

jkr

Billington's Redesign

Category
4.0 Packaging

Sub Category
4.1 Branded – Food

Client
The Silver Spoon Company

Design Consultancy
jkr

Date
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For publication



The Billington's range pre-redesign

Executive summary

Design as a defensive tactic

Anonymous on shelf and with a low profile among consumers, Billington's unrefined brown sugar was simultaneously being undercut by private label and threatened by established white sugar brands newly extended into the sector. Delists loomed large.

Billington's took the brave decision to invest in design. With eye-catching new packaging, the brand dramatically increased its awareness, reversed its declining rate of sale and as a consequence held its sales in a declining market sector.

If the white sugar competitors had replicated their shares of that sector in speciality brown, Billington's value share could have potentially declined by 45%. In practice, despite operating at a price disadvantage, it lost just 0.1% share to the new competition.

Conversely, the new design opened up fresh opportunities with new listings gained in major retailers at home and overseas.

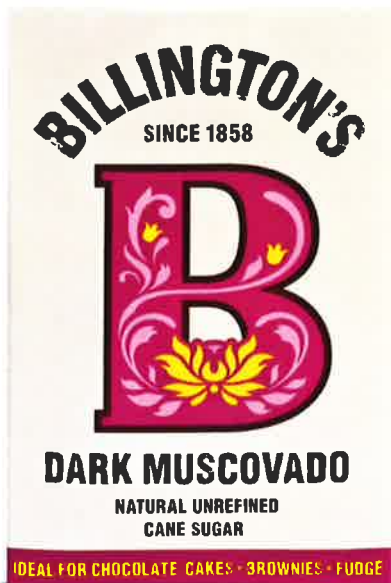
A conservative estimate of the value generated by the redesign provides a return on investment of £24 for every £1 spent on design fees.

Word count: 197

Headlines

- Awareness up from 26% to 55%
- Average Weight of Purchase up 9%
- RoS decline turned positive
- Won Waitrose, held Tesco, Asda and Sainsbury's
- ROI £24 for every £1 invested

The new design



Project overview

Outline of brief

jkr were tasked with bringing Billington's to life on shelf. Their plain brown box was anonymous within a fixture that lacked emotional excitement – a stark contrast to the joy that consumers gain from successfully baking cakes with the products.

Design objectives

Attract, inspire, premiumise

Ultimately, to improve stand out, maintain listings and loyalty by positioning Billington's as the first choice for Accomplished Bakers.

Project launch date:

The new design began to appear on shelf in April 2012 and replaced the old design as stocks ran out by end December 2012.

Description

Billington's has pioneered the development of the brown speciality baking sugar category in the UK. Since its launch in the 1970's, Billington's has offered a range of different styles of natural, unrefined cane sugar, from plantations in Mauritius. The brand was acquired by The Silver Spoon Co. in 2008 to complement their mainstream white sugar brand.

Overview of market

Sugar isn't such a sweet place for brands and retailers. When the design was introduced the category was declining by 3.5% pa due to social change, health concerns and RSP inflation.

Historically, sugar is viewed as a commodity by major grocers. The principle producers of sugar - Tate & Lyle, Napier Brown/Whitworths and Silver Spoon must compete on price to secure private-label white sugar supply contracts and secure shelf space for their own brands within the agreement. As a result, distribution for sugar brands is gained or lost in discrete blocks, store chain by store chain, with very little overlap.

Given the specialist nature of Billington's, the marketing team wanted to try to break out of this paradigm, but to do so would require them to demonstrate consumer loyalty. A strategy threatened by two major competitors entering the brown baking sugar segment. With ranges largely undifferentiated from Billington's, the category was set to become further, not less commoditised.

The team determined that only a better design could deliver them a catalyst for growth, by enhancing stand out and brand appeal.

Word count: 339

Design solution

The design was inspired by the heritage and provenance of Billington's. It draws upon the juxtaposition of the refined nature of William Billington and the raw nature of his unrefined Mauritian sugar.

