



## DBA DESIGN EFFECTIVENESS AWARDS 2011

Project Title: Funkin Mixers  
Category: 04 Packaging  
Sub Category: 4.2 Branded – Drink  
Client Company: Funkin  
Design Consultancy: Blue Marlin Brand Design  
Current Date: 4 July 2011

*bluemarlin*

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It's not easy being perfect. But it is possible to have a perfect product yet at the same time have a brand that needs a certain something. That's where design makes the difference. And in the case of Funkin Mixers, that difference was a return of 31 times the original design investment.

Funkin Mixers are 100 per cent natural pureed fruit cocktail ingredients that guarantee the perfect cocktail with the addition of a little ice and the appropriate spirit. Beloved by bartenders and mixologists the world over, the fledgling company understood that it needed to communicate its proposition clearly and more engagingly to consumers and trade buyers to establish a new category. In addition to graphics, it needed to address the structure of multipacks if it was to stand any chance of swaying the UK's uber demanding multiple grocers.

Blue Marlin set to work on creating dynamic graphics that visually described the contents of the pack and dialled up the sophistication and upmarket nature of the brand. We also embraced retailers' strictures to come up with shelf ready multipacks that sold the brand and withstood the rough and tumble of grocery distribution and stocking.

Since the new design launched in June 2010, Funkin has gained listings in Sainsbury's, Tesco and Asda, and at Majestic Wine Warehouse. Its on-trade listings have gone through the roof with gains in nightclubs, casinos, national pub chains, holiday camps, airlines, major wholesalers, hotel chains and many more. The brand has also made significant in-roads into export markets in Europe, the US, Asia and the Middle East.

In the year to June 2011, volume increased 61 per cent, equivalent to approximately £1m, which is enormous for an entrepreneurial brand in only its second year of trading.

(290 words)

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

### Outline of Project Brief

As a new and unique product Funkin Mixers faced an interesting challenge: to create a market where none had existed before in the hearts and minds of both consumers and hard to impress retailers. It enlisted the help of Blue Marlin to:

- Create a design that enables everyone who looks at the brand to understand it immediately
- Address consumer confusion over alcohol content
- Deliver a brand identity that reflects the premium quality and sophisticated nature of the product supported by convenience and consistency messaging
- Optimise outer carton construction for transit and on-shelf performance
- Create outers that can be merchandised to create a pick'n'mix experience
- Deliver a new structural format and graphics for a new range of multipacks
- Drive sales and gain distribution

### Description

Funkin is unique – the only 100 per cent natural fresh fruit cocktail mixer. Funkin's heritage is creating the very best purees for professional bartenders to use to make the best cocktails in the world. The purees do not contain any artificial colours, flavours, preservatives or additives. The company's mission is to revolutionise the cocktail party for those occasions where a bartender is not present by creating foolproof instant cocktails thus giving you more time to have fun. Think of it as a bartender in a pouch – simply pour, add the relevant spirit and some ice and voila: a ten second cocktail mixed to professional standards. Easy, convenient, mess free, waste free and with no need for specialist knowledge or a liquor cabinet brimming with ingredients.

### Overview of Market

Funkin Mixers have no direct like for like competitors. Cocktail syrups and cordials exist and there are own label cocktail mixers, but Funkin is the only pure fruit pre-mix puree on the market.

It can be argued that it competes for share of throat with premixed drinks, such as Smirnoff Ice, WKD, Bacardi Breezer and Moscow Mule, and also with popular mainstream wines, particularly Pinot Grigio. Funkin appeals to a wide range of consumers, from better off

students to young professionals to foodies. It is, however, attempting to create a new niche in both the on trade and the drinking at home market.

The brand faced several significant challenges, not least of which was to establish a new sector. The on trade's reservations were based on concerns that cocktails are hard to make, labour intensive and require specialist knowledge and specialist ingredients – concerns that Funkin could allay immediately if it could be heard. The off trade required convincing that Funkin Mixers could and would look better on shelf, and that consumers would buy into the idea of making cocktails at home. All of which meant the packaging had to communicate the simplicity, convenience and sophistication of the product.

#### Project Launch Date

The new design was rolled out from June 2010.

