

# MCCAIN STREET FRIES (FRANCE)

For publication

McCain

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

McCain's heartland has been within family mealtimes, bringing convenience and joy to this sit-down occasion. The brand had sought to drive continued growth by attracting new customers and playing in new occasions through innovation. One target audience they hadn't quite cracked yet were younger consumers and there was a real opportunity to open up this audience in France. With out-of-home and unstructured meals on the rise with younger French consumers, McCain wanted to tap in and grow the express meal category through a completely new offering – a ready-to-heat kit of fries, meat sauce and toppings, that delivered a convenient out-of-home experience, within the home.

We were briefed to come up with a distinctive name and create a pack design that clearly communicated the unique offering and drove consumers looking for convenience to the freezer aisle. But this wasn't an easy task. Supermarket convenient meals were seen as classic and old fashioned by younger consumers with many turning to the chilled aisle. McCain had a long-standing issue of being associated with a side dish rather than a full meal. To add to the challenge, Covid 19 had a significant negative impact on the supermarket express meals category as more people had time on their hands to cook from scratch.

Drawing inspiration from street food markets, we used the power of design to bring excitement to the freezer aisle – crafting a bold, colourful and rustic package design and naming system. Despite all the challenges the brand faced, Street Fries still managed to appeal to a younger audience by an additional 23%, successfully shifting the

## RESULTS OVERVIEW

THE NEW DESIGN RESULTED IN:

- 2.5 million units sold (target 1.5m), generating €8.5 million in turnover (target €5.5), with over 30% repurchasing.
- An impressive 4.8% market penetration (target 3%), over-indexing on families with teenagers and younger people.
- New consumers were brought into both the wider frozen snacking segment by 57% and the McCain portfolio frozen snacking segment by 96%.
- Appealing to a younger audience by an additional 23% compared to the wider McCain brand, successfully shifting the overall brand image.
- Expansion into new European markets including Belgium and Italy, as well as growing and strengthening relationships with key distributors such as Monoprix.

overall brand image for McCain. This resulted in an impressive €3m over sales target and 1.8% over penetration target. Additionally, the success of the Street Fries design has opened the brand up to expand into Belgium and Italy, as well as strengthened relationships with more premium retailers.

# STREET FRIES

# CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW

## OUTLINE OF PROJECT BRIEF/BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

1. Grow the express meal occasion category, selling 1.5 units in first 12 months, equating to sales target of €5.5m.
2. Drive penetration inside the new convenience category, aiming for 3% in the first 12 months.
3. Appeal to younger targets to move the overall brand image for McCain.
4. Open the Street Fries brand up to new European markets outside of France.

## BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Having invented the frozen chip, McCain had established themselves as the king of the frozen aisle. Globally and in France, McCain's heartland had been within family mealtimes, bringing convenience and joy to this occasion. Whilst they are the lead brand within this space across most markets, competitors continued to compete on both price and offer, meaning McCain needed to keep innovating in new occasions and to new consumers. This included a younger target who they didn't typically appeal to.

With out-of-home and unstructured meals on the rise with younger consumers in France, McCain wanted to tap in and grow the express meal category to boost relevance and more importantly grow the bottom line. Across the French market specifically, teenagers and young adults were spending more time eating out – including street vendors and food markets. There was a growing demand for fast, simple, tasty, ready-to-assemble meal options and McCain wanted to be there in that moment – a moment they weren't used to being a part of.

To appeal to this market and grow the brand, McCain turned to innovation. Creating a new product from scratch – a ready-to-heat kit of fries, meat sauce and toppings, that delivered a convenient out of home experience, within the comfort of the home. But this was more than a side of fries, it was a full meal. McCain's new offering was original, indulgent, and convenient. Despite this, McCain needed to shake off its long-standing reputation of being a traditional and old-fashioned side dish. Street Fries needed to stand on its own two feet as a trendy and exciting main meal – striking the fine balance of being a unique product, whilst still being part of the wider McCain portfolio.

