

Designers Anonymous[™]
The creative studio behind...



HELPING A GOURMET POPCORN BRAND **POP OFF THE SHELF**

CATEGORY: 1. BRAND IDENTITY

SUB-CATEGORY: 1.2 DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION COSTS UNDER €100,000

CLIENT: JOE & SEPH'S POPCORN

DESIGN STUDIO: DESIGNERS ANONYMOUS

DATE: JUNE 2014

For publication

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Words 281

Joseph Sopher had a kernel of an idea. He wanted to develop a completely new market for popcorn. With his family he set about creating a gourmet popcorn brand and growing the business without external funding. This seemingly unimpressive food was not associated with quality in the UK. Joseph needed to develop a strong brand and hard-working packaging to establish it as a new category. It needed to compete as a gourmet natural snack for grown-ups and capture the attention of the premium retailers. Design would be critical.

The design team created 'Joe & Seph's: Gourmet popcorn chef and connoisseur' with a flamboyant logo and effusive tone of voice. The clever design supported the brand's launch with solutions for merchandising, and supported its growth with designs to accommodate new flavours. Innovative packaging was created to maximise unlikely opportunities in gifting and corporate catering.

The design had impact. The business grew faster than the team could have hoped for. While the target had been to gain listings by **five** premium retailers by the end of year two, in fact it was stocked by **twelve**: Harrods, Selfridges, Wholefoods, Harvey Nichols, Liberty, Heal's, Debenhams, Claridges, Ambassador Theatre Group, Spirit Pubs, Baxter Storey Contract Caterers and the Picturehouse Cinema Group. And while the aim had been to secure orders from **200** independent and smaller UK retailers by the end of year three, in fact they achieved orders from **750**. Additionally, the brand was exported to 15 countries – which wasn't even in the five year plan.

The company now employs 23 staff in the UK. It has sold over 1,800,000 packs of popcorn. With a design spend of £15,000, the return on investment is, well... eye-popping.

**1,800,000
packs sold
so far**

**Exported
to 15
countries**

“We are now the most established and well-known gourmet popcorn brand in the UK, and one of the most well-known British popcorn brands in the world. We couldn't have done it without the right design.”

Joseph Sopher Joe & Seph's founder



Right: Joseph and wife Jackie launching the brand in China, May 2014.

3. PROJECT OVERVIEW

Words 634

Outline of project brief

The business was founded with the aim of developing a completely new market for popcorn in the UK.

The business objectives were:



To be stocked by five UK premium retailers by the end of year 2.



To be stocked by 200 independent UK stores by end of year 3.

The start-up would redefine popcorn as a product, exploiting opportunities in the snack, gift and hospitality markets.

The design objectives were:



To create a gourmet product for grown-ups, with emphasis on quality ingredients and natural flavours.



To create a label design to accommodate multiple flavours.



To create packaging formats and structures for new markets and contexts.

Description

Joseph Sopher created Joe & Seph's after travelling to the US on business and bringing home popcorn as gifts for friends and family. Every time he went back to the US, he'd bring back more and more until one day he vowed to create a popcorn business when he retired and produce popcorn that tasted better than he tried over there.

Joseph retired and spent a couple of years relaxing before starting to play around in the kitchen creating different recipes. After several years and lots of burnt saucepans he managed to create a unique popcorn that enabled the layering of flavours onto each piece of popcorn, using all natural ingredients, so that you taste the popcorn flavours in sequence. The best example of this is the Caramel, Pepper & Chilli popcorn that has been nicknamed Willy Wonka for the way that it changes flavours in your mouth.

Along with his wife Jackie and son Adam he then set out to shake up the UK snacks market through innovation, creativity and putting the fun back into eating.

“We started from our own kitchen at home and from this point on we've gone from strength to strength moving into our own larger production site and winning customers one by one.”

Below: Joseph and wife Jackie, with son Adam.



Image copyright Jeremy Selwyn

Overview of market

Before the arrival of Joe & Seph's, popcorn in the UK was a sorry affair. This small market was dominated by a large packaged brand and cinema popcorn – both lacking in taste, quality and innovation.

