

# WHITBY SEAFOODS: CREATING A BLOOMIN' SPECIAL BRAND

**For Publication**

Whitby Seafoods

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards entry, 2020



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Whitby Seafoods are a family-owned seafood business founded by Graham Whittle and run today with the help of his three children, Laura, Edward and Daniel. They've been trading since 1985 with a mission to show the world how bloomin' special real quality scampi could be.

Whitby Seafoods performance had stalled in the last 12 months prior to commencement of the redesign and they had suffered several delists in frozen as retailers rationalised their ranges. This was in spite of the fact that the frozen category as a whole was growing with major brands doing well against private label.

The brand wanted to recapture what makes Whitby Seafoods different to other frozen food manufacturers to justify their space on shelf. This would help the brand to increase their listings in major retailers, bring new users into the category and steal share from their rivals. Growth was also going to be achieved by getting Whitby shoppers to buy across the range.

But that wasn't enough for Whitby Seafoods. They believe in doing things 'the right way, not the easy way' and so they wanted to do all of this at the same time as reducing their plastic waste.

This was not a simple challenge. Whitby Seafoods were up against two titans of FMCG in Young's and Birds Eye who led the category and who's marketing budgets dwarfed Whitby Seafood's. They also needed to shift consumer perceptions of coated seafood in which only fish fingers were really driving volume.

In short, a new design that could demonstrate how bloomin' special Whitby Scampi could be, was needed in order to justify their price premium and recruit new users. It had to solve the range hierarchy problem and better communicate different usage occasions. And it needed to deliver a more sustainable packaging solution.





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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***The results have shown the power of design to solve the business challenges...***

- £4m in new shoppers for scampi who have never bought into the coated seafood category
- £1.3m gains by the brand attracting shoppers who have previously bought other brands
- Penetration of the entire Whitby Seafoods range is up a whopping 40.1% over 52we YOY gaining 995,000 new shoppers to the brand
- The Whitby Seafoods brand as a total has seen enormous growth of 45.3% in value and 52.7% in volume - worth £8m in total
- Whitby Seafoods is the only brand with an overall increase in awareness in the category - despite no media spend.





# CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

## BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

- The brand wanted to move back into growth. We set ourselves the target of at least 20% in value and volume sales growth.
- Gaining additional listings (or increased distribution) in major retailers.
- Critically bringing new consumers into the category
- Switching consumers from private label and the major brands to Whitby Seafoods.

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Whitby Seafoods are a proudly independent, family-owned, seafood business founded by Graham Whittle and run today with the help of his three children, Laura, Edward and Daniel. Based in the quintessentially British seaside town whose name they share, Whitby Seafoods have been working with local fisherman to bring scampi caught off the coast of the British isles to market since 1985. The Whittle family set out to challenge scampi's reputation as a '70s pub relic – by showing just how Bloomin' Special real, quality, scampi could be. Today the brand creates a number of coated seafood products selling in both the chilled and frozen sections of major retailers.

Whitby Seafood's performance had stalled in the 12 months prior to them engaging us in the middle of 2017. This was partly driven by several delists in frozen as retailers rationalised their ranges. To justify their place on shelf they needed to show that the brand had a right to play there by attracting new audiences and growing the category.

Growth would also be seen by an increase in product lines. But the brand was having difficulty growing their ranges and product portfolio. The previous packaging design was creating challenges with differentiation and with introducing SKUs that would justify a higher price point. The one size-fits-all approach of the previous packs was no longer adequate for a brand who had serious growth ambitions.

Being close to the sea and dealing in seafood, plastic pollution was a cause that was close to the heart of the brand. Whitby Seafoods stood for and were committed to 'doing the right thing' so they wanted to find ways to reduce their plastic usage on pack. We needed to work together to create the same design and brand impact on more sustainable structures.



BEFORE



AFTER

# CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

## MARKET OVERVIEW

The Grocer (2017) reported that coated seafood was worth £302m in frozen and £148m in chilled to UK retail, with both in growth of 2.5% & 6% respectively in 2018. Both Sainsbury's and Morrison's have seen coated fish sales rise by £2.6m year on year, while Tesco sales are up £1.9m.

Within coated seafood, brands were actually performing well in frozen, especially compared to other categories where private label was eroding value. The conditions were there for Whitby Seafoods to be growing with the category, but they weren't.

For starters, Whitby Seafoods was competing against major players in the category. Both Birds Eye and Young's, who lead the coated fish category, have substantial marketing budgets and can outspend Whitby Seafoods with ease. But there were further challenges for Whitby Seafoods. Frozen was playing out a game of two halves, with fish fingers driving huge growth, attracting new shoppers who were paying more and buying more frequently. However, The Grocer Frozen Category Report stated the rest of the coated seafood category was either stagnant or in decline.

Whitby Seafood's mission and core product was scampi. To drive growth, justify their place on shelf and show the world what 'Bloomin' good scampi tastes like, they would need to shift perceptions on coated seafood that wasn't fish fingers. To truly succeed, we knew the brand needed to persuade consumers to try scampi again, or for the first time.





