

WE NEVER USE PALM OIL
PLANT BASED



meridian

**SPREADING
MERIDIAN'S GOODNESS**

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards
FOR PUBLICATION

CLIENT COMPANY
3V Natural Foods Ltd

BRANDING AGENCY
Bulletproof

DATE
September 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"The agency approached the brief with a real passion, understanding and respect for Meridian's core values. The new identity proudly represents those core values and ethical practices, living true to Meridian's origin. The agency inherently understood the brand and have been extremely collaborative and true partners in helping us bring to life the vision for the brand. The impact speaks for itself: A year on from launch, the Meridian brand has grown 1.5 share points to 18.4%, created 9 new jobs in an economically deprived area to keep up with consumer demand, and much more. All with no promotional support typical of a launch of this kind."

PAUL FRASER, MANAGING DIRECTOR -
3V NATURAL FOODS LTD

OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

Meridian is the UK's leading producer of nut butters. Made in their factory in North Wales, all products from Meridian Foods are free from palm oil, supporting the environment and primates.

However, at the time of the brief category growth was slowing, and the market was becoming increasingly competitive. With a dated design, Meridian was the brand in the category taking the biggest revenue hit. The business knew they needed to act decisively for Meridian to grow. They appointed us to develop a distinctive and ownable identity and packaging design to build its brand credentials, deepen the emotional equity with consumers, and build its value to retail buyers and other trade partners.

The result of this project is a bold and memorable design that communicates Meridian's core values, commitment to sustainability and ethical practices. And it has worked: despite not being able to promote following the launch in 2020, Meridian has grown brand share, grown brand sales, and outpaced the market. Here are a few of the results we're most proud of:

**19.4% INCREASE IN
VALUE SALES**

**£3,783,000 IN
ADDITIONAL REVENUE**

**9 NEW JOBS CREATED TO
KEEP UP WITH DEMAND**

**84% MORE D2C SALES
VIA THE MERIDIAN
WEBSITE**

**£900,000 OF NEW SPEND
FROM NEW SHOPPERS TO
THE MARKET**

**13 DAYS TO RETURN ON
DESIGN INVESTMENT**

**THREE NEW MULTIPLE
RETAILER LISTINGS**

**MINIMAL PROMOTIONAL
SUPPORT**



DESCRIPTION

The natural choice for those looking to keep healthy, Meridian is the UK's leading producer of nut butters. Made in their factory in North Wales, Meridian's products are naturally delicious and provide an excellent source of protein and energy. All of Meridian Foods products are free from palm oil, supporting the environment and primates.

At the time of brief, category growth was slowing, and the market was becoming increasingly competitive. So whilst rival brands had evolved, because the Meridian design was now over five years old and looked a little outmoded and lacking in personality, inevitably sales were taking a hit.

The business was ambitious for Meridian to grow. Still, to do so, they knew they needed to deepen the emotional equity the brand has with consumers, with a distinctive and ownable identity to build its brand credentials. The hope was that this would also build its value to retail

buyers and other trade partners, as the category magnet for new users into peanut and nut butters and the broader emerging natural foods arena.

Specifically, the challenges were:

- The brand was dated and lacked standout, meaning that it is often overlooked by shoppers.
- The brand's quality, premium credentials, and delicious taste and texture were not shining through on pack.
- Meridian's old pack design failed to communicate what it stands for beyond naturalness, the packaging felt dusty and lacked in confidence and had adopted the visual cues most commonly associated with private label alternatives.



BEFORE

OUTLINE OF PROJECT BRIEF

With this in mind, the brief to the agency was to reposition Meridian based on its core values. To create a sensory brand world, designed to communicate a deep-rooted expression of the brand at every touch-point, and give it a fresh new look to appeal to both current consumers and recruits.

OVERVIEW OF THE MARKET

In 2019, just prior to the time of the brief, the Spreads category's overall market value change stood at +£1.4m², whilst volume change was at +0.4%. However, Meridian's value change had dipped by -£0.1m, and their volume changed down by -0.8%.

With volumes sales suffering after years of historic growth, spreads and jams "were showing off", in the words of leading industry publication, The Grocer. Brands were splashing out on marketing and promotional activities. There was also a host of new product development launched: from Marmite peanut butter to M&M spreads.

Throughout this, nut butter brands suffered: shelf space became increasingly squeezed for all brands as the category became more crowded. Those brands who couldn't spend on promotion, or didn't stand out on shelf (like Meridian) suffered.



The UK nut butter brand competitive set at the time of brief.