Mintel published a report which recognised that the packaged UK popcorn market had a value of only £50m of retail sales (excluding popcorn sales made through the food-service, business and cinema sectors). In comparison, the UK crisps and nuts market had seen a growth of 24% since 2005 and had estimated sales of £2.6 billion in 2010. 25% of the crisps and nuts sales were “indulgents”, looking for premium products with superior taste, resulting in an “indulgence market” of £650m. And there was a rising demand for at-home snacks during the recession.

Joseph drew several conclusions from this report. He recognised the potential of popcorn as a snack, and he saw that with such a large market for indulgence, there was potential for a premium popcorn brand. Finally, with the current economic climate, there was a gap for affordable indulgence. Joseph set out to change people's mind-sets with a popcorn brand people could enjoy at home, with a sandwich at lunch, with a drink in a pub or at the cinema.

Project launch date

The brand launched in October 2010.

Size of design budget

The initial budget for the branding and packaging including a flyer and a four page ecommerce website and developments through year one was £15,000.

4. OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

Words 499



The design team worked closely with the start-up to develop all aspects of the brand identity, including the name, logo, packaging, trade show stand and website. The designers became guardians of the brand developing the website and new packaging as the business grew.

Popcorn for grown-ups.

The first consideration was the name. It could have launched as 'Joseph's Popcorn' but the creative team wanted the name to work harder. They created two fictional characters, Joe & Seph, who represent chef and connoisseur. With a clever inversion of the same graphic icon, a chef hat and a top hat were created to add character to the word marque. The highly decorative and interesting name and logo would give the brand a decadent style to compete as a premium product on the shelves of retailers such as Selfridges, Harrods and Heals.

Below: Joe&Seph's hats reference the split personality of Joseph Sopher as chef and connoisseur.



Taste. Done tastefully.

The design team knew they needed to develop a gourmet brand, and took inspiration from other categories such as wine and chocolate. Each flavour is described theatrically on the front of the pack, and in the 'tasting notes' section on the website. This brings to life the quality of the sometimes unusual, all-natural ingredients which aren't obvious on sight of the product.



Above: Joe&Seph's front of pack tasting notes.

Right: Joe&Seph's flavour journey is described on the back of the pack.



Lots of flavours but not lots of labour.

The flamboyant logo meant that the rest of the label could be kept quite simple. Expensive ingredient illustrations to differentiate the flavours were not used. Instead, a system of colour combinations was developed for use on the labels.

Below: Colour coding solutions for sweet, savoury and alcohol ranges.



Proud to be British. Even prouder to export British.

Below: Language used in promoting the new cocktail range in product brochures.

The tone of voice is eccentrically British. Along with the Dickensian top hat and prominent 'Made in England' message on the front of the packs, it helps to position the brand as a quality, artisan product and separates it from the more familiar American associations with popcorn. Joe & Seph's Britishness has maximised appeal internationally.

Fancy a tippie!

OUR **SPIRIT** BASED FLAVOURS
HAVE BEEN **STIRRING UP INTEREST**

Packing a punch in new markets

Pack structures were used to exploit new markets in a number of ways.

Premium pouches

Transparent pouches were selected to let customers see the product, and show that there are not broken pieces or unpopped kernels at the bottom. This type of pack made the product look like something different, new and premium, with more in common with fresh food packaging (pastas and sauces) than the foil, cellophane or boxes used for crisps and snacks.

Glamorous glass

For larger sizes, the design team and client used glass biscotti jars as packaging. This added preciousness and created an interesting gift object. The main benefit however was in merchandising the product, initially at the all important trade shows, and later providing retailers with eye-catching in-store merchandising opportunities.

Corporate catering

The use of Kilner jars and biscotti jars provided opportunities for corporate event catering in large quantities, and bespoke corporate gifting.

Seasonal shapes

It didn't stop there. Packaging was to open up even more markets. Special seasonal header cards were created for Valentines Day, Christmas and Easter, which also attracted press coverage.



Above: Glass jars used to create gift products.

Below: Adaptable label design allows for personalisation to maximise corporate markets.



Right: Seasonal header cards maximise gift opportunities.

5. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The new brand quickly captured the attention of retailers large and small and distribution and sales grew faster than the founders could have hoped for.

