

Category: *Premium Packaged Goods*

Methods: *Depth Interviews, Projective Techniques, Motivational Research, Survey Research, Advanced Analytics, Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Packaged Goods*

Summary

During the economic boom of the mid-1990s, sales rose for new and old products alike. Marketers were benefiting, especially in the premium packaged goods industry. Our client's brand was among the first of its kind, had been on the market for decades, and had maintained market share, yet our client wanted the brand to do more than just survive. They saw the booming economy and consumers' growing interest in premium packaged goods as an opportunity to refresh and strengthen the brand's identity. Our consumer research identified "key pillars" for the brand, which have helped propel it far beyond previous success and into new markets around the world.

Strategic Issues

Competition for market share in the premium packaged goods market is fierce; a few dominant brands have strong holds on the market in their respective categories. While our client's brand remained stable in market share, the brand was maturing and struggling to attract new users at a desirable rate. Management challenged the brand team to rejuvenate the brand and sharpen its identity in order to steepen the growth trajectory.



Research Objectives

The overarching research objective was to identify ways to increase the brand's relevance to the target consumer. The research was designed to explore and understand consumer aspirations, attitudes, behaviors, lifestyles, and motivations. Based on the results of the research, our client planned to develop a formal brand architecture, depicting its foundational elements and its key personality traits that combined to represent the overall essence of the brand.

Research Design and Methods

This research utilized a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. In the early stages, in-person depth interviews with target consumers delved into their habits and underlying motivations. We explored the ways they expressed themselves—everything from lingo to fashion. The interview guide began with the broad subjects of happiness, contentment, and lifestyle so respondents would not immediately recognize the purpose of the interviews.

As the discussions progressed, we moved into products and services that made these consumers happy, finally arriving at specific brands. During the discussions with consumers, we were able to uncover deep desires and motivations. Not only did we use direct questions to understand particular areas of interest, but we also employed projective techniques such as photo- and word-sorting and storytelling to help uncover who these consumers really aspired to be. One-on-one depth interviews were perfect for this phase of the research because the privacy allowed consumers to truly reveal their fears, hopes, and dreams in a way they typically would not in a room of strangers.

The understanding from the first phase set the stage for the quantitative phase by uncovering several hypotheses about the target market (including unexpected insights) and by helping us formulate the quantitative questionnaire. For the second stage of the research, we conducted a survey with 1,200 category consumers from across the U.S. This stage allowed us to measure and truly understand the extent to which the population, at large, agreed or disagreed with the hypotheses from the first phase. We also incorporated advanced multivariate analyses to reveal and help confirm the attitudes and product characteristics that drove consumer preferences and brand decisions. From this research, we were able to isolate the key personality and lifestyle characteristics that motivated and excited target consumers.

Results

Based on the research, we identified four key characteristics that fit well with the brand and that were both motivational and aspirational for members of its target audience. Next, the brand team developed a brand architecture incorporating those key characteristics, represented by a graphic similar to the one at right.

The company has been molding, shaping, and evolving the brand's persona using this backdrop for over 15 years. The brand architecture that resulted from this research effort has contributed to exponential growth for the brand, and has helped the company open up markets around the world. To this day, Decision Analyst still consults with this client on this brand, as well as on several of its other key brands.

