

CASSIES 2011 Cases

Brand/Case: McCain Sweet Potato Superfries

**Winner: Packaged Goods Food—Bronze
Best Launch—Bronze**

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Crossover Notes: All winning cases contain lessons that cross over from one case to another. David Rutherford has been identifying these as Crossover Notes since CASSIES1997. The full set for CASSIES 2011 can be downloaded from the Case Library section at www.cassies.ca

Crossover Note 1. What a Brand Stands For.
Crossover Note 25. Brand Linkage (when should the brand name appear).

To see creative, go to the Case Library Index and click on the additional links beside the case.

Section 1 — BASIC INFORMATION

Business Results Period (Consecutive Months):	January 2009 – June 2010
Start of Advertising/Communication Effort:	March 30, 2009
Base Period for Comparison:	n/a – this is a launch
Geographic Area Covered:	Canada
Annual Budget Range:	\$1 - 2 million

Synopsis of the Case

McCain Superfries is the largest brand in the Canadian frozen potato category. In the quest to bring news to the category and answer consumer's desire for healthier and, at the same time, convenient options, McCain developed two line extensions to the Superfries brand: McCain Sweet Potato Superfries – Plank Cut and Crinkle Cut.

We had to establish these as a delicious addition to everyday meals. In addition, we had to be mindful not to denigrate our existing Superfries products or trigger consumers to simply replace one Superfries product with another. The objective was to generate additional growth.

When we supported the launch with advertising Sweet Potato Superfries started to fly off the shelf, exceeding all expectations and making this one of the most successful product launches in the history of McCain.

Section II — SITUATION ANALYSIS

a) Overall Assessment

Over 60% of Canadians buy McCain frozen potatoes at retail. However, consumers haven't bought into the idea that Superfries can be part of a balanced diet. Sweet potatoes, on the other hand, are recognized as a nutritional powerhouse. So, although they are not mainstream yet, we wanted to make them more of an everyday consideration.

Research also showed that sweet potato fries could "stretch" the traditional demographic profile of the french-fry consumer. They are an appealing side or snack option to adults, whereas french fries generally appeal to kids. This represented an opportunity for incremental sales to the frozen potato category. (Source: BASES, July 2007.)

b) Resulting Business Objectives

- To launch Sweet Potato Superfries Plank Cut and Crinkly Cut, getting \$3.9 million in annual sales; with 32% or \$1.3 million incremental to the frozen potato category.
- After a full year to be ranked #16 and #29 in the frozen potato category in annual dollar volume.

Section III — STRATEGIC THINKING

a) Analysis and Insight

Sweet potato consumption typically occurs at holiday occasions, and although it is becoming more common for casual dining restaurants to offer sweet potatoes, they are still considered a niche offering. Home consumption of sweet potato fries is rare – they are not top of mind and are quite tedious to make. So, we had to convince Moms that Sweet Potato Superfries are a great-tasting and nutritious addition to the french-fry repertoire—not just suited for children, but for an adult palate as well.

b) Communication Strategy

Our first objective was to build awareness of McCain Sweet Potato Superfries, while driving trial. We had to convince McCain Superfries consumers and general sweet potato lovers that McCain Sweet Potato Superfries are a great tasting alternative to regular fries, and that they can feel good about serving them as part of a balanced diet. [Crossover Note 1](#).

Section IV — KEY EXECUTIONAL ELEMENTS

a) “The Sweet Potato Story”

This 30-second television commercial features a farmer in the soft, early morning light. He pulls sweet potatoes out of the soil and puts them into a basket. Then he washes one, and we hear a flowery, eloquent description of the sweet potato. At this point, it’s obvious the farmer is out of character with the eloquent description. He’s finally had enough and addresses the voice-over, but in a real, almost awkward manner. The idea was to juxtapose the visual cues of a down-to-earth, wholesome food with the humour and fun that people associate with french fries. [Crossover Note 25](#).

b) Media Execution

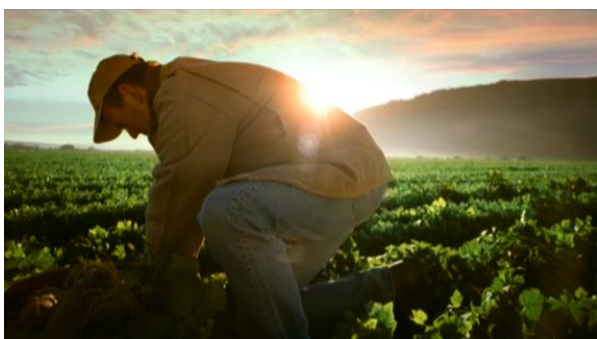
The launch was supported with a 30-second television spot in English and French Canada, as well as with a 15-second cut-down version. The spot ran on 10 conventional selective market stations, two conventional networks, and 17 specialty stations in all major markets across Canada.

