



my mochi™

MELT YOUR MOUTH'S MIND

DBA Design Effectiveness Awards
FOR PUBLICATION

CLIENT COMPANY

My/Mochi Ice Cream Co.

BRANDING AGENCY

Bulletproof

DATE

October 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"My/Mochi had come a long way in the three years from launch to redesign and quickly became the fastest growing frozen novelty brand in the market. The previous packaging had served its purpose, but with competitive brands stepping up their efforts, and a need to drive brand dominance and corporate value, My/Mochi needed to represent our true differentiating purpose of play to keep standing out from the growing crowd. We hired the agency to infuse our purpose of play into the brand and all its wider touchpoints. The result is a pack that asserts 'we're here to melt your mouth's mind' and resonates better with consumers all while growing the category and maintaining a dominant share in the frozen snack space."

RUSSELL BARNETT, MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, MY/MOCHI

OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT

Three years ago, recognising the unique appeal of a grab-and-go handheld snack that just happens to be frozen - the My/Mochi Ice Cream team introduced this previously niche product to the US masses. The brand soon became the fastest growing frozen novelty, owning 80% of the mochi ice cream category in the grocery channel and 98% of the category in convenience stores¹. But with My/Mochi's rise, so came other brands as well as competition from legacy brands and multinational players hoping to get a perfectly squishy portion of their success.

The owners turned to the agency to bring the brand's playful purpose to the pack in a way that helped them secure their position as a beacon in this category and pave the way for many more successful years to come. The redesign saw immediate success, including:

**79.9% VALUE
SALES SHARE
IN ICE CREAM**

**61%
INCREASE
IN SALES**

**#1 BRAND
OF MOCHI ICE
CREAM ON
TIKTOK**

**ZERO PAID
MEDIA
SUPPORT**

**1.5 DAYS TO
RETURN ON
INVESTMENT**



DESCRIPTION

In 1910, a Japanese pastry shop called Mikawaya opened in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles. Founder Ryuzaburo Hashimoto sold the store in 1925 to his nephew, Koroku Hashimoto, and Koroku's wife, Haru. Their daughter, Frances Hashimoto, took the reins in 1970. She and her husband, Joel Friedman, are widely credited with inventing the popular dessert in the early 90s: a golfball sized dollop of frozen ice-creamy goodness enveloped lovingly by a soft and smooth doughy coating².

When El Segundo-based Century Park Capital Partners bought the business in 2015, the company's mochi product was sold in fewer than 1,000 niche ethnic and specialty grocery stores. In 2017, recognising the unique appeal of a grab-and-go handheld snack that just happens to be ice cream, My/Mo Mochi Ice Cream team introduced this niche product to the masses of the USA.

Yet three years on from the relaunch, and even though My/Mo Mochi Ice Cream was the dominant brand in the market, their packaging was out of sync with their communications and needed holistic alignment.

In short, there was room for improvement: The brand wasn't playful enough, the previous pastel colour palette lacked shelf impact and made variant differentiation hard for consumers. Consumers were photographing the product but had a tougher time connecting on a brand and packaging level, and My/Mochi wanted to change up that behaviour to ensure the packaging was 'Insta-worthy' too. But perhaps most apparent was the disconnect between what the brand called itself and what consumers called the brand: Most people shortened shortened the product name from My/Mo Mochi to My/Mochi, so the company knew this was integral to the next phase of the brand's presentation.



OUTLINE OF PROJECT BRIEF

In 2020, the brand owners briefed the agency to rethink My/Mochi, bringing its playful purpose to life through a new but recognisable brand identity and packaging design that has a consistent impact at the shelf and beyond.

Specifically, the brief was to:

- Bring to life the essence of My/Mochi's play and fun
- Defend its leadership position and protect from the competition
- Bring brand name forward - create a distinctive memory cue
- Boost shelf standout
- The packaging change should be a 'non-event' for the consumer
- An 'oh cool' moment that reinforces the joy of snacking My/Mochi
- Retain visual perception as a snack, not as an indulgent treat
- Move towards more gender-neutral visual expression (60/40 f/m).