SIZE OF DESIGN BUDGET

£131,000

COLLABORATORS INVOLVED

Alan Foster - Typographer

SCOPE OF WORK

- Design Identity
- Packaging design
- Photography
- Strategy
- Brand Guardianship

OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

When we engaged with the team at Meridian, we soon realised that this was a brand and company living true to its values. It was no coincidence that those values perfectly reflect the consumer shift towards more considered and sustainable brands who were taking their responsibility to our world seriously. With that in mind, we knew we needed to deliver more than just a brand refresh. First, we needed to reposition the brand around its core product values; a commitment to never using palm oil, shipping rather than flying their products, and finally, engaging in as little 'process' as possible.

Inspired by the notion that 'good tastes better' and with our Sensory Brand World idea of 'Nature Liberated', we set about redesigning each unique brand asset and defining their relationship with one another; from core logo lock-up and packaging to tone of voice, leaning into an inherent appreciation of, and desire to work with nature in its purest form. We did this with a view that the design approach would later extend far beyond their range of nut butters and into bars and sauces.

The old design lacked a recognisable brand icon, so we created our vibrant 'Rainbow', a symbol that inherently stands for positivity and radiates energy.

We wanted to clearly call out our core product values and proudly run these within the arches. We used multiple touchpoints as an opportunity to build a bold and uplifting application of our joyful brand icon - 'Spreading good.' In line with the Sensory Brand World idea, our deep autumnal brown provides richness and a connection to nature, whilst the brand icon is an uplifting injection of colour, aiding shelf navigation and delivering taste appeal.

The previous logotype was very serious, lacked weight, gravitas and recognisability. We chose an ultra-bold sans serif typeface that has a friendly and approachable character. We grounded the logotype, so it doesn't curve around the horizon, adding the bold authority that the brand was previously lacking. Meridian creates delicious products adding nothing but natural ingredients in a one-step process - with nothing to hide. Therefore, when it came to photographic assets, it was essential to showcase the raw nuts in their purest form with minimal retouching.

Finally, the frankly optimistic tone of voice we introduced means the brand can now talk about broader issues with a light-heartedness whilst visually showing its core values and love for the planet with simplistic illustrations and bold iconography.



INCREASE IN SALES

A year on from the redesign launch, Meridian had reached £19.5m value sales in 52-week data³. That's representative of a nut cracking **19.4% increase in value sales** or, put another way, £3,783,000 in additional revenue compared to the previous year.

Most impressively, value sales outpace the market by 4.2% over the same period.

PAYBACK PERIOD / ROI

The project took just **13 days to return on design investment**, based on the **additional** sales Meridian generated thanks to the new look.

INCREASED MARKET SHARE

Meridian's market share jumped 0.8% pts to 17.8% in 4 week data and by 1.4% pts to 17.7% in 12 week data over the last year since launch⁴. Crucially, Meridian made key switching gains from two significant competitors, Whole Earth and Sun-Pat, a victory for the brand in a crowded and competitive market.

INCREASED MARKET DISTRIBUTION

In a tough year for retail, the brand secured a new listing in **142 Iceland Food Warehouses**. Meridian also achieved listings with delivery service Milk & More and Nisa convenience stores.

INCREASES IN PERCEIVED VALUE/ HIGHER PRICE POINT ACHIEVED

Following the redesign Meridian's price point increased by between **£0.83 and £1.78 per kilo**⁵. Even at its lowest point, the price per kilo increase was 11.5% greater than prior to the redesign.

CHANGES IN SPENDING PATTERNS

In the year since the redesign launched, Meridian has made £1.6m in gains from existing shoppers buying more products. This is the highest of any brand. The volume of Meridian products purchased per buyer has increased by 14.3% to 1.2 packs in the year since the redesign launched. This increase outperformed the overall market volume per buyer growth by 4.5%.

Frequency of purchase also saw a significant increase, growing by 12.3% to 2.8 units per buyer. This marks an **outperformance of the market by 6.6%**.

But perhaps the most exciting aspect for both Meridian and the market as a whole is the **£900,000 of new spend** from new shoppers buying into the category via Meridian for the first time in the year since the redesign launched.

2020 was a weird year for retail by all accounts, but Meridian outperformed the market on value sales, frequency and volume of purchase, despite a reduction in the promotion and penetration declines of -8% (whereas overall market penetration grew by 3.5%).

EXPORT GROWTH

Following the redesign, the brand was exported into the German market for the first time.