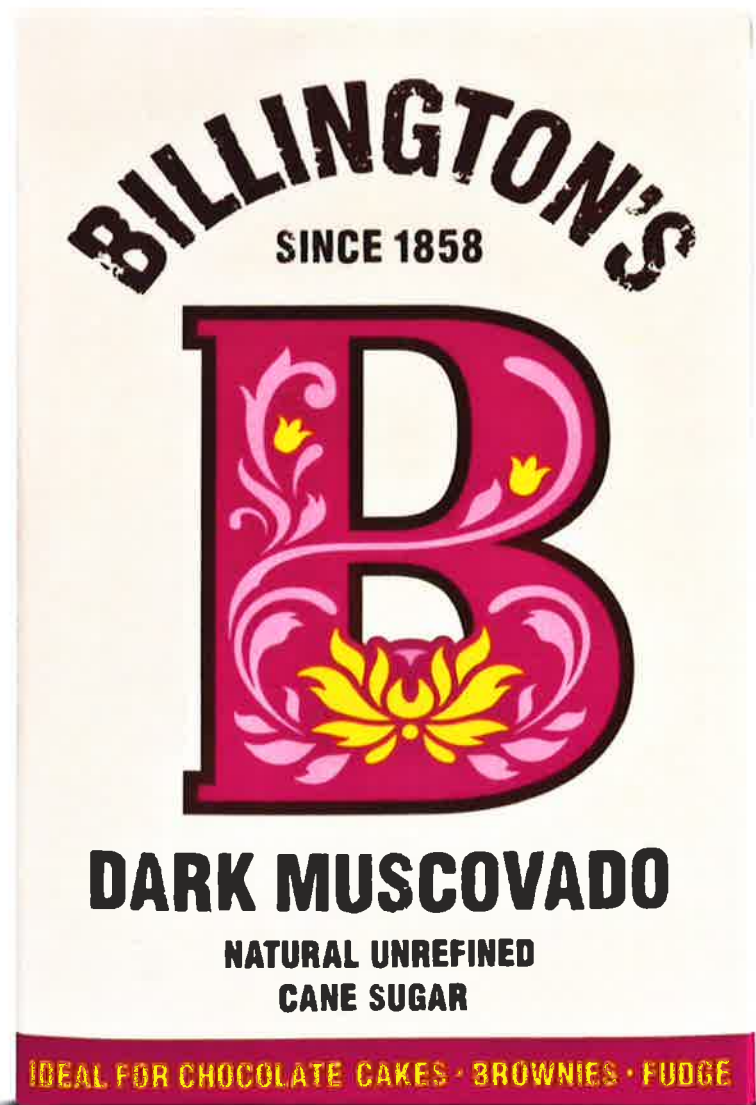
A formal letter 'B' embellished with decorative elements evokes the character and personality of his sugar while expressing something exuberant about Mauritius – from exotic tropical birds, to yellow Mauritian flowers.

The unrefined character is represented by the raw aesthetic of the Billington's typeface.

To aid navigation, colour coding creates a simple architecture for the brand's portfolio of products.

Finally, baking suggestions propose different uses to educate and encourage trial.

Word count: 101



The newly designed Billington's pack incorporating the Mauritian origins of the sugar

An overview of the range demonstrating how bright colours aid shopper navigation.




The back of pack provided a perfect canvas to celebrate and share the Billington's story.

**THE WORLDS FINEST
DARK MOLASSES SUGAR.**

OUR UNREFINED NATURAL SUGAR HAS BEEN VERY CAREFULLY PRODUCED TO LOCK IN, RATHER THAN REFINE OUT, THE NATURAL MOLASSES OF THE SUGAR CANE. IT IS THIS DIFFERENCE WHICH GIVES BILLINGTON'S SUGAR ITS UNIQUE RICHNESS, DEPTH OF FLAVOUR AND NATURAL COLOUR.