Increases in market distribution

In its bid to find a market for gourmet popcorn, the first hurdle was to persuade the high-end retailers to take a fresh look at popcorn. The distinctive branding helped the product to be taken seriously as a gourmet snack for grown-ups. Pick-up was rapid. Joe & Seph's was accepted as a new and exciting indulgent snack, and merchandised appropriately. Who would have thought that Heals would stock popcorn as a stylish gift?

Launching in October 2010 at BBC Masterchef Food Show, the target had been to gain listings by **five** premium retailers by the end of year two, in fact it was stocked by **twelve**: Harrods, Selfridges, Wholefoods, Harvey Nichols, Liberty, Heal's, Debenhams, Claridges, Ambassador Theatre Group, Spirit Pubs, Baxter Storey Contract Caterers and the Picturehouse Cinema Group.

Yr 1

- October - Launch at BBC Masterchef Food Show in Kensington Olympia
- Launch in Selfridges
- Launch in Harrods

Yr 2

- Launch in Wholefoods
- Launch in Harvey Nichols
- Launch in Debenhams
- Launch in Claridges
- Launch in Heal's
- Launch in Liberty
- Launch in 30 stores in Ireland
- Launch in 50 stores in France

Yr 3

- Launch on QVC
- Launch in Waitrose
- Launch in 15 stores in Hong Kong
- Launch on Ocado
- Launch in Top Shop
- Launch in 20 stores in Australia

Yr 4 (So far)

- February 2014 - Launch in 20 stores in Japan
- March 2014 - Launch on British Airways
- April 2014 - Launch in 50 stores in China
- So far Christmas orders still to be made

KARSTADT
Dresden · Prager Straße

**WHOLE
FOODS**

SELFRIDGES 200

Harrods

HARVEY NICHOLS

Spirit

COMPASS
GROUP

El Corte Inglés

ocado

BRITISH AIRWAYS

GLOBUS
SAVOIR VIVRE

starwood
Hotels and
Resorts

avc

**Picture
house**

**LA GRANDE
EPICERIE PARIS**

Within three years, the target had been to secure orders from 200 independent and smaller UK retailers. In fact they achieved orders from 750. Exceeding all expectations, the business accelerated its plans to grow internationally. It is now exported to 15 countries.

Increase in sales

Year two saw growth of 319% on year one, and year three saw growth of 254% on year two. The forecast is for turnover to grow 251% in year 4.