#### Size of Design Budget

Less than £35,000

#### Outline of Design Solution

Funkin is a dynamic entrepreneurial business that very quickly established a loyal following among bartenders in some of the world's finest drinking establishments, including five star hotels and achingly cool style bars, through its professional range, Funkin Pro.

However, a year in, its consumer range was proving to be a more difficult sell. A key concern was that people were confused as to what Funkin Puree – as it was then called – was and if it contained alcohol. The foil pouch was a given; it is intrinsic to its offer as it delivers the optimum amount of fruit puree for each cocktail in a convenient and mess free format. That meant that the graphics needed to work much harder to attract 18-35 year old drinkers and to emphasise the nature of the product. Its outers and a new multipack format needed to persuade retailers that it was easy to range and merchandise, and to convert consumers to the idea of serving cocktails at home.

An essential part of the redesign was renaming the brand Funkin Mixer, which instantly helped to clarify that it is a cocktail mixer as opposed to a pre-mixed cocktail.

The graphics on both pouch and carton heighten the brand's sense of sophistication and style. The inclusion of a '100% Natural' brand claim underpins the purity and premium nature

of the product. The outline glass device that appears on all variants describes at a glance – and from a long way off – what the brand is for. It is highly adaptable, effectively future-proofing the brand, and allows for co-branding, for example with Bacardi on the mojito variant. It also carries a device that advises which spirit should be used with which mixer.

The structural design fulfils retailers' needs and merchandises beautifully, reflecting the vibrant colourways and clear communication of the pouches.

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## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

### **Increase in sales**

Sales shot up immediately on launch of the new look and have continued to rise steadily and ahead of forecast. Pouches and multipacks have literally flown off the shelves. In the year to June 2011 volume increased by 61 per cent, which is equivalent to circa £1m in value terms. The performance is all the more impressive given that Funkin is establishing an entirely new sector – educating consumers and trade buyers along the way through the packaging alone.

### **Increases in market distribution**

Where to start? Among the multiple grocers, Funkin has gained listings with Sainsbury's, Asda and Tesco, which is no mean feat for a pioneering brand considering the general level of risk averseness in the retail trade, competition for shelf space and the physical constraints imposed by stocking policies. It is also in national distribution in Majestic Wine Warehouse.

In the on trade it is stocked nationally by Barracuda, Punch, Butlins, Pontins and JW Lees; all Gentings Casinos; 80 Luminar Nightclubs, SSP Station pubs and a vast number of independent bars, pubs, clubs, parks and hotels. Hotel chains stocking Funkin now include Hilton, Park, Shearings and Radisson.

It is in wholesale distribution through leading players, such as Mathew Clark, WTBS, Coes, Wallaces, LWC and Bibendum. In the travel sector it has made in-roads into duty free with six airport listings, and is stocked on Virgin Atlantic (Las Vegas route), EasyJet, BMI Baby, Thomas Cook, TUI, FlyBe, Jet2Com, Iceland Air and Frontiers.

### **Improvements in consumer perception or behaviour**

Since the redesign its popularity has increased beyond recognition. Direct positive consumer feedback has increased massively and the reaction from the trade has been overwhelmingly positive. The hefty increase in sales is based on the fact that retail and on-trade buyers now get the proposition and consumers know what to do with Funkin Mixers.

## Return on design investment

The new design paid for itself 31 times over in 12 months.

## Testimonials

*"We are delighted, the redesign was a significant step forward. We have better stand out in both off and on trade and are able to own the fixture, largely due to the outer pack design and, of course, supported by the new look pouches. Sales are up 61 per cent year to date with much more growth forecast ahead and the distribution gains have been fantastic."*

- Andrew King, Funkin CEO

*"Our research has identified that our customers want cocktails as part of their night out, but don't want to spend ages waiting at the bar. The Funkin range allows our clubs to create great tasting classic cocktails such as daquiri's and mojito's without the lengthy wait often associated with cocktails."*

- Jodi Bevan, Head of Commercial Purchasing for Luminar

## RESEARCH RESOURCES

Funkin internal sales data

## OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS

Was it advertising? Promotion? PR?

No, there has been no other marketing or PR activity around the launch to promote sales of Funkin Mixers. No employee training has taken place, and the website has barely changed since the rebrand. The brand has been 100 per cent reliant on packaging to sell itself, proving that the increase in sales has been purely the result of effective design.