# CASE STUDY OVERVIEW



BEFORE



AFTER

## DESIGN CHALLENGE:

- Reveal & express why Whitby Seafoods is worth paying more for in order to drive switching from private label and other branded players.
- Make the pack design more relevant and meaningful in order to drive consideration with new audiences.
- Introduce a less restrictive design & improve navigation across differentiated ranges to enable portfolio diversification & future NPD pipeline.

## SCOPE

- Brand strategy
- Brand identity
- Pack design for 20 SKUs
- Range segmentation strategy
- More sustainable packaging solutions

## SOLUTION:

Whitby Seafood's packaging had undergone a radical facelift in 2014 which had brought much-needed modernity and energy to the brand. But, whilst it had helped to drive some growth and interest, its appeal was beginning to fade. The packaging design worked well across a small number of SKUs but, as new SKUs and ranges were introduced the brand was becoming confusing and hard to buy. This was being caused by a number of reasons; the portfolio had no clear segmentation strategy beyond colour, the products were also differentiated by functional rather than emotional/occasion-based reasons and product and brand were being confused on pack.

# CASE STUDY OVERVIEW

We started by creating a new core identity which wasn't confused with product descriptors. Separating the hut device and wordmark from the product descriptors helped to give Whitby Seafoods a clear and memorable identity. In addition, we brought in a new Whitby Seafoods flag device to bring further distinction to the logo which would drive recognition and distinguish the brand from private label.

A new on-pack architecture helped to create range differentiation through additional devices around the core logo. Utilising varied iconography from the seaside such as a restaurant, beach huts, fast food trucks and even sandcastles, we were able to clearly signpost the different ranges and aid consumer navigation at shelf.

The new devices had a further aim of shifting the portfolio from functional to emotional ranging, providing consumers with more cues to help intuitively understand the different occasions for the brand and thereby clearly differentiating between more elevated ranges. This, we believed, would help consumers buy across the range and drive increased relevancy and meaning to draw new consumers in. Other on-pack cues helped to further drive the occasion-based strategy such as the inclusion of a table for two for the most premium 'Tonight's Reward' range, or seafood characters leaping out of the water for the family friendly 'Midweek Meals' range.

By creating a more distinctive and memorable identity we were able to ensure consumers could recognise and distinguish Whitby Seafoods from own label and justify the price-premium. And by building a clearer and more emotional ranging architecture, we were able to give consumers easier ways to shop the range and make it more meaningful and relevant.

In addition to this, for their chilled range, Whitby Seafoods have moved from packaging their seafood in black plastic trays to 'halopacks'. These new trays are made from renewable or recycled cardboard with a thin layer of film on top which protects the seafood. After use, the consumer simply peels the thin layer of film off and the base can be recycled. We have helped clarify this with a simple message outlining how to recycle the pack on the base of the tray. Rather than adding an additional sleeve, the top of the pack is a thin piece of plastic with the branding printed directly on. This has reduced the plastic by 85% and allowed the majority of the pack to be recycled.

