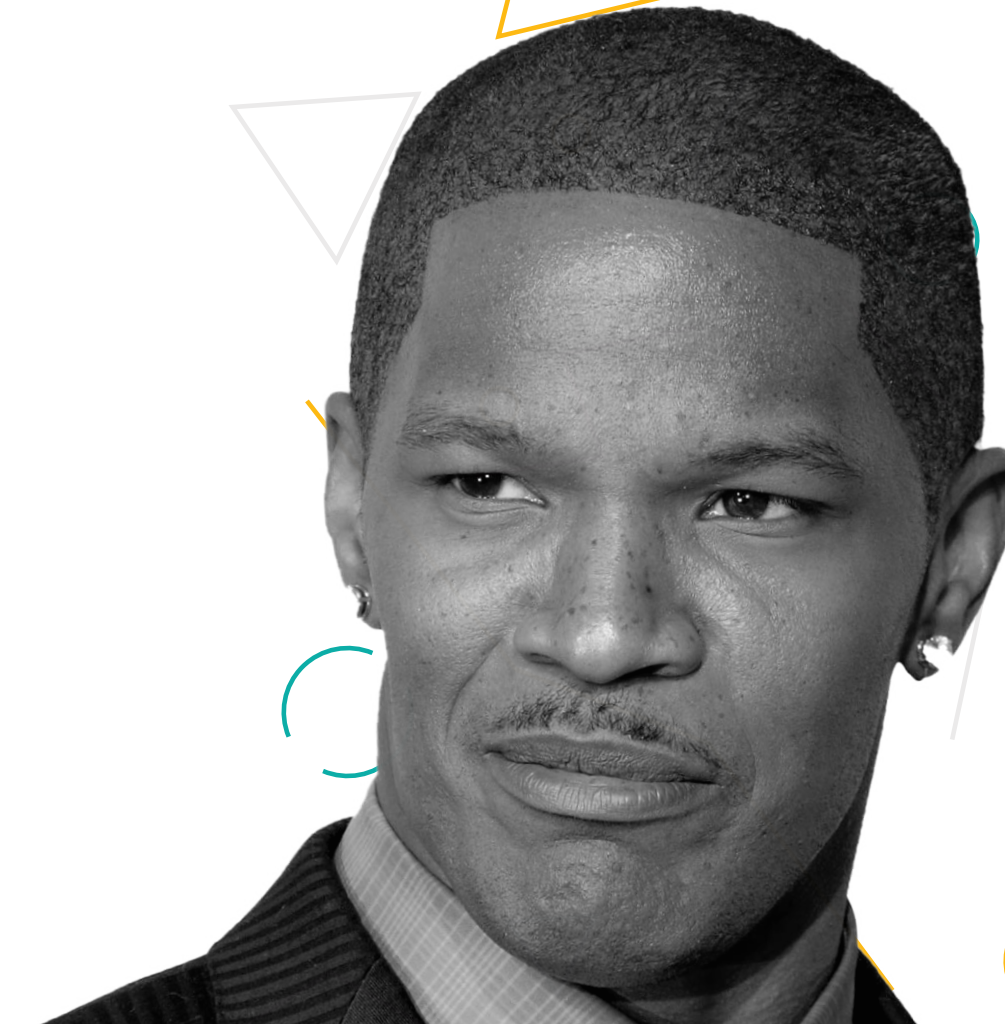
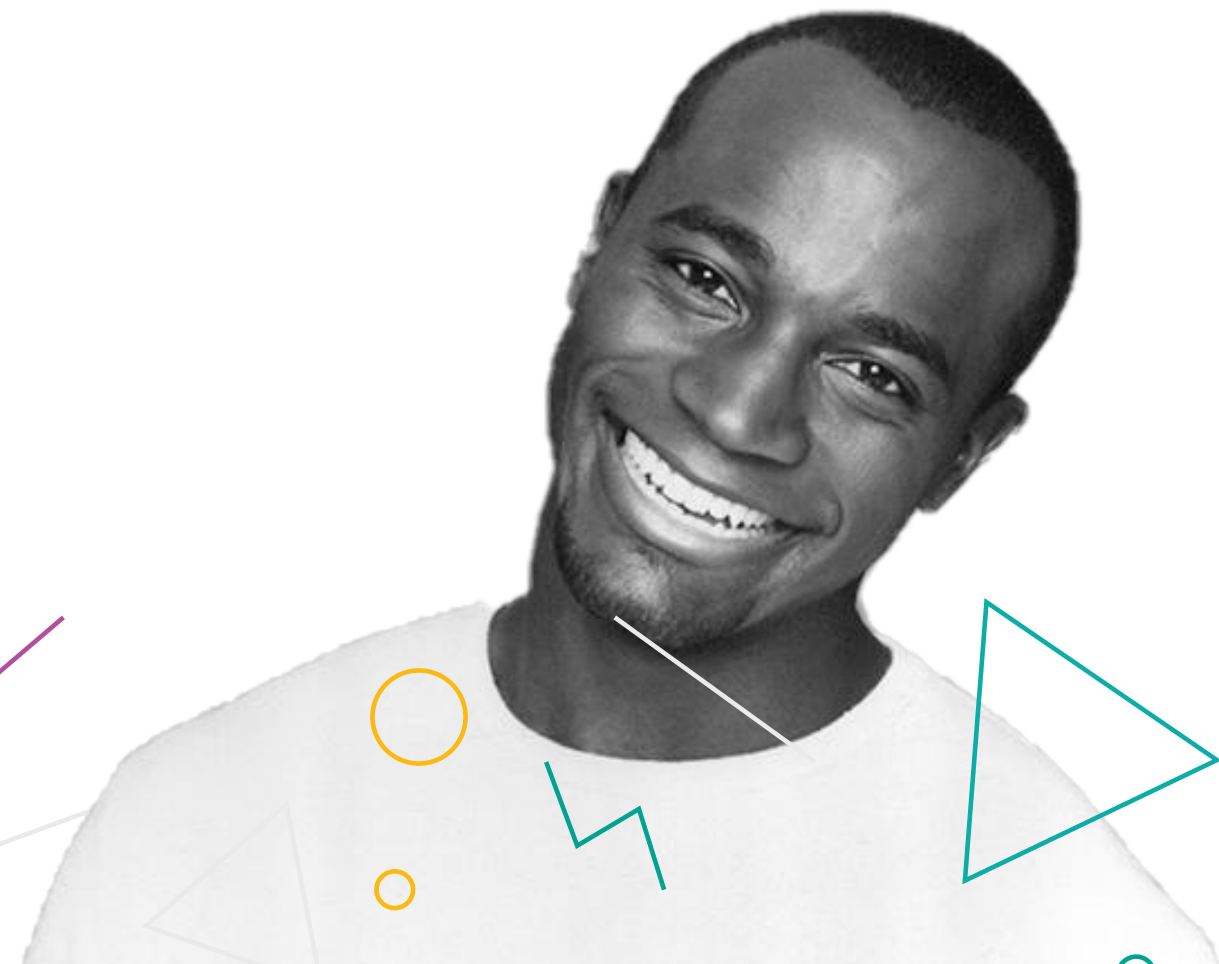
An escape from the day-to-day

