

MEDIA TSUNAMI BUSTS CHEESE FRAUD

Bad behavior meets issue consumers care about

Early on February 16, 2016, *Bloomberg Business* released its first investigative report on adulteration in the U.S. Italian cheese business. Over the 72 hours that followed, the media world lit up with hundreds of shared stories in business and consumer channels on excessive use of cellulose fillers (a.k.a. wood pulp) and subsequent mislabeling of grated Parmesan products.

From NBC's *TODAY* show and *Nightly News* to *CBS This Morning*, *FORTUNE*, *TIME*, and *BuzzFeed*, a literal global expansion of the story dropped a side arm smash followed by an upper cut blow to fraud conditions operating behind a curtain of secrecy for decades in the Italian cheese business.

The news blanket was so heavy Stephen Colbert ran a segment on *The Late Show* bringing some feigned comedy to the 'outrage' over duping consumers about cheese represented as real Parmesan when it's anything but that.



Continued on page 2.



"Some grated Parmesan suppliers have been mislabeling products by filling them with too much cellulose, a common anti-clumping agent made from wood pulp, or using cheaper cheddar, instead of real Romano."

- Bloomberg, 2/16/16

Full disclosure: our firm – Emergent – was behind the development and movement of this news on behalf of our client Schuman Cheese (formerly Arthur Schuman Inc.), one of the nation’s leading Italian cheese companies – a category captain determined to rid its industry of longstanding quality pollution and integrity violations. Emergent built a multi-faceted strategic game plan spanning media, stakeholder, influencer and consumer audiences.

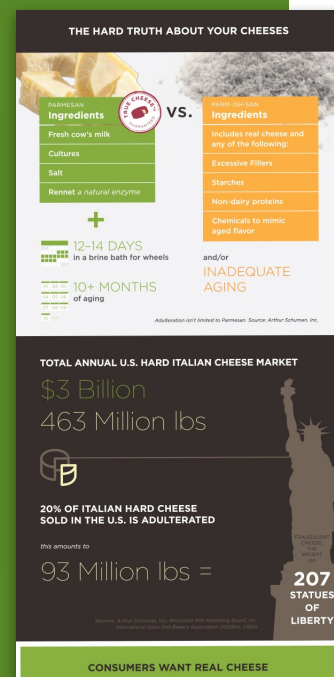
Consumer insight research Emergent completed in June of 2015 revealed consumers care about the issue deeply, demanding quality, authenticity, transparency and honesty in foods they buy – while confirming they would resoundingly reject products found to be adulterated, fake and misrepresented.

With consumer insight guidance, Emergent developed the industry’s first trust mark, True Cheese®, as the logical solution to counter fraud, providing a way to verify and validate for consumers that the grated cheese they’re buying is true, real and compliant.

Emergent cultivated a network of industry influencers and advocates who provided expertise and contributed to the storytelling assets – bringing further credibility and support to the story and True Cheese solution. True Cheese assets included video content, TrueCheese.com website, “The Hard Truth About Your

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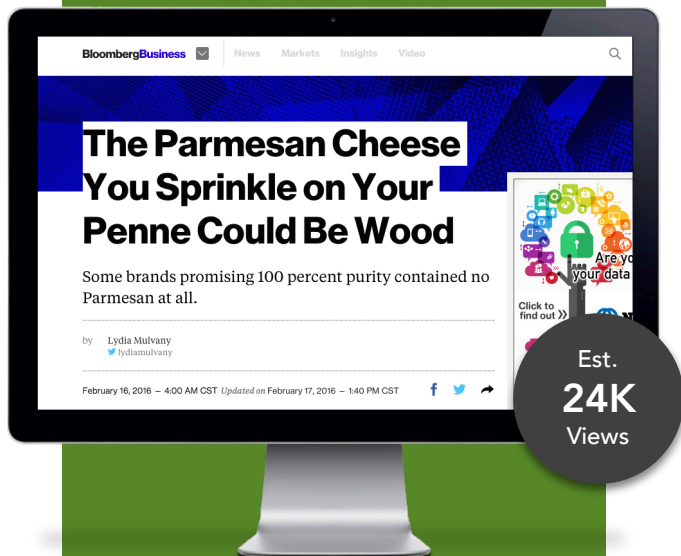
The Story of True Cheese eBook, *The Hard Truth About Your Cheeses* infographic, TrueCheese.com website



Cheeses” infographic, and “The Story of True Cheese” eBook.

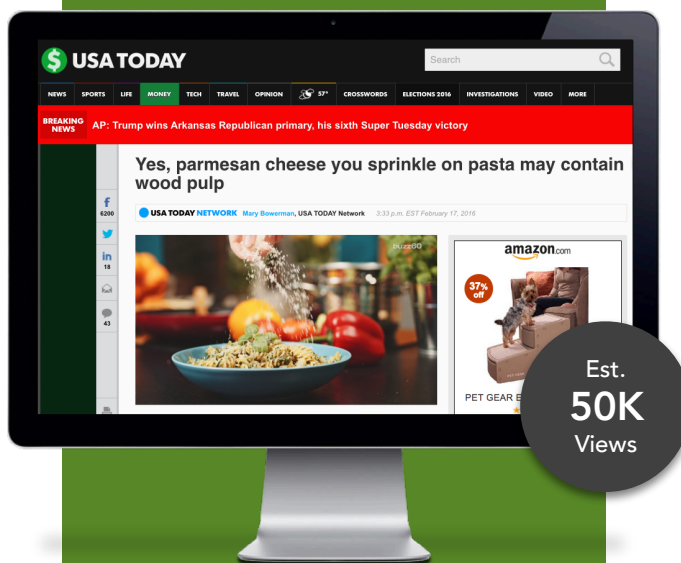
A multi-tiered media strategy was launched to bring this issue to light. Dairy-aware Wisconsin media were targeted detailing fraud impacting more than 20 percent of the Italian hard cheese category volume annually.

Continued on page 3.



Then, the story moved to industry/trade media citing more than 90 million pounds of grated and shredded cheese sold each year (at an estimated value of \$375 million) is fake. Meaning, it doesn't meet the Code of Federal Regulation standards to be legally labeled as Parmesan or Romano.

This laid the track for a progression to national consumer-facing outreach and interest at Bloomberg to investigate and report on the condition. Our team – with some of the best communications talent in the business – worked diligently to provide information, guidance, expert sources and data.



Strategic intent, consumer insight research, coalition building and gated outreach to media decision-makers informed every aspect of the project, paving the way for continued consumer education and business expansion for our client. True Cheese is now being deployed as a quality marker and differentiator in what is ostensibly a commodity product category.

Ultimately, we are strategic thinkers and storytellers in the food and beverage business. How can we help you grow your business?

For more information, contact Bob Wheatley at 312-806-6975 or bob@emergent-comm.com.



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