## **KEY FACTS**

**LAUNCH DATE - JULY 2019**

**DESIGN FEES - £190K**



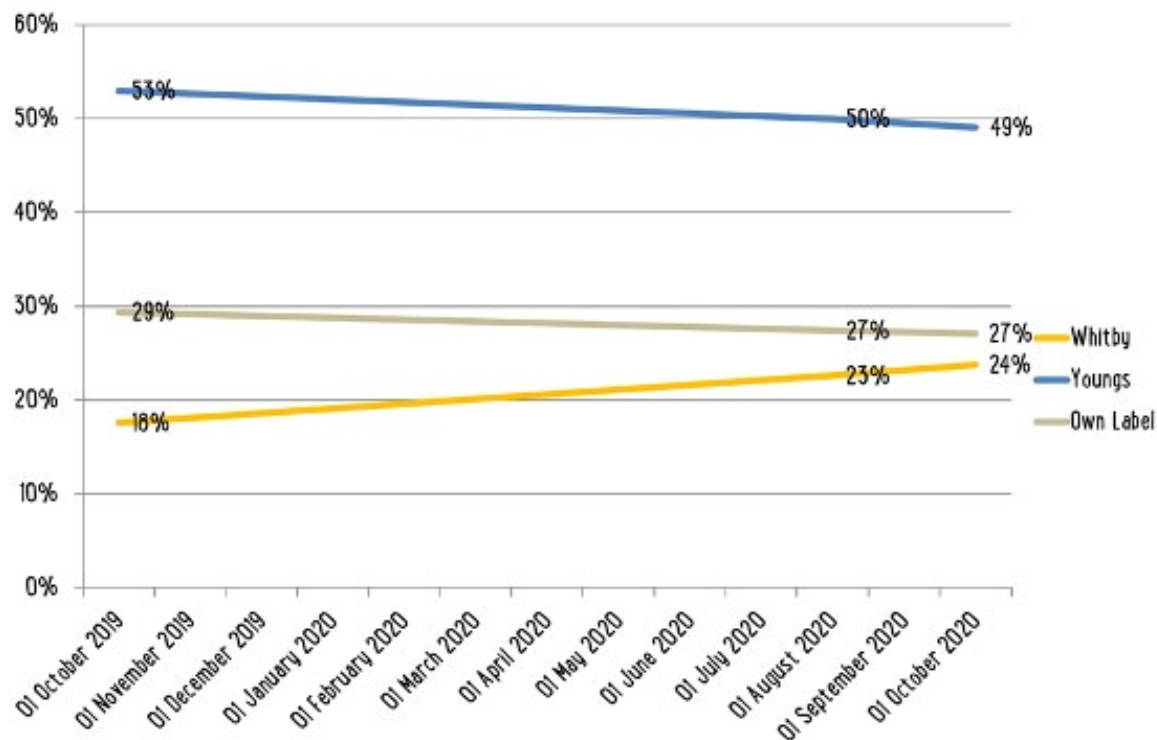


# RESULTS

***Whitby Seafoods' success since the rebrand has been outstanding with the packaging playing a clear role in driving value perception and clarity, enabling new users into the category and switching from other brands and private label. This in turn has had a stonking effect on their ability to maintain and grow their listings as well as driving huge increases in volume and value sales. And this was not just an effect of lockdown. Whitby Seafoods stole market share off their rivals and private label before, during and after lockdown. To boot, the new sustainable packaging has improved consumer perception AND helped drive industry-wide recognition all done with absolutely zero media spend.***

## OVERALL GROWTH

Whitby Seafoods' brand has seen growth of 45.3% in value and 52.7% in volume - worth £8m in total. But critically, that value and volume growth has come at the expense of other brands. A trend that began before lockdown and has continued after it. Their share of the frozen coated seafood market grew from 18% to 24% with both own label and Young's.





# RESULTS

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## **BRINGING NEW CONSUMERS INTO THE CATEGORY:**

Whitby Seafoods brought in £4m in new shoppers for scampi who had never bought the coated seafood category prior to the redesign, showing that the pack design worked in making the brand more meaningful and relevant to consumers who had never considered the brand before. Crucially, this was the sort of success that was helping the brand maintain and justify and grow their space on shelf.

## **GETTING MORE CONSUMERS TO TRY WHITBY SEAFOODS**

- Penetration of the entire Whitby Seafoods range is up 40.1% over 52we yoy gaining 995,000 new shoppers to the brand
- £1.3m has also been won by the brand attracting shoppers who have previously bought other brands (Young's etc) adding Whitby to their basket alongside existing purchases
- Whitby have seen switching gains (in scampi) from other brands worth £828k over the last 52we and the Whitby Seafoods brand now makes up 23.8% of all frozen scampi sales compared to just 17.8% last year.
- In fact, Whitby Seafoods were the only brand in the market to show a rise in overall awareness (prompted and unprompted) amongst category shoppers (4%) – without a penny spent in media. This again showed the power of the new pack design to drive recognition and memorability.

## **BUYING ACROSS THE RANGE**

Whitby Seafoods shoppers spent an extra £836k with the brand this year compared to last showcasing that the new portfolio architecture was helping to clarify the different ranges.

## **DISTRIBUTION GAINS/INCREASED LISTING**

Crucially, the brand was able to make significant increase in distribution points (+3,585) since the re-brand through the listing of 11 new branded lines across all retailers. This was in sharp contrast to performance pre-rebrand in which the brand was seeing de-lists.

## **MORE SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING**

- The new pack design and structure has reduced plastic by 85% and allowed the majority of the pack to be recycled. This has been done without seeing any disruption to the Whitby Seafoods shopper. In fact, initial reactions to the design have been incredibly positive, with consumers recognizing the simplicity and clarity of messaging of the design.
- “Absolutely love your cardboard recycling packaging - it's really innovative and so easy. Thank you and I hope other manufacturers follow suit.” - Consumer
- The new packaging has also been recognised industry-wide when the brand won the 2020 Grocer NPD award in the meat, fish and poultry category for their sustainable packaging.



# RESULTS

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## **OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS**

- Whilst coronavirus undoubtedly had an impact in driving sales in the months of March, April & May, Whitby's sustained market share growth pre- and post-lockdown period showcases the strength of the packaging design changes. Similarly, the fact Whitby Seafoods were the only brand to show a rise in overall awareness, speaks to the strength of the brand's ability to drive recognition.
- There were no changes in the sales team in the period.
- Media spend on ATL is 0 since the packaging design launch.
- Promotions only began in March of this year and yet we can see that market share gains rose consistently over time.

## **DATA SOURCES**

- **THE GROCER, 2017**
- **THE GROCER FROZEN CATEGORY REPORT 2016**