We were briefed to come up with a distinctive name and create a pack design that drove consumers looking for convenience to the freezer aisle. The design had a big task to do. It needed to speak to a new audience – drawing out the product's deliciousness and indulgence, whilst communicating convenience and ease. Because it was a completely new product, it also needed to effectively educate consumers on how the three-step product worked and how easy it was to assemble.





## MARKET OVERVIEW

Pre-Covid (and pre-launch) the demand for convenient, fast and simple food solutions was seeing steady growth across France. With less time spent at home and busier daily schedules, average mealtimes had decreased to around 30 minutes – down from one hour and 22 minutes 20 years ago (The Local, 2017). This was a threat for McCain whose chip portfolio typically featured in a longer sit-down meal. Consumers were also eating fewer meals at home (-2.4%). Out-of-home meal occasions had increased by 12.2% – totalling 27.4%. (McCain brief/ 2017 vs 2014 Kantar panel). This resulted in fast-food sales hitting €51 billion in 2017 – an increase of 260% over the last 13 years (The Local, 2017). This meant the supermarket convenience category had to work harder than ever before.

Within this need for convenient food options, younger French consumers were driven by adventurous tastes and appetite for exciting food experiences. Out-of-home, this need was met with increasingly popular street food cuisine taking people on a taste journey and home delivery companies serving up a variety of convenient food options. Although there was a huge rise in the delivery and out of home experience – these were seen as indulgent treats.

To be able to translate that experience into the freezer aisle, which is traditionally seen as a compromise was the major challenge. Supermarket convenient meals were seen as classic and old fashioned by younger consumers, with many turning to pasta boxes, salads and sandwiches in the chilled aisle. McCain had the hard task of changing the perception of the frozen convenience category – moving consumers from the refrigerated aisle to the frozen.

When McCain Street Fries hit stores in April 2020, it launched under extremely challenging conditions. The sudden shift from a highly transient, on-the-go society, to one with restrictions placed on movement due to Covid had a significant negative impact on the supermarket express meals category. With French consumers having much more time spent at home, this resulted in a huge 61% cooking meals from scratch at home (Connexion France, 2020).

### KEY INFO

- Launch date: April 2020
- Design fees: £28,766
- Scope of work: naming and packaging design





## DESIGN OBJECTIVES

1. Bring excitement to convenient at-home meal occasions through design & naming.
2. Appeal to a younger audience for McCain.
3. Shift perception that the new product development (NPD) isn't playing its usual role of a side dish but is now a central meal.
4. Create a clear visual system that can communicate multiple messages without confusion - convenience, taste, and easy-to-use instructions.

## DESIGN SOLUTION

To meet the objectives of appealing to a younger audience, increasing penetration and expanding into new markets, we needed to use the power of design to shift the perception of frozen convenience and bring new excitement to the freezer aisle.

The success of the design solution for the innovation was fundamentally driven by the decision to align the at-home eating experience with the out-of-home experience. We knew that customers recognised, understood, and liked eating out and so we translated that to the packaging design.

It seems obvious in hindsight but the decision to name the innovation as 'Street Fries' rather than a name that was more descriptive e.g., 'topped fries' was a key decision in creating the associations with the out-of-home experience. We knew that consumers would immediately be transported to the bustling street food markets.

On-pack photography isn't always the right decision for brands, but in this instance, it absolutely had

to be. Bringing to life the mouth-watering flavours within the paper cartons reminiscent of street food environments, we believed would help to further drive associations that consumers recognise in out-of-home eating.

The typographic boldness and edgy texture of the range name and roller paint which provides range navigation echo the street-market environment, as well as recalling the bold and colourful hand painted signage. At the same time, the dark slate background reflected rustic serving boards and makeshift tables, delivering the final touch of the street food eating experience.

To attract the younger audiences, it was also important for us to design this range not as a product range, but as a sub-brand. In many ways, this was the most crucial design process giving us the freedom to create a personality away from the McCain Masterbrand that doesn't index well against younger customers.



