



SUCCESS DOESN'T COME ON A PLATE
How Pot Noodle won over a new generation

Marketing Society Effectiveness Awards, entered for
Category C: Effective Marketing Communications
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Executive summary

The challenge

Pot Noodle's association with 1990s 'Slacker' culture had always made it the choice of the lazy and the indolent, but today's 16-24 year-olds no longer identified with that lifestyle. They were driven, ambitious and determined to succeed.

Pot Noodle was becoming a cultural pariah and as a result, its sales and market share were dropping. Something radical had to be done.

Our response

We spent time with Pot Noodle's young audience and realised they still valued its speed and ease, but not because they were lazy, because they were *busy*. So we flipped Pot Noodle's convenience benefit on its head and humorously positioned it as the choice of go-getters chasing their dreams.

Our idea was: *Pot Noodle. You Can Make It.* And between September and December 2015 we used it to completely re-launch the brand.

What this idea delivered

Young people completely embraced the *You Can Make It* idea. The hashtag generated 29M impressions and Pot Noodle became a trending topic as our inspirational message was re-tweeted and re-posted by media brands and youth influencers.

Perceptions of Pot Noodle changed for the better and this translated into business results. Volume and Value sales jumped by over 3% as over 364,000 extra houses bought Pot Noodle, pushing total brand value over the £100M mark for the first time. Pot Noodle pushed back new Pot Snack competitors and regained lost market share.

Why we should win

These days we all talk about impacting on popular culture to drive business results. This campaign is a rare example of that theory in action. By placing Pot Noodle at the heart of today's youth culture we have won over a new generation to the brand.



The problem: The market was growing, but Pot Noodle wasn't

Pot Noodle was invented in 1977 when two Welsh lads brought the idea of instant noodles back from their travels in Asia. By the turn of the century it had become the biggest instant hot snack brand and a British cultural icon.

But then, after decades of success, Pot Noodle began to struggle.

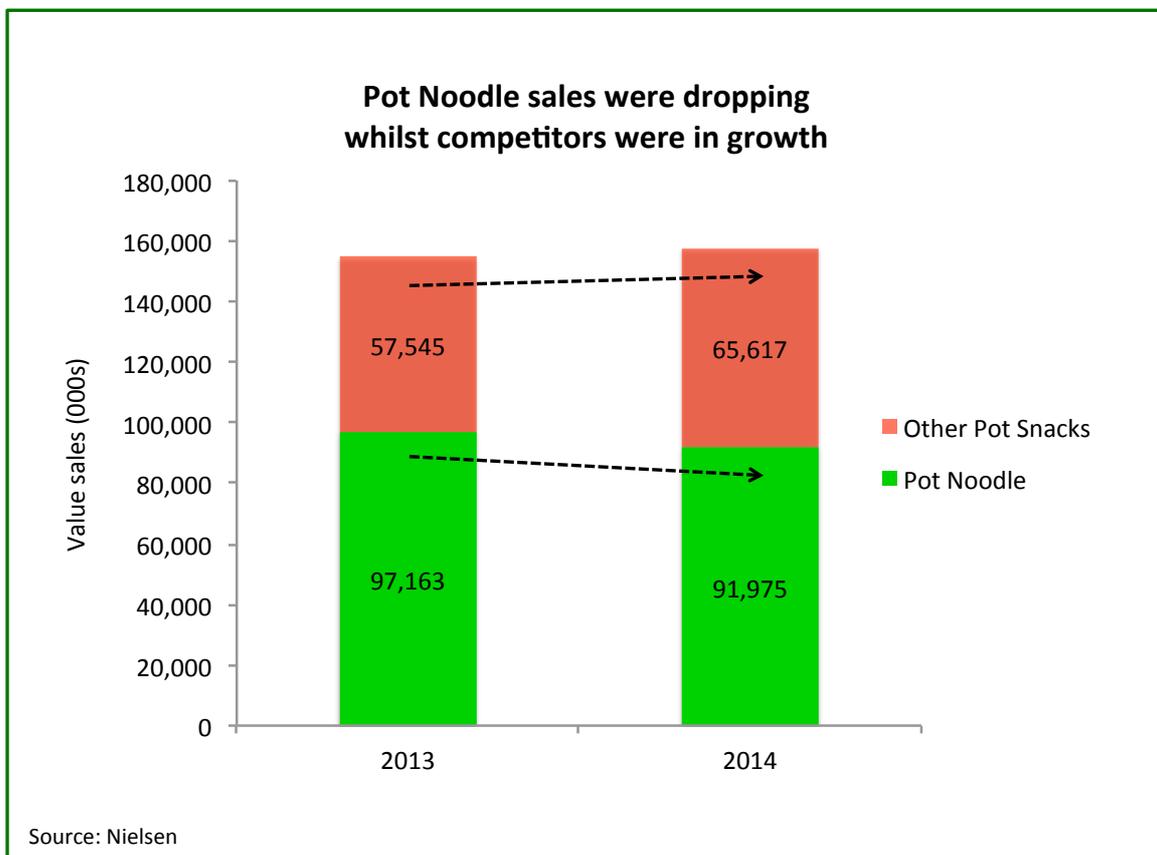
The pot snack market was still piping hot. New entrants like Itsu and Kabuto were doing well and big brands like Uncle Bens and Dolmio were launching their own pot products. All these competitors were growing rapidly.

