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Hartville Potato Chips

Anna Kish
agk37@uakron.edu

Daniel Brewer
dfb13@uakron.edu

Sarah Flaker
sjf78@uakron.edu

William Brashear
wb51@uakron.edu

Parker Doerrer
pd69@uakron.edu

See next page for additional authors

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Hartville Potato Chips: Research & Recommendations

College of Business,
The University of Akron
Increase Sales
+ Brand Awareness
Recommendations

01 Improve original packaging

02 Brand extension

03 Update the brand story
AGENDA

- Objectives
- Process
- Focus group
- Survey
- Recommendations
OBJECTIVES

1. Determine the target market
2. Determine the market positioning strategy
3. Develop a strategic marketing plan
Stage 1

- Toured factory
- Secondary research
- In-depth interviews

Stage 2

- Online focus group
- Online survey
TARGET MARKET

Millennials

- High buying power
- Lower price sensitivity
- Influence on future generations
- Favorable perceptions of natural ingredients
- Willing to pay more for better oils, however, still prefer taste over health
FOCUS GROUP
6 millennials participated in the online focus group.

**Gender of Participants**
- Female: 67%
- Male: 33%

**Occupations**
- Real Estate Agent
- Stay-at-home mom
- Marketing manager
- Law student
- Business Analyst
- Student

**Locations**
- Wadsworth (3)
- Cleveland (1)
- Green (1)
- Indianapolis (1)

**Children**
- 3 Children (2)
- 2 Children (2)
- 0 Children (2)
Focus Group Insights
## INSIGHTS

### Original Packaging Modifications
- “Kettle Cooked” clear and obvious
- Emphasize “Only 3 Ingredients”
- Chip image important to target market
- Modifications to back of bag

### Brand Extension Chips
- Sunflower chips well-received
- Black bag = high quality
- Easier to read
- More eye-catching design
# More Insights

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Brand Story</th>
<th>New Brand Story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not clear to why they make chips</td>
<td>Tested 2 versions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lacks personal aspect</td>
<td>Positive reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not influence purchasing decision</td>
<td>Effectively communicates your identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would influence purchasing decision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SURVEY
• Quantitative data
• Tested logo for original and brand extension
• Tested attributes of packaging
• Tested brand story
• Demographic, lifestyle, and behavioral questions
• 175 responses
**SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Parental Status**
- A parent with children (under 18) still living with me: 27%
- A parent but no children (under 18) live with me: 34%
- Not a parent: 39%

**Marital Status**
- Married: 54%
- Single: 37%
- Living with significant other/partner: 6%
- Widowed: 3%

**Age of Participants**
- 18-27: 36%
- 28-43: 31%
- 44-59: 26%
RECOMMENDATION #1: IMPROVE ORIGINAL PACKAGING
FOCUS GROUP: ORIGINAL PACKAGING QUOTES

“I'm so used to looking for those brightly colored packages.”
-Male, 27

“It wouldn’t really stand out to me or draw my attention for any reason.”
-Female, 40

“Yeah, definitely could be improved, but not terrible.”
-Male, 34
Use simpler fonts on the packaging

The best thing for marketers and packaging suppliers is to think simply (Mintel).
Simple design had 84% agree easy or somewhat easy to read compared to original bag with 38%.

Is the bag easy to read?

- **EASY TO READ**: 62% (Original Bag), 21% (Simpler Bag)
- **SOMETHAT EASY TO READ**: 22% (Original Bag), 17% (Simpler Bag)
- **NEUTRAL**: 25% (Original Bag), 7% (Simpler Bag)
- **SOMETHAT HARD TO READ**: 27% (Original Bag), 5% (Simpler Bag)
- **HARD TO READ**: 10% (Original Bag), 4% (Simpler Bag)
77% agreed they would purchase the mock-up over the original.
Make “Kettle Cooked” Clear

“Clear and simple communication will be essential to connect with fatigued customers” (Lettenberger, Mintel).
54% PREFER KETTLE COOKED CHIPS
“Kettle Cooked” is important to see on packaging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important Characteristics</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gluten Free</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Kettle Cooked&quot; made clear</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturally Made</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locally Made</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Importance Scale**

- **Very Unimportant**: 1
- **Somewhat Unimportant**: 2
- **Neutral**: 3
- **Somewhat Important**: 4
- **Very Important**: 5
78% said it was hard to tell the chips are kettle cooked.
I feel like it stands out to the point where you know it’s kettle cooked, not just basic potato chips.

-Female, 28

If I'm specifically looking to buy kettle cooked chips, then I would notice that a lot more.

-Female, 40
Add an image of the potato chip on the packaging

Packaging that displays the product significantly increases a customer’s purchasing intent (Arendar, 2022).
"I like to know what I’m getting into, so I like to know what the chips look like.
-Female, 28"

"I like to see a picture because there can kind of be some variety with kettle cooked chips.
-Female, 40"

"I’m gonna look, and I’m gonna see the yellow, and think okay those are potato chips.
-Male, 27"
COMPETITORS

Cape Cod
Kettle Cooked Potato Chips

Gold'n Krisp
Potato Chips
55% said image of chip would increase desire to purchase chips.

