

SUGAR “ADDICTION”

*Potential harms, probable pleasures,
and pervasive paternalism.*

Jacques Rousseau



FREE SOCIETY INSTITUTE

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Everything gives you cancer

Age, air pollution, air travel, alcohol, allergies, artificial flavours, artificial light, asbestos, Aspirin, babies, baby bottles, baby food, bacon, bad breath, barbeques, beef, beer, being a black person, being a woman, being a man, being southern, biscuits, blowjobs, bottling up emotions, bras, bread, breast feeding, breast implants, breathing, broken hearts, bubble bath, burgers...

From A-Z: how the Daily Mail gives you cancer.



HYPE VERSUS HYPOTHESES

"The truth is rarely pure and never simple".

Oscar Wilde



A responsible epistemic approach

- Objective regarding data.
- Willing to be wrong.
- Engages with arguments, not character.



Confounders

We're deeply invested in certain outcomes – the emotional dog and its rational tail (Haidt). Manifests in:

- Confirmation bias
- Motivated reasoning
- Filter bubbles and echo chambers



Science vs. Pseudoscience



sugar scale

We rounded up some of SA's most popular sauces and compared their sugar content to a can of Coke's. Now we're not saying you'll be consuming a bottle of sauce like you would a can of Coke, but it's still important to note how much sugar is in our food

GRAMS

50

45

40

35

30

25

20

15

10

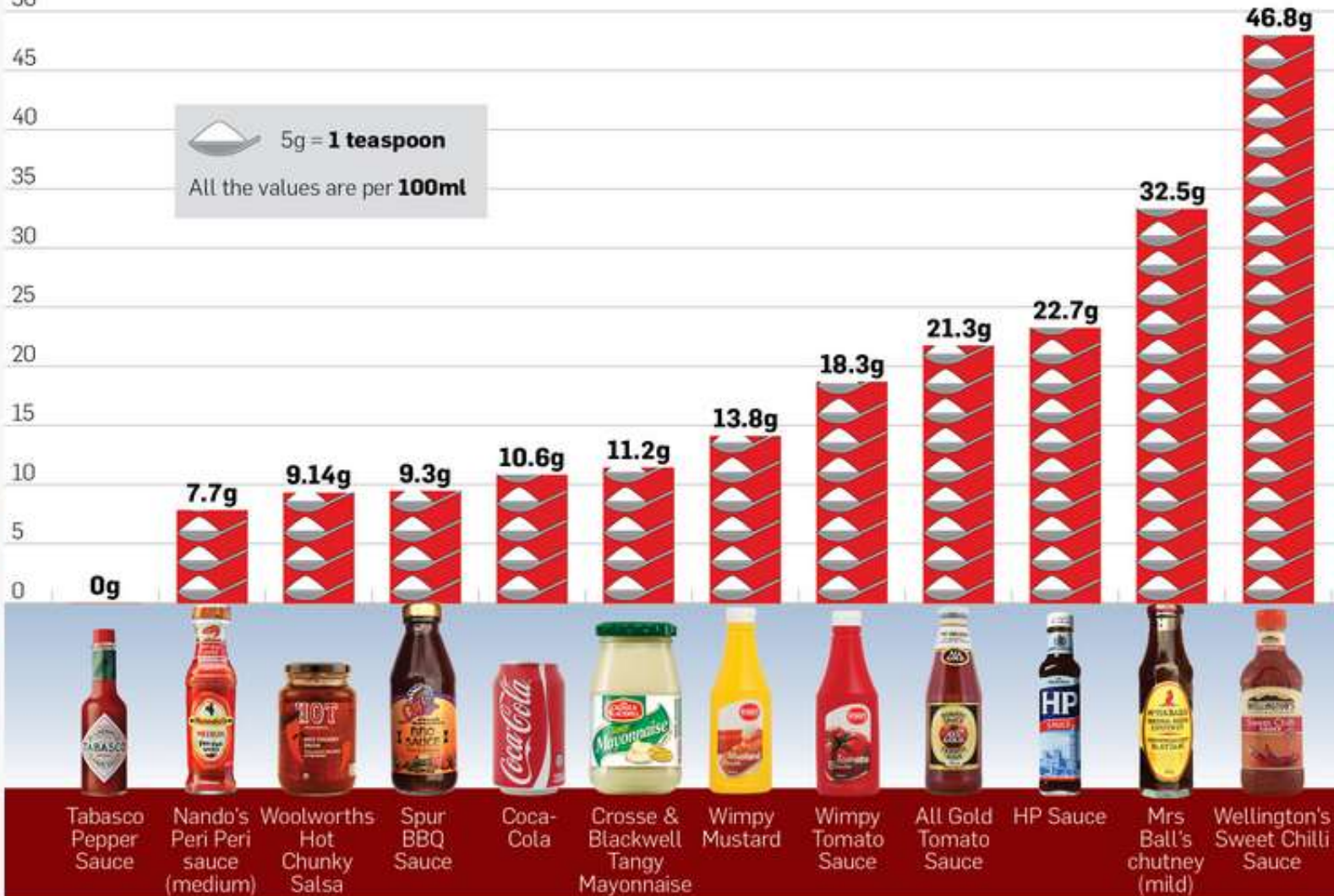
5

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5g = 1 teaspoon

All the values are per 100ml



Research: Grethe Koen

THEUNS KRUGER, Graphics24



Thinking is also healthy

Food isn't moral. It's not immoral, either.
It's morally neutral.

It's certainly not trying to kill you...



But isn't sugar "addictive"?

Can be answered "yes" or "no" –
depending on what you mean.

Food itself (rather than *eating*) an
unlikely candidate for addiction.

And, even typical "addiction"
oversimplified.



Brain-disease model of addiction

- Addiction has fundamental elements of voluntary behaviour.
- Predictable responses in the brain don't mean hijacking.
- Everything changes the brain – and we can tweak responses.



Operation "Golden Flow"



Causing harm, with good intentions

No question that NCDs & obesity non-ideal – but is it necessary to address them through fearmongering & infantilization?

At some point, can we become well-trained enough to *welcome* paternalism?



Bullying, taxing and nudging

- When “science” is infused with scaremongering, state has all the motivation it needs for paternalism.
- Nudging often justified – but needs to be data-driven.
- “Fat tax” in Denmark ineffective (or worse), Bloomberg’s soda tax simply created perverse incentives.



Profits & predatory producers

- Why think that manufacturers need to be noble?
- They make the food that we ask them to.
- Panic, tax, etc. absolve us of responsibility and blame them for doing a good job.



Science, method & credibility

Real breakthroughs happen in journals,
not cookbooks.

And you hear about them on the news,
not on the Dr Oz show.



Paternalism & expectations of agency

Easier to make choices when you believe that there's a choice to make, rather than a forced one.

Food as "addictive" unhelpful, in implying a passive process, ignoring behavioural component.



Dogma and/or denialism no help

Cherry-picking data by presenting science as settled also harmful.

And, producers need to be socially responsible too – but not at the expense of treating all consumers like children, because...



that's a very effective way of turning
them **into** children.

Thank you.