BUSINESS GROWTH

[REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

NEW REVENUE STREAMS CREATED

The success of the redesign encouraged the brand to launch three new nut butter products: Gingernut Butter, Toffee Apple Almond Butter, Banoffee Pie Almond Butter.

The redesign put the 'no palm oil' messaging firmly front row-centre on the new brand packaging, [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

CHANGES IN CONSUMER ATTITUDE & BEHAVIOURS

Between January 2020 and August 2020, consumer spontaneous awareness **increased from 9% to 13%**, whilst prompted awareness **increased from 60% to 65%**. These are huge gains for a brand that was previously receding on shelf, as the market moved on visually, leaving Meridian looking out of date.

Even before the new look hit the shelves and consumers voted with their spend, the new Meridian brand design was showing signs of success in research:

- Purchase intent increased by 2%
- Recall at the fixture increased by 4%
- Standout on the shelf, measured by the time to find Meridian was faster by 0.06 seconds
- The number of consumers describing their overall opinion of the new packaging as 'excellent' increased by an average of 2% between the UK & Ireland compared with the old pack design.

In research, when shown the new packaging, more consumers agreed that when compared with the old packaging design:

- The new Meridian pack was 'modern and up to date'
- They 'would buy this for my family and children'
- Meridian is an ethical brand
- Meridian is an environmentally friendly brand
- Meridian is a plant-based brand
- Meridian does not contain palm oil.

POSITIVE SHIFTS IN PERCEPTION

The brand has seen an overwhelming amount of love on social media through customer services and other feedback channels. Below is a snapshot of the kind of comments they've been enjoying since the redesign launched.



BUYER TESTIMONIALS

Retailers have also commented on how the consistent background introduced as part of the redesign, means **Meridian is now easier to recognise at the point of purchase**, which has boosted sales. They also frequently state that the 'nut profile' is more recognisable now due to colour blocking introduced in the redesign. The 'rainbow' design has been a big success with retailers, who are seeking to provide a natural portrayal of stocked products when appropriate.

SALES TEAMS TESTIMONIALS

"The rebrand was incredibly well received by my customers. Meridian has been instrumental in driving the growth of the nut butter and sweet spreads categories, so buyers were excited to see the new look. They all agreed that the outstanding new look and enhanced stand out on pack of our core brand values (no palm oil etc.) drives more shoppers and adds incremental value to the category."

Simon Lucas, Senior National Account Manager, Meridian

DIGITAL GROWTH/ENGAGEMENT

Vitality for a brand that sells direct to consumers via their website, Meridian has seen an **uplift of 84% in total website sales** since the redesign.

Since the redesign to the time of writing, the Meridian social media audience has **grown by a massive 89.1%**, and more importantly, **engagement by 169.4%**. Impressions have risen by 105.1%, and Meridian are receiving +111.3% post link clicks to their website since the redesign.

JOB CREATION/RETENTION

An additional production night-shift was introduced in September 2020 to help meet the demand of increased order volumes. This led to **9 permanent roles being created** at the Corwen manufacturing site in Wales, in an economically deprived area where 25% of the working population has no qualifications, and there is a higher rate of benefit claimants than in the rest of the country⁴.

SOCIAL & SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

The majority of gains achieved since the redesign came from consumers switching to Meridian from Whole Earth and Sun-Pat, both of which use palm oil in their nut butters. Therefore, everyone who switched to Meridian from another brand supports not using palm oil in nut butter production.

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

2020 was an unprecedented year, and there will be those food and drink brands who stood to benefit from the move to staying at home. But the fact that Meridian outperformed the market on sale value, frequency and volume of purchase, despite penetration declines of -8% (whereas overall market penetration grew by 3.5%), demonstrates that the design alone had a marked effect on the results you've read here.

Meridian undertook 100% less promotion in 2020 than in a typical year when circa 25% of sales are on promotion⁷, despite the fact that most brands seek to support a redesign with promotion. This was due to the impact of COVID promo restrictions, making the uplift in sales all the more impressive.

SOURCES

1. Nielsen 4 wk/e 03/07/21
2. <https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/top-products/jams-and-spreads-top-products-2019/600237.article>
3. Kantar World Panel 52wk 16.05.2021
4. Nielsen data to 06.06.21
5. Kantar Market 12wk 13.06.2021
6. <https://www.ilivehere.co.uk/statistics-corwen-denbighshire-9603.html>
7. Nielsen Answers & Sainsburys Insight platform 26wk covering 2019 and 2020, vs 21wk covering 2021