Seeing the image of the potato chips would increase my desire to purchase the chips

- **Strongly Agree**: 20%
- **Somewhat Agree**: 35%
- **Neither Agree nor Disagree**: 11%
- **Somewhat Disagree**: 19%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 14%
Add “Only 3 Ingredients” onto the packaging

Ingredient Transparency (Roberts, 2023)
69% agreed “Only 3 Ingredients” would increase desire to purchase the chips.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreement Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY AGREE</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMewhat AGREE</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOMewhat DISAGREE</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
66% of millennials agreed

Seeing "Only 3 Ingredients" would increase my desire to purchase these chips.
86% of parents living with children agreed, most were millennials.
Emphasizing local origins with an Ohio figure

Produced at PAL’s Snack Foods, LLC in Akron, OH 44311

Gluten Free

Making great kettle cooked potato chips runs deep in our family. In 1970, Ted Purchased his first potato chip company in Kenmore, OH, making multiple brands that were loved throughout the area. One of those brands was Hartville Potato Chips. Selling the business in 1991, Ted traveled the world helping others perfect the kettle cooked potato chip.

Now, with the help of his cousins, the family is back at it! We’re making a great tasting kettle cooked potato chip that will bring back memories of the way chips used to be made. After more than two decades of being away from the business, we hope you enjoy our new Hartville potato chip!
Opportunity to leverage local market through flavors inspired by the region (Roberts, 2023).
78% agreed they preferred the Ohio mock-up bag over the original.

When observing the graphics on the back of the bag, I prefer the bag on the bottom emphasizing local origins.
“Made Fresh Daily” was not seen as a necessary feature on the bag
Focus group overwhelmingly agreed the phrase was not necessary.

42% participants disagreed
41% participants agreed

The 'made fresh daily' to me doesn’t do anything because I’m not eating them fresh, like they’re sitting for at least a little while.
-Male 27

42% participants disagreed
41% participants agreed
TREAT YOURSELF WITH
HARTVILLE
POTATO CHIPS
ONLY 3 INGREDIENTS
KETTLE COOKED

GLUTEN FREE

NET WEIGHT 7 OZ. (198.4 GRAMS)
RECOMMENDATION #2:
BRAND EXTENSION
USING
SUNFLOWER OIL
80% agreed that they perceived the sunflower oil bag as high quality.
It looks a little bit higher quality.

- Female, 40

Yeah, these would definitely make me feel less guilty as a mom handing this to my children.

- Female, 45

It screams elegance, so if I'm like on a health kick, I feel like I'm going to feel better about this bag.

- Female, 28
Millennials are likely to pay more for “premium quality” (Roberts, 2023)
50% find this logo attractive
55% of respondents and 60% of millennials prefer the sunflower bag over the original bag.
46% prefer sunflower oil over soybean. Most millennials have no preference.
SURVEY INSIGHTS

Gen X vs Millennials

STRONGLY AGREE

SOMewhat AGREE

NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE

SOMewhat DISAGREE

STRONGLY DISAGREE

Gen X (44-59): 31
Millennials (28-43): 35
59% of parents consider the oils used

When buying potato chips, the oil used influences my decision to purchase them.

- **Strongly Agree**: 22%
- **Somewhat Agree**: 37%
- **Neither Disagree or Agree**: 29%
- **Somewhat Disagree**: 29%
- **Strongly Disagree**: 10%
TREAT YOURSELF WITH
HARTVILLE
POTATO CHIPS
ONLY 3 INGREDIENTS
Kettle Cooked in Sunflower Oil
Gluten Free
RECOMMENDATION #3: IMPROVE BRAND STORY
70% experienced a positive response to the updated brand story.
Respondents prefer a mix of themes when learning more about a brand.

When learning more about a brand's story, would you prefer to read about:

- **A mix of all**: 58%
- **Daily Process**: 17%
- **Customer Impact**: 11%
- **Brand Origins**: 14%
**Current Brand Story:**

- Not clear why company is in the business
- Does not talk about community or consumer

**Story Rewrite:**

- Process of making three ingredient, locally sourced potato chips
- Evolution and origins
- Impact and customer-oriented philosophy
In 1970, our family embarked on a journey into the world of kettle-cooked potato chips when Ted purchased his first chip company in Kenmore, OH. Crafting beloved brands like Hartville Potato Chips, known for their traditional flavors and locally sourced ingredients, quickly became our legacy. Rooted in a commitment to three simple, locally sourced elements—potatoes, oil, and salt—our brand evolved over the years, each chip embodying authenticity and craftsmanship, meticulously selected from nearby farms.

Fast forward to today, after over two decades away from the business, our family reunites to resurrect Hartville Potato Chips with you, our valued customer, in mind. Our revival isn't just about making chips; it's about reconnecting with our roots and reigniting the flames of tradition to bring you the best possible snack experience. With Ted's cousins' unwavering support, we're poised to continue our legacy, driven by a customer-oriented philosophy. Each crunchy bite isn't just a snack; it's a piece of our timeless tradition, crafted with care to evoke joy and nostalgia in every moment you share with us.
RECAP

Original packaging modifications
- Simpler fonts
- “Kettle Cooked”
- Image of potato chips
- “Only 3 Ingredients”
- Emphasizing local origins
- Remove ‘Made Fresh Daily’

Create high-quality black packaging

Updated brand story on back of bag
Thank you!

Paul Laguardia,
CEO

Dr. Matthew Wyszynski,
Senior Associate Dean,
Williams Honor College

Dr. Deborah Owens,
Department of Marketing Chair
Associate Professor

Alyssa Alexsonshk,
Marketing Student

Tom Waltermire,
Chairman of the Board at V2X


References
References


