

Subject: The menu-strategy lesson inside Swift's "proposal"

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The useful takeaway from Jonathan Swift's **A Modest Proposal** is not the grotesque food concept itself. It is the way Swift makes an indefensible system sound like a disciplined business case.

The speaker begins with a visible social problem, claims years of study, introduces precise population estimates and cost assumptions, defines a standardized "product," and then maps the supposed upside across multiple stakeholders. He calculates supply, yield, customer use, seasonal demand, preparation, by-products, and market expansion. He even imagines institutional infrastructure and public occasions that would absorb the output.

That structure is familiar to any large-scale menu organization: identify a problem, quantify the opportunity, design the product, validate supply, model unit economics, plan execution, and list the beneficiaries. Swift's satire works because the mechanics sound orderly while the premise is morally intolerable. The numbers and operating detail do not make the proposal sound more humane; they make the ethical failure easier to overlook.

There are three practical checks worth carrying into menu innovation:

- Test the premise before optimizing the model. A proposal can reduce cost, create a new revenue stream, or use more of an available input and still be unacceptable if the underlying value exchange is exploitative or degrading.
- Separate stakeholder count from stakeholder benefit. Swift lists mothers, landlords, taverns, wealthy diners, and the broader economy as winners. But counting transactions does not prove that the people supplying the value are benefiting.
- Treat PR risk as an operating variable, not a communications issue. The imagined slaughterhouses, public feasts, and consumer advice show how

quickly a seemingly contained product decision becomes a visible statement about the company's values.

Swift's final move is especially relevant: he dismisses humane alternatives-reducing luxury, improving thrift, ending faction, and showing mercy to tenants-not because they are unintelligible, but because there is no sincere commitment to implement them. The satire therefore targets solution avoidance as much as bad economics.

For future concepts, the logical next step is to add a premise-and-consequences screen before detailed costing: What human or consumer value is being created? Who bears the downside? Does the supply model depend on vulnerability or concealment? Can the concept be explained plainly at scale without changing its meaning? If those answers fail, more precise calculations will only make the wrong idea more efficient.

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