OVERVIEW OF THE MARKET

A relatively new segment of the novelty ice cream category, the invention of mochi ice cream is widely credited to the legacy of Los Angeles' Hashimoto family. Even though the My/Mochi brand is the legacy of their traditions, the product only found national success for the first time after a nationwide launch in 2017.

In terms of a time to launch the redesign, March 2020 ended up being an interesting choice. In the words of Today.com³, "Though ice cream has remained a staple in freezers across the U.S. [through COVID], independent businesses across the country have felt the heat during the pandemic, trying their hardest to survive. Unfortunately, many beloved ones have shut down in the past year."



BEFORE



AFTER

DATE OF LAUNCH

January 2021

[REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

COLLABORATIONS INVOLVED

AOR: Lovers

SCOPE OF WORK

Original Scope:

- Brand visual identity system
- Packaging design for core range (6 ct. cartons, single serves and two packs)
- Style guide

Incremental Scope:

- Website design
- Vegan (6 ct. cartons and single serves)
- Club packaging (BJs and Costco)

OUTLINE OF DESIGN SOLUTION

Mindful that the brand's purpose was not apparent, we firstly articulated this as: 'play is our purpose. We're here to melt your mouth's mind'. Building on this, we defined the new Sensory Brand World idea: 'Loving on the desquishiousness. Go ahead, wrap your eyes around our high touch, high taste, highly snackable mashups and let it sink in and wash over you.'

With the intention set, we then went about bringing the playful purpose of My/Mochi to life visually through a new brand identity and packaging design that has a consistent impact at the shelf and beyond, but is still recognisable to existing fans of the brand.

The on-pack illustrations had previously been described as 'juvenile' by some consumers in research, so we went about changing their presence on pack, complementing illustrations with ultra-dimensional visual devices that drive the brand purpose of play. We also brought product photography to the fore. In fact, the product's duality and bi-texturality is the most critical aspect of the My/Mochi appeal, and the new product photography finally does this unique attribute justice. The goal was to get more mochi balls in peoples' hands with a high touch, high feel visual appeal.

Combined, these visual shifts help to balance out the appeal of My/Mochi, which had previously skewed highly female. They also helped to unlock new product development opportunities for the brand, giving them a flexible platform to extend out into new formats.



INCREASE IN SALES

In major multiple retailers (known as MULO in the US) since the redesign launched, **My/Mochi Ice Cream value sales now stand at \$47.1m** and unit sales at 12.9m packs, with no paid media advertising. This represents a 61% and 106.5% respective increase versus the same period a year before the redesign⁴.

The redesign has allowed My/Mochi to widen their lead over their mochi competitive set within US MULO retailers, to the tune of \$40.6m in value sales and 11.6m units in the 24 weeks since the redesign launched⁵.

The story is even better in convenience stores than major multiples, with My/Mochi growing by a massive 124.1% in unit sales and 159.7% in the latest 12-week value sales since the relaunch, versus the same period a year before the redesign⁶.

My/Mochi Ice Cream is **#12 of all ice cream frozen novelty brands** by dollar sales in MULO, and #27 in convenience stores, despite only placing 14th out of 25 brands in terms of ACV (distribution points) in MULO, and 23rd out of 30 brands in convenience stores. That's a higher value sales productivity ranking than household brand names such as Nestle, M&Ms, Blue Bunny and Dove, despite My/Mochi having a lower ACV.