In English Canada, the launch flight, with the 30-second spot, ran from March 30 to May 31, 2009, followed by a 15-second cut-down running from June 1 to June 28, 2009. A sustaining flight ran from October 19, 2009, to January 3, 2010, with the 30-second spot. In French Canada, where the product was in market a couple of weeks later, the launch was supported from August 31 to November 29, 2009, with the 30-second spot.

For the launch flight, we ran 100 GRPs per week for 13 consecutive weeks, which is the bare minimum for launch levels. In total, the launch was supported by 2,368 GRPs in English Canada and 1,300 GRPs in French Canada.



V/O:



They come from the earth,



dirty, ragged.



But inside is a natural sweetness



that comes from being wrapped in the Earth's embrace and gently caressed by the hands of loving farmers ...



Farmer:

"Whoa, this ain't no romance novel, it's just a sweet potato."



V/O:

Nature's sweet potato, now in McCain Superfries.

McCain. It's all good.

Section V — BUSINESS RESULTS

1. Sales Results Are More than Double the Projection

- In the last 52 weeks, ending June 5, 2010, sales have been over \$8.4 million. Against an objective of \$3.9 million, this can be considered one of McCain's most successful new product launches.

2. Ranking in the Frozen Potato Category Is Significantly Higher than Projected

- Superfries Plain Cut and Crinkle Cut are both top 13 items by dollar volume. The objective was to reach #16 and #29.
- McCain is now the leading sweet potato brand in the category.

3. Penetration Driven by McCain Sweet Potato Superfries

- McCain Sweet Potato Superfries helped increase penetration for frozen potatoes by 2.7 points one year after launch. This was the highest increase in the top 14 frozen food categories, which saw an average change in penetration of -0.1 points. In the same time frame, McCain Sweet Potato Superfries were a leading contributor to the overall increase in Superfries penetration from 28.6% to 30.6%.

(Source: ACNielsen Homescan, National All Channels, 52 weeks ending January 2, 2010.)

4. Category Growth Accelerated

- Six months leading up to the launch, the total frozen french fries category was growing at 8%. A year after the launch, growth was at 12%.
- Within the total frozen food category, potatoes are leading the top 10 dollar growth categories at the end of 2009.

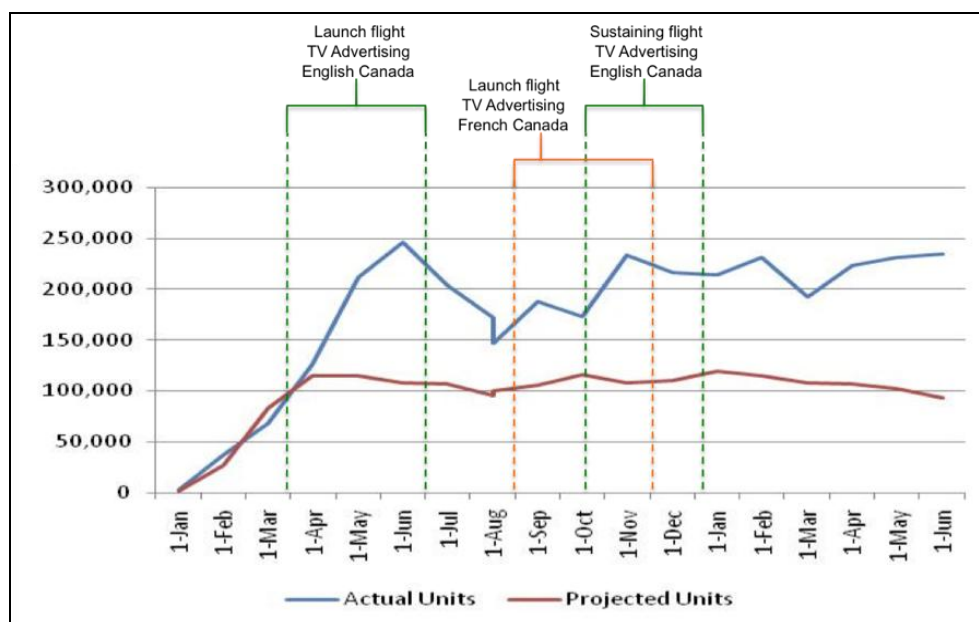
(Source: ACNielsen MarketTrack, National All Channels, 52 weeks ending January 2, 2010.)