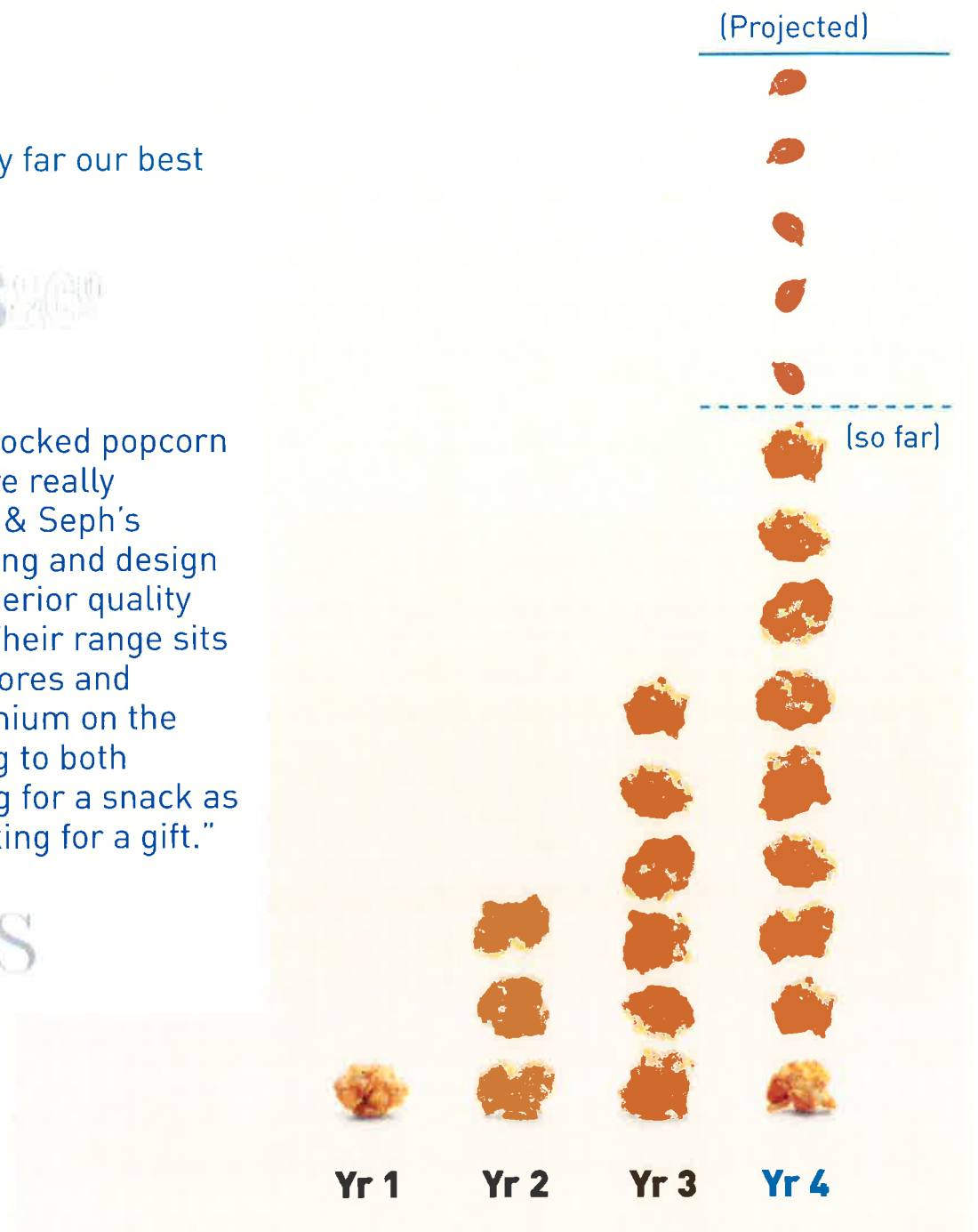
TURNOVER

“Joe & Seph’s is by far our best selling popcorn.”

SELFRIDGES

“We have never stocked popcorn before but we were really impressed by Joe & Seph’s packaging, branding and design as well as the superior quality of their product. Their range sits perfectly in our stores and clearly looks premium on the shelves, appealing to both customers looking for a snack as well as those looking for a gift.”

HEAL’S



Creation of jobs

As the turnover grew, so did the team. Starting out as a team of three, with the product being cooked and packed from the family kitchen, Joe & Seph's now rents kitchens and packing facilities, and employs 23 people in full-time roles, all in the UK.

PR and social media

Joe & Seph's used a mixture of free PR, social media (now at 5,254 twitter followers) and marketing techniques to build the brand into what it is today. The visual assets and branding maximised its impact on these channels. The brand achieved coverage in style-led publications including *Elle Decoration*, *Stylist*, *The Lady*, *Wallpaper*, and *House and Garden*.



STYLIST

Above (left and right): Joe & Seph's featured in the style pages of *Stylist* and *The Lady* magazines.

Below: Joe & Seph's featured in style-led publication *Elle Decoration*.

ELLE DECORATION






TOP OF THE POPS

We can't get enough of Joe & Seph's gourmet popcorn, which comes in intriguing flavours such as Goat's Cheese & Black Pepper and Strawberry Cheesecake. These kilner jars make perfect presents – or eat the contents and then keep the jar for your kitchen! 500ml jar, £9.99; 1 litre jar, £16.99 (joeandsephs.co.uk).

6. OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Joe & Seph's is a start-up family business with no external investment. Sales and marketing focused almost exclusively on trade shows and face to face meetings for trade, and PR and social media for consumers. As part of the project, the design team created brand-led assets for these activities. Style-led press coverage was successful only because of the design.

-  No external investment.
-  No advertising.
-  Minimal spend on press relations.

7. RESEARCH RESOURCES

All sales data supplied by Joe & Seph's. Market report from Mintel.



“Hats off to our design team!”