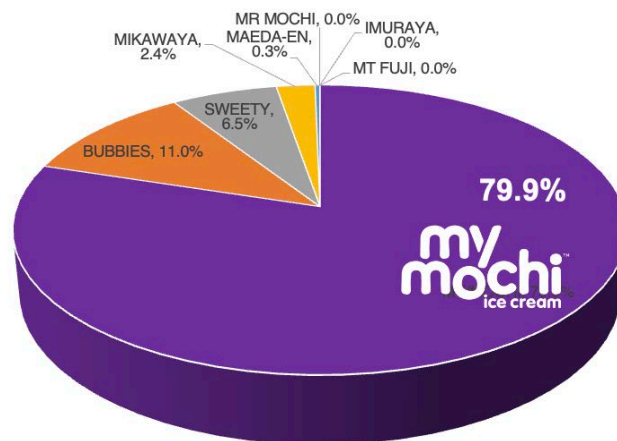
The pace shows no signs of slowing: at the time of writing this entry, My/Mochi was the fastest growing top 25 brand based on dollar and unit change, outpacing the 6.4% category value growth more than 9.5 times over in MULO ice cream frozen novelty brands.

In convenience stores, too, the brand is outpacing the category value sales percentage growth more than 16 times over across major frozen novelties. My/Mochi has broken into the top 20 brands for value sales velocity since the redesign launched.

INCREASED MARKET SHARE

Since the redesign launch, **My/Mochi boasts a 79.9% value sales share** and an 83.9% unit sales share in MULO.

In total US mochi brand sales in convenience stores (where they are a prime target for snacking), **My/Mochi now makes up 96.7% of mochi ice cream dollar sales** and 94.9% of unit sales. This is particularly important as it illustrates that the brand's success story is based on its merit rather than being pushed by category growth.



[REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

By this time next year, My/Mochi is **on track to be the 10th largest selling brand**, right behind Magnum, which spends millions of dollars on consumer marketing a year!

INCREASES IN PERCEIVED VALUE

My/Mochi has always been a premium-priced item and as the category has started to decline, the brand has been able to maintain their premium price point in a time when discounts and allowances are driving the category:

"The redesign has allowed us to maintain our premium pricing – where much of the category is subjected to tremendous trade promotion efforts".

CHANGES IN SPENDING PATTERNS

My/Mochi continues to have a high basket value, when other well-known players like Unilever, Mars and Nestlé have not managed to break past their smaller basket sizes. **In New York Metro, in major markets, My/Mochi Household Penetration increased by 90%** versus the year prior to the redesign. But it's not just the brand that's benefitting: the success of the My/Mochi redesign is **driving 69.7% of the category year on year growth**. That means a halo effect for Mochi Ice Cream products overall.

The trend is even more pronounced in convenience stores: since the redesign launch, My/Mochi has driven +2518.4% out of a +2520% total value sales increase.

[REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

In the words of the client, “It’s a David and Goliath story – a small, independent brand that has now become a behemoth in the frozen snack category. Frozen novelty was previously a nascent category, where My/Mochi is no longer a small niche brand, now we can compete with Unilever, Nestlé and Mars.”

As the business has scaled so quickly, it has required My/Mochi to make a significant investment in hiring high-talent people (such as the brand’s new Head of Innovation, who was previously the role lead at Beyond Meat) and increase the depth of all teams, to manage the scaling of the business. This uptick has been spread between back of house and the operational management, to allow them to unlock further significant leaps forward, and to sustain the growth of the business.

INCREASED MARKET DISTRIBUTION & NEW REVENUE STREAMS CREATED

[REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

The redesign’s success has allowed the brand to move out of mainstream retail and into other categories such as HoReCa, convenience and education with eight new and highly successful single-serve products.

My/Mochi is now **stocked in over 500 Hilton properties** across the USA and convenience and drug stores, colleges and universities, in addition to food service channels.

This isn’t just a visibility and publicity tactic: in fact, My/Mochi Ice Cream Single-Serve commands 95.5% dollar sales share and makes up 12 of the top 15 items by value sales. [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

The wider frozen novelty market is also now seeing a shift as a result of My/Mochi’s innovation in format: now all frozen novelty products are moving to smaller, handheld formats. In the words of the client, “My/Mochi has allowed us to bring mochi to the masses, and through the redesign, we’ve been able to do this at scale to play with the goliaths in the category.” Furthermore, the newly created Masterbrand has allowed My/Mochi to confidently expand their offer to non-dairy / vegan products, formulated with Oat Milk. The redesign of Non-Dairy and Vegan products has allowed them to get into more retailers.