Section VI — CAUSE & EFFECT BETWEEN ADVERTISING AND RESULTS

Timing

Once advertising support set in, sales flourished compared to forecast, and the peak coincided with the end of the launch flight for English Canada—despite the fact that this time of the year is typically a low season for frozen potato products. Sales peaked again in the middle of November, at the end of the launch flight in French Canada and during the sustaining flight in English Canada. Once the advertising was established, average sales units were tracking at 88% over plan.

Exhibit 1: Sweet Potato Superfries Unit Sales by Month in Correlation with Advertising Flight



(Source: ACNielsen MarketTrack, January 5, 2009 to June 5, 2010.)

Distribution Momentum

After the initial pipeline build, All Commodity Distribution (ACD) was projected to be 68%. The advertising created an additional pull effect from retail. Additional grocery chains signed up once they had seen the advertising and noticed consumers demanding the product. All Commodity Distribution grew to 89%, representing an increase of 29 points over target. (Please refer to Appendix, Exhibit 4.)

Message Effectiveness for Trial and Persuasion

Advertising tracking results reinforce the business success. The main message “Superfries are now made with sweet potatoes” is the strongest communicated message, with additional taste and nutritional credentials hitting the secondary objective spot-on. Overall the ad is working hard to drive appeal for the product and making viewers feel good about serving Sweet Potato Superfries to their friends and family. [See more data in the Appendix.]

The advertising achieved a Persuasion Rating in the top 4% of all Millward Brown Canadian ads tested.

Persuasion for "The Sweet Potato Story" was extremely positive. With a 26% Persuasion Rating, it was more than double the norm, making this one of the top 4% persuasion scores among all Millward Brown ads tested in Canada. The majority of respondents are highly responsive to the points being made and are likely to try new McCain Sweet Potato Superfries. [See more data in the Appendix.]

Pricing

Although Sweet Potato Superfries are regularly priced higher than other Superfries due to higher raw material costs, the pricing strategy overall did not change throughout the launch. Normal price discounting did occur and was taken into consideration when the business objectives were set.

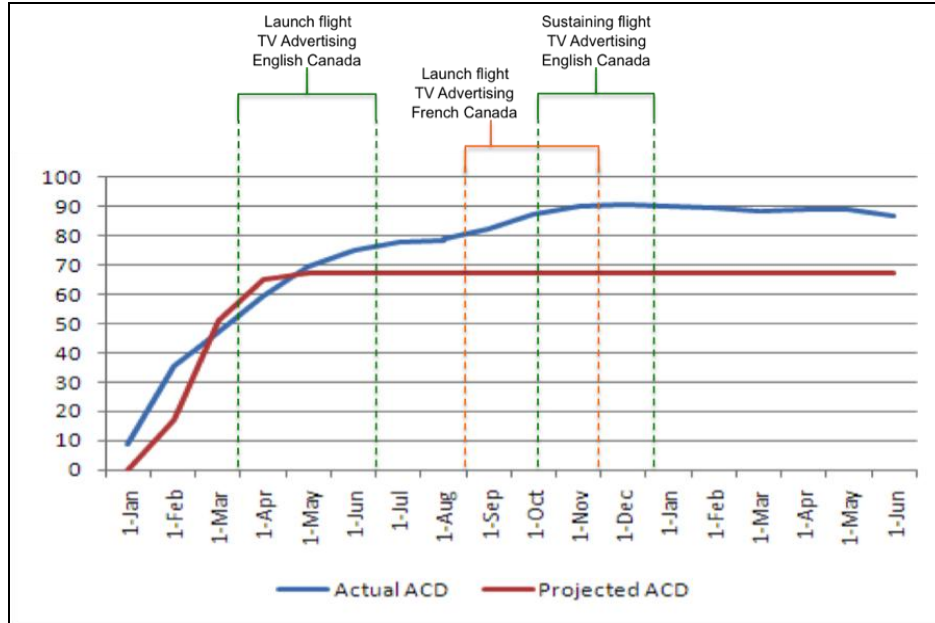
Promotion

There were no out-of-the-ordinary promotional activities to drive sales compared to the original plan.