A BEAUTIFULLY RICH DARK SUGAR SUPERB IN RICH CHRISTMAS CAKES AND PUDDINGS, AS WELL AS DARK CHOCOLATE CAKES AND STICKY BBQ SAUCE



**THE WORLDS FINEST
LIGHT MUSCOVADO BROWN SUGAR.**

OUR UNREFINED NATURAL SUGAR HAS BEEN VERY CAREFULLY PRODUCED TO LOCK IN, RATHER THAN REFINE OUT, THE NATURAL MOLASSES OF THE SUGAR CANE. IT IS THIS DIFFERENCE WHICH GIVES BILLINGTON'S SUGAR ITS UNIQUE RICHNESS, DEPTH OF FLAVOUR AND NATURAL COLOUR.


A GREAT SUGAR TO USE IN SOFT CHEWY COOKIES AS WELL AS RICH CHOCOLATE CAKES AND YUMMY PUDDINGS



**THE WORLDS FINEST
DARK MUSCOVADO BROWN SUGAR.**

OUR UNREFINED NATURAL SUGAR HAS BEEN VERY CAREFULLY PRODUCED TO LOCK IN, RATHER THAN REFINE OUT, THE NATURAL MOLASSES OF THE SUGAR CANE. IT IS THIS DIFFERENCE WHICH GIVES BILLINGTON'S SUGAR ITS UNIQUE RICHNESS, DEPTH OF FLAVOUR AND NATURAL COLOUR.

EXCELLENT IN RICH DARK CHOCOLATE CAKES, FRUIT CAKES AND INDULGENT SQUIDDY BROWNIES, ALSO ADDS RICHNESS & DEPTH OF FLAVOUR TO MARINADES



Consumer feedback

In focus groups consumers provided highly positive feedback on the design:

'The colours would make you stop and look and then yeah, I think you'd definitely be drawn to that.'

Aspiring Homemaker

'With the birds and the flowers, to me it's like less processed.'

Aspiring Homemaker

'I can see Billington's, I can see the B, and I can see the colour of the sugar, you can see it all just by looking at it.'

Accomplished Homemaker

'I like it because it almost looks like you've got the older generation trying to keep it – the Billington's and with the younger generation coming in and brightening it up.'

Accomplished Homemaker

'Because the bird's getting the nectar from the flowers so it's like a bee making honey, it is almost like an association. It's saying yeah this is a natural product.'

Accomplished Homemaker

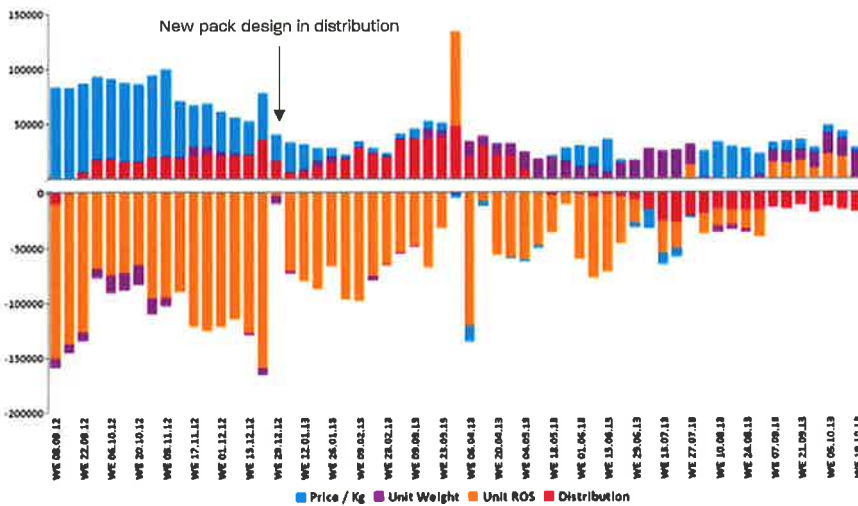
The results

Reversing the decline

But never mind about the sentiment, where's the evidence?

Despite retailers raising RSP in the speciality segment exaggerating the sector decline and distribution losses conspiring to disguise the impact of the design in store, the graph below provides evidence of its positive impact upon rate of sale.

Value Contribution vs. Year ago
BILLINGTON'S - Grocery Multiples



Prior to the redesign shoppers were trading down into mainstream white sugars, at about 33% lower price. Retail price inflation was precipitating value growth but ROS was more than cancelling it out.