HalfSmoke's atmosphere encourages you to leave your grown-up problems behind, calling upon childhood memories that take you back to simpler, more carefree times when board games, trapper keepers, and after-school snacks reigned king.

A place to gather

Whether you're brunching with your crew, catching up with a friend over Jenga and drinks, or chatting up regulars during happy hour, a visit to HalfSmoke is more than a meal – it's a feel-good, no-stress, social *experience*.

Personality



Laidback.

Relics from the 90s and early-2000s, an indulgent menu, and a convivial ambiance combine to create a lighthearted and lively atmosphere at HalfSmoke, where you can hit pause on your adult woes and enjoy a good meal in good company.

Irreverent.

HalfSmoke doesn't beat around the bush or pretend to be something it's not. Instead, it's unapologetically informal, bold, and unpretentious, using colloquialisms and pop culture references to convey a sense of levity and unceremoniousness.

Troop Rally-er.

HalfSmoke is the outgoing friend that always has a plan for getting the band back together. From private events and game nights to all-day brunch and nightly happy hours, HalfSmoke has a will and a way to celebrate every day of the week.

Promise

HalfSmoke bridges the gap between fun and food. Its indulgent menu, playful atmosphere, and relics from the 90s and early-2000s allow you to embrace your inner child and leave your "adult" shoes at the door. In other words: don't grow up, it's a trap.

Don't grow up it's a trap



VISUAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Logo

While casual, the H still retains a hint of seriousness with its parallel stems and perfectly crafted curves. It appears written by a high-performing student concerned with their cursive – something more appropriate for a restaurant inspired by the 1950s. Typefaces from the late 1990s and early 2000s were a little more spontaneous and of the moment. HalfSmoke's logo should reflect that energetic spirit.



Palette

We suggest developing a sophisticated color palette that is a little more adult, and uses a base of cool neutrals and navy blues accented by number of vibrant colors to showcase the era's spirit and the energy and playfulness of your restaurant.

Given that the primary color throughout your existing restaurant (aside from the light, warm wood tones and white tile) is a dark blue, we suggest making sure colors feel appropriate in both hue and amount when adding them to your interiors or branded items.

Given there is no defining color or large installation within your existing interiors, your branded elements (menus, coasters, etc.) can use a variety of strong colors without feeling out of place.



Existing



Suggested



Consistency

Maintaining a consistent look and feel across every customer touchpoint is tantamount when developing a cohesive brand. Given the glut of dining options in the region, customers are looking for an institution that has put care and craft into everything from the milkshakes to the napkins that arrive with their delivery.

If you choose to modify your branding, we'd suggest rolling out changes simultaneously across your website, physical collateral (menus, coasters, receipts, etc.) and other customer touch points.



Additional Thoughts

We suggest investing in custom illustrations of half-smokes, milkshakes, cereal, games, squirting ketchup or mustard bottles that could be used for physical stickers given away with the check, and re-purposed virtually for sticker packs on Instagram.

Incorporating black and white photography with custom illustrations of cultural icons of the late 1990s and early 2000s throughout the restaurant or a custom mural on the patio could also serve to further the brand.



Don't grow up it's a trap



THANK YOU

Next Steps

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