APPENDIX

Distribution in Correlation with the Advertising

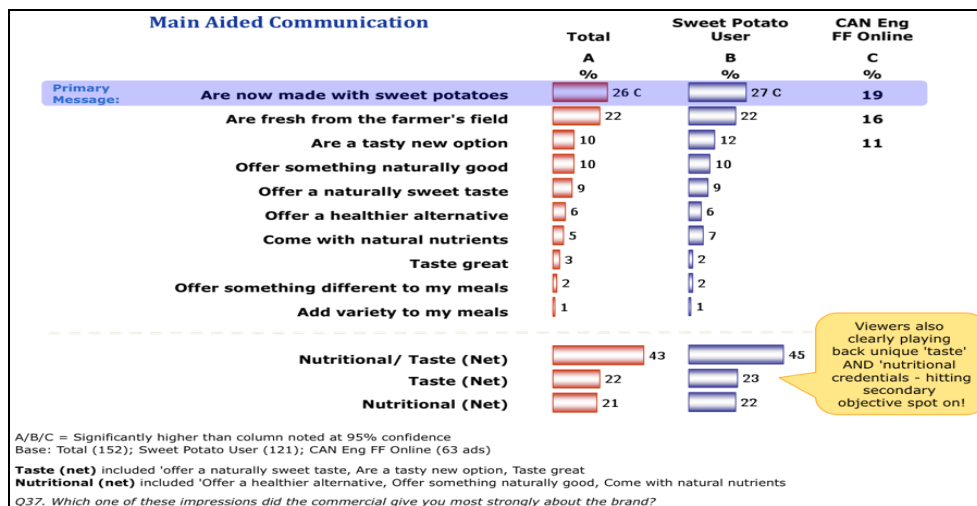
Exhibit 4: McCain Sweet Potato Superfries Distribution by Month in Correlation with Advertising Flight



(Source: ACNielsen MarketTrack, January 5, 2009 to June 5, 2010.)

Message Effectiveness for Trial and Persuasion

Exhibit 5: Total Prompted Communication



(Source: Millward Brown's Link™ Evaluation, May 4, 2009.)

Millward Brown's Link™ Test Results

Exhibit 6: Link Summary of Results

		Main (152) A %	Sweet Potato User (121) B %	CAN English Online FF (173 Ads) D %
Branded Engagement: Opportunity to Communicate	Branding "McCain Sweet Potato Superfries" (Top Box)	38 C	39 C	23
	Enjoyment (Mean)	3.87 C	3.99 C	3.34
	Active Involvement (Mean)	4.39	4.6	5.01
	Active Positive	42	45	42
	Active Negative	2	1	8 AB
	Ease of Understanding (Top Box)	79 C	82 C	64
	Awareness Index	9	10	5
Brand Associations: Aided Communication: (Top Box) Opportunity to Communicate	New Information (Top Box)	24 C	27 C	10
	Relevance (Top Box)	39 C	43 C	24
	Distinction (Top Box)	27 C	29 C	19
	Credibility (Top Box)	44 C	49 C	29
	Brand Appeal (Top Box)	20	24 C	14
		Primary: Are now made with Sweet Potatoes	26 C	27 C
	Other: Are fresh from the farmer's field	22	22	16
Motivations: User Groups	Users (Top 2 Box) (n=11)*, (n=10)**	*	**	58
	Trialists (Top 2 Box) (n=15)*, (n=15)**	*	**	33
	Non-Users (Top 2 Box) (n=126), (n=96)	68 C	78 C	44
	Persuasion Rating	26C	32C	11

Sweet Potato User Definition: Those who are willing to try or like sweet potato fries.
 *Caution: Small base size for main, **Caution: Small base for Sweet Potato User
 A/B/C/D Significant testing done at 95% confidence

(Source: Millward Brown's Link™ Evaluation, May 4, 2009.)

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