INCREASED MARKET INCREASED AWARENESS/PROFILE

My/Mochi is now the **#1 brand of mochi ice cream on TikTok** globally achieving 0 to 300,000 followers in less than 6 months since the redesign in 2021. [REDACTED CONFIDENTIAL DATA]

In fact, according to TikTok, My/Mochi are the most successful e-commerce brand on the platform, and they don’t even sell via e-commerce!

It’s all very well flashing follower counts, but crucially, this has allowed the brand to unlock consumer resonance and sales in their own sector: My/Mochi has 38% more followers than Ben & Jerry’s, and it’s no coincidence that the brand now outsells Ben & Jerry’s twice over where they compete in Frozen Novelties.

Ultimately, My/Mochi’s social media savviness has enabled them to connect and gain relevance with Gen Z consumers who are not resonating with irrelevant heritage brands like Haagen Dazs and Klondike.

PAYBACK PERIOD / ROI

The project took just **1.5 days to return on design investment**, based on the additional sales My/Mochi generated thanks to the redesign.

SALES TEAM TESTIMONIALS:

“It’s a key win that originally the brief was meant to be a ‘sisters’ or ‘cousins’ level of change, and we ended up with a revolutionary redesign that didn’t lose consumers at all. The consumer didn’t really notice this was a new brand, [to them] it’s the same brand they’ve always had.”

RUSSELL BARNETT, MANAGING DIRECTOR AND CMO, MY/MOCHI

MEDIA IMPACT/REACH

My/Mochi’s profile is growing in tandem with the uplift in sales following the redesign. The most important points to note from 2021 are Food Network magazine awarding the brand a place in the frozen food hall of fame (up there with prolific US household names such as Eggo Waffles, Lean Cuisine, Hot Pockets, DiGiorno Rising Crust Pizzas and Bird’s Eye).

My/Mochi has also been named for the Nielsen BASES award for 2021 breakthrough innovations. The results are still to be announced (at time of writing) but this marks a significant milestone for the brand's profile on a national scale.

Furthermore, the brand has now been featured in publications as diverse as:



THE DAILY BEAST
MASHED
GUILTY EATS
YAHOO
AD AGE
VICE
EAT THIS
GOOD MORNING AMERICA

CNN
PARENTS
POP SUGAR
COSMOPOLITAN
PEOPLE
FORBES
REFINERY29
THRILLIST
WASHINGTON POST

VEG NEWS
EAT THIS, NOT THAT!
DELISH
SPOON UNIVERSITY
ELITE DAILY
RACHAEL RAY EVERY DAY
FOOD NETWORK
REAL SIMPLE

FUNDING

The beauty of My/Mochi's success is that this is an entirely self-funded business, and the results you have read above are standalone: no additional funding has come into the business to achieve them. In fact, the brand has committed to self-funded the incremental capacity needed to grow the business, which is a direct result from the sales uplift detailed above.

OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

The brand achieved all this with no paid media advertising at all.

In the words of the client, “We’re at a disadvantage every day: Our competitors spend more on media advertising in a day than we do in a year.

“We did one press release that talked about a new name and new ingredients - but the story was about making sure people didn’t feel like it was a new brand even though the design changed so dramatically.”

SOURCES

1. PRnewswire.com - Creator of the Modern Frozen Snack Category Raises the Bar While Ditching the Stick
2. Wikipedia - Mikawayaya
3. Today.com - Best Ice Cream Shops In America
4. SPINs, MULO Frozen Novelty \$ Sales Latest 52 Wks as of 3/21/21
5. SPINs, MULO Frozen Novelty \$ Sales Latest 24 Wks as of 3/21/21
6. SPINs, Convenience Frozen Novelty \$ Sales Latest 12 Wks as of 3/21/21