But Pot Noodle sales weren't keeping up.

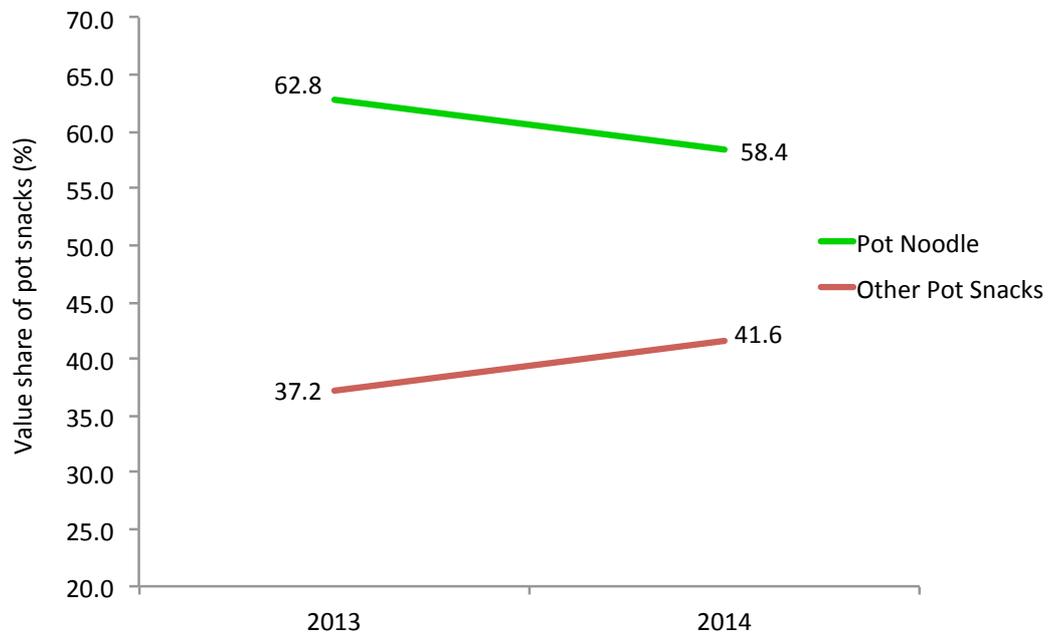
In fact they were slipping.

And that meant Pot Noodle's market share was dropping fast.

We had to find out why.



And as a result, Pot Noodle value share was in decline



Source: Nielsen

The cause: Pot Noodle's slacker image was no longer aspirational

Pot Noodle became cultural icon in the 1990s when it was embraced by the 'Slacker' generation.

These were the kids who were proud to sit around in their undies on the sofa watching Men Behaving Badly and playing on their PlayStations.

The ease and convenience of Pot Noodle made it the perfect food for this infamous 90s lifestyle, and the brand became emblematic of slacker culture.