# RESULTS

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## 1. Grow the express meal occasion category, selling 1.5 million units in first 12 months, equating to a sales target of €5.5m.

- In the first 12 months, the design solution resulted in over 2.5 million units sold and generated €8.5 million in turnover, with an impressive 30% repurchasing. This translated to a volume target of 475 tonnes, where 750 tonnes in volume was achieved (1.6x higher). (IRI CAM P8 HM ECOM PROXI)
- The new design brought additional / new consumers into both the wider frozen snacking segment by 57%, and by 96% into the McCain portfolio frozen snacking segment. This has resulted in more buyers without cannibalising McCain's other frozen snacking products. (McCain Marketing Conventions, 2021)
- The success of the new design has also resulted in Street Fries being named as the 7th top launches in France this year, according to Nielsen (2021).

## 2. Drive category penetration inside new occasions, aiming for 3% in the first 12 months.

- The design solution achieved an impressive 4.8% market penetration in the first 12 months. In the first 6 months of launch, which was during the peak of Covid – a challenging time for the convenience sector, Street Fries had a market penetration of 3.4%, compared to previous McCain launches outside of the Covid period.
  - Instant Frite (1.7%) in Sept 2016, Just AU Four Express (1.8%) in Sept 2018 and Bistro (3%) in Sept 2017.
- Compared to key competitors in the ready meal category (chilled and frozen) – Pizzetta Buittoni (1.7%) and Sodebo Pasta Box (2.6%). (Kantar P06 2021, Total France)

## 3. Appeal to younger targets; move the overall brand image for McCain.

- The successful design solution has resulted in penetration over-indexing on families with teenagers and younger people.
- For the overall McCain brand, 25% of consumers are families with 1 child, 21% are families with

teenagers and 8% are younger consumers (total 54%). For Street Fries, 32% of consumers are families with 1 child, 32% are families with teenagers and 13% are younger consumers (total 77%), indicating that design has appealed to a younger audience and moved the overall brand image for McCain. (McCain Marketing Conventions, 2021)

## 4. Open the brand up to new markets outside of France.

- Since its success in France, the range has launched in Belgium. Initially launching in just one retailer – Carrefour in April 2021, McCain Street Fries has now been made available across all retailers as of September 2021. It has also just launched in Italy as of early October 2021.

## OTHER RESULTS

- The new design was so impactful that it completed targets of window displays (WD) and rotations within 2 months. McCain launches tend to take around 12 months to achieve targets, meaning the concept was extremely well accepted and appreciated by the retailers to be in shelves so quickly. This was the first McCain launch in France to complete WD and rotation targets this quickly.
- The new design grew distribution in more premium retailers. More importantly it's enabled McCain to strengthen its relationship with Monoprix, one of France's leading premium retailers who specialise in urban and innovative concepts in store. Because of the Street Fries design, this was the first time McCain had permission to do special instore activations – in a total of all 675 Monoprix stores nationwide.



## INFLUENCING FACTORS

### Marcomms activity:

- McCain invested in targeted marcomms activity for Street Fries through a limited period of Oct/Nov 2020, Jan/Feb 2021, Sept/Oct 2021 across TV, in-store, digital and print. However, the marcomm activity leveraged the design equities such as across e-retail and in-store activations. The impressive penetration results above within the first 6 months were before the marcomm period began.

### Sales promotion / special offers:

- The brand has had different promos at different retailers; however, this was standard across launches including Bistro and Just AU Four Express, in which Street Fries outperformed as referenced above.

### Covid 19:

- As mentioned in the market overview, Covid had a significant negative impact on the supermarket express meals category as more people had time on their hands to cook from scratch (61%) (The Local, 2017). Regardless of this, Street Fries have still outperformed other McCain products that were launched pre-Covid.

## SOURCES

*The Local, Five Ways France Food Habits Are Changing, IRI 2017*

*McCain brief, 2017 vs Kantar Panel, 2014*

*Connexion France, Covid Trends in France Show Changing In Fresh Frozen Organic Cooking, IRI, 2020*

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