With the new design fully displayed on shelf from the end of December 2012, the rate of decline in rate of sale began to slow, despite the relative price premium of baking sugar over standard white sugars rising from 60% to 65% during the ensuing months.

September 2013 finally saw positive growth in the ROS of Billington's for the first time in years.

Awareness & imagery scores

Shelf impact was assessed to be the key driver of the growth in rate of sale, as evidenced by the dramatic growth in awareness after its introduction. Prior to the redesign Billington's enjoyed a very low profile. In the 20 months following its introduction spontaneous awareness rose from 2% to 10% and prompted awareness from 22% to 55% among the target audience of accomplished bakers.

Winning retailer favour

As a result of the improvement in brand distinction, The Silver Spoon Co. has started to decouple the distribution of Billington's from their white sugar contracts.

Today, Asda stock Billington's outside their white supply contract because it resonates with their shoppers and brings category growth.

Likewise, despite their own brand being highly regarded by their shoppers, Waitrose have since listed Billington's full range alongside their own.

Finally, Billington's were awarded a listing by Woolworth's, (the biggest grocer in Australia), after their buyer spotted the new design in a UK store. Australia is a low-cost sugar cane producing nation, yet Billington's is thriving there as an added value brand.

*These are
unprecedented
developments
in the category*

Return on investment

Given the double impact of market decline and the entry of two powerful new competitors, the redesign was essentially deployed as a defensive-offensive strategy.

Against this context, Billington's performed remarkably well in holding its sales value over the year following the introduction of the new design.

Calculating a return on investment requires us to cautiously estimate what might have happened if the brand had continued in its existing design.

Given it presented like a generic, one could assume the market decline of 3.5% would have applied to Billington's – equating to $3.5 \times £21m = £735k$ in lost sales.

Indeed, this is reinforced by the fact that household penetration of Billington's actually declined from 9.4% to 8.9% over the year, as consumers dropped out of the baking sugar sector, but this was balanced out by the rate of sale improvements and a 9% increase in average weight of purchase. In the absence of other significant influences, we therefore attribute this avoidance of decline in line with the market to the re-design.

But what value do we attribute to the design in seeing off the competitive attack? If they had matched their share of white sugar, together they'd have taken 45% of the branded speciality brown sugar sector, or £25.5m in sales. Assuming their 45% share of that sector was spread equally across all the players, they'd therefore have taken 45% of Billington's sales, which would equate to £9.45m in lost sales.

Of course, line extension into an adjacent category already containing an established brand would be unlikely to precipitate such an immediate collapse in share, but surely between them the competitors aspired to take 10% of Billington's sales?

On this basis, we contend that a value to attribute to the design should conservatively be equated to 10% of the potential loss in sales, or £945k.

In combination then, we conservatively estimate a minimum value added by the redesign to be £1.68m. This in return for a design fee of £70k, or a payback of £24 for every pound invested.

We say conservative because this number is a) computed on first year sales alone and b) doesn't yet attribute any value to the new listings in Waitrose, or Woolworths.

Other influencing factors

Sales promotion

Using the new design on an embossed cake tin brought Billington's success at Christmas in 2013 with an on pack promotion. The promotion offered a free recipe guide on-pack plus a free tin for registering codes from 2 packets, online. Redemptions eventually reached 14.5% of the promotional packs sold, which represented 55,000 homes. However, to put this into perspective, there's 2.1m households purchasing Billington's nationwide.

Sponsorship of The Cake & Bake Show

Billington's were a sponsor of the event and sampled cakes baked with their sugar with 60,000 visitors at two locations – Manchester and London.

We fully acknowledge that these activities will have helped secure awareness and perhaps trial within a small, but core section of the Billington's purchasing community.

Nevertheless, they were one-off activities and the brand had received similar levels of marketing investment in previous years, whereas the new design works hard on shelf and in the home, 365 days per year. Any incremental growth over previous years was therefore likely to be primarily driven by the redesign.

Research sources

AC Nielsen/Scantrack 2011-14
TNS Omnibus Survey 2011-14
Client data