So perhaps it's not surprising that this was the message Pot Noodle had pushed ever since, most recently with its 'Why try Harder?' campaign which featured a man marrying a footballer in order to live the easy life and another pretending to be a towel so people would carry him to the beach every day.

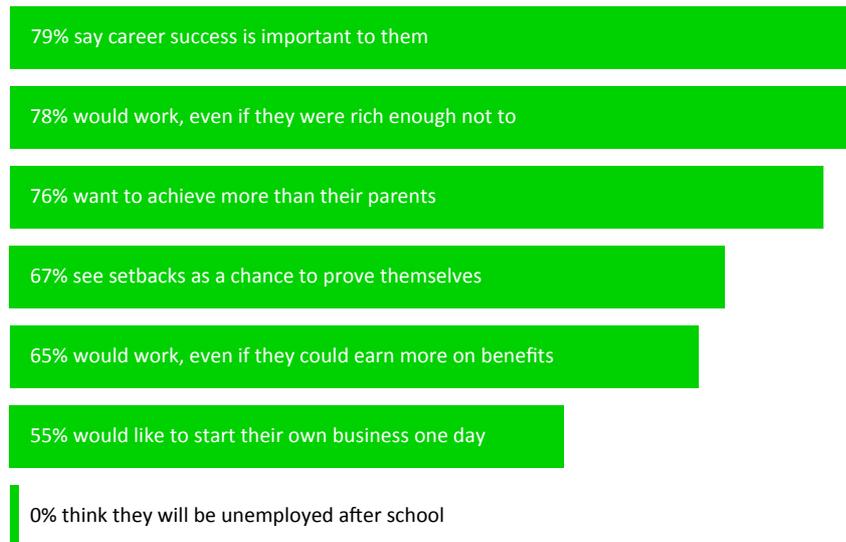


But while Pot Noodle had kept saying the same thing since the 90s, young people had changed. There was now a new generation of 16-24 year olds buying pot snacks, and their values were completely different.

These kids had grown up watching their peers become tech billionaires (Mark Zuckerberg), self-made media moguls (Zoella) and global peace envoys (Emma Watson). And they were determined to achieve success of their own.

79% said career success was important to them. 76% wanted to achieve more than their parents. 55% planned to start their own business. And none of them expected to be unemployed after school.

YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY ARE HARDWORKING, MULTI-TASKING OPTIMISTS



Source: Britain Thinks survey 2014

This was the most ambitious generation of young people ever, and Pot Noodle's slacker image was badly out of step with their values.

The insight: Less time cooking means more time winning.

We spent time with these ambitious, motivated young people. We went to their homes and hung out in their student flatshares and asked them how they actually used our product.

And they told us something really obvious, but really interesting.

They valued Pot Noodle for the same reason the slackers had - because it was quick and easy.

But not because they were lazy.

Because they were *busy*.

And less time cooking meant more time winning.

LESS TIME COOKING MEANS MORE TIME WINNING

*No-one has the time to cook.
Time is really precious.*

*If I'm doing a lot of work it's so
much easier just to pour some
water onto some noodles.*

*Right now I'm doing 16
hours at the library a day
and the only thing available
on campus is a kettle...*

*That's when I need
quick food. When I'm
rushing back out to get
on with something.*

Source: Lucky Generals qualitative research

The idea: You can make it

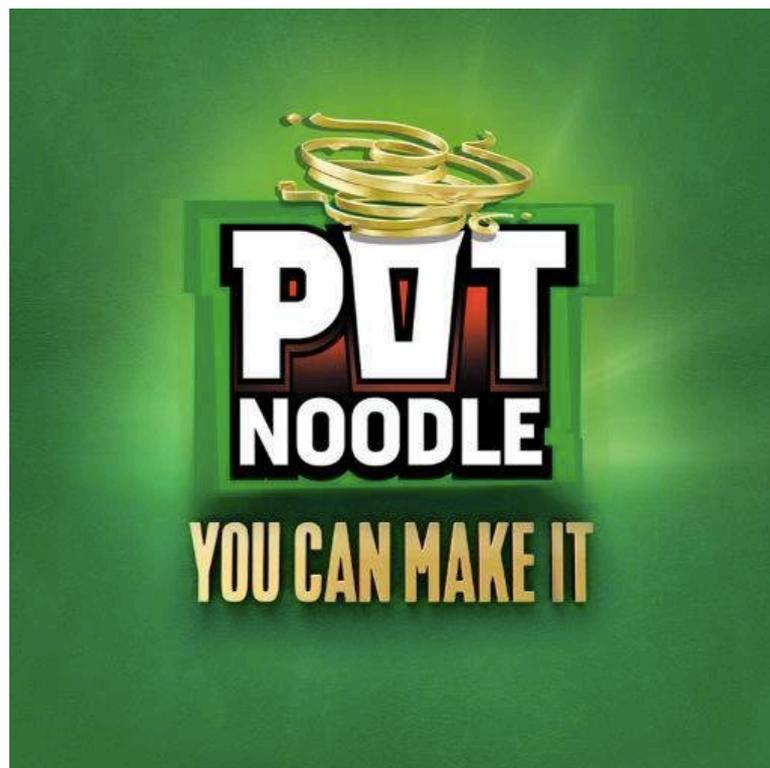
Now we understood why this new generation of go-getters used our product we could make the brand relevant to them again.

We would 'flip' Pot Noodle's convenience benefit, positioning it as perfect for the busiest and most ambitious people on the planet.

(After all, if you can make a delicious hot snack in four minutes flat then imagine what you can do in four years).

We set out to deliver this new message with the brand's trademark humour and an irreverent, unexpected twist.

Our creative idea?



This simple line was literally true of the product (anyone can make it) but had a deeper meaning that was completely in tune with the zeitgeist.

The launch: Helping a generation make it in 2015

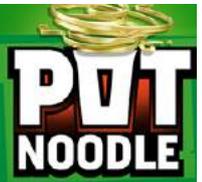
Over the period from September to December 2015 we used the 'You Can Make It' idea to completely re-launch the Pot Noodle brand. Given that our audience had a high propensity to be online and access the internet on their mobiles we focused heavily on digital channels such as social, online video and online display.

We kicked-off our campaign with the story of a young man who dreams of success in the boxing ring (but not as a boxer!) The 60 second version of this film broke in the X Factor on the 11th September 2015 and we tied-in paid support on Twitter to further amplify the story.



We then ran mobile and online ads encouraging our young audience to keep smashing it.





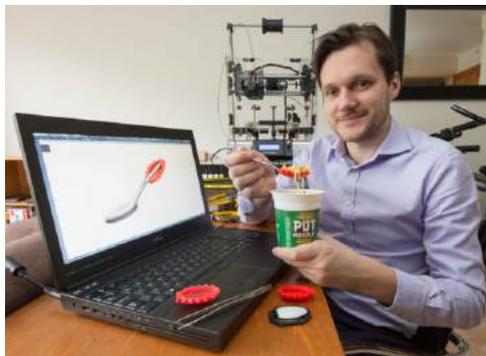
But we did much more than merely *talk* about young people making it.

We literally helped them do so.

A week after the 'Boxer' spot aired we sent the star of the ad to the O2 Arena, where he appeared as a real life 'ring boy' in front of the assembled press at the Commonwealth Bout between Anthony Joshua and Gary Cornish.



Then we launched a partnership with the online youth sites The Poke and The Tab to back young entrepreneurs. Our first investment funded the production of a revolutionary Noodlespoon invented by a young man from Sheffield. And we followed this up by inviting Pot Noodle fans to send us their own ideas for timesaving inventions.



We visited 20 Universities and handed out 100K samples of Pot Noodle to students who were facing the daunting task of 'Making it' in their studies.



And we ran a huge on-pack promotion to win Pot Noodle shaped phone chargers that would help our audience 'Stay 100% all day'. This was supported with dedicated out of home and highly impactful in-store displays.



We even launched a music career. The band who had recorded the music for Boxer were picked up by a major label on the strength of the ads' performance so we helped them produce the full track – fittingly entitled 'Winner' – and a music video to launch it.



So from September to December 2015, in every single channel and in every single way, Pot Noodle was helping young people make it.

The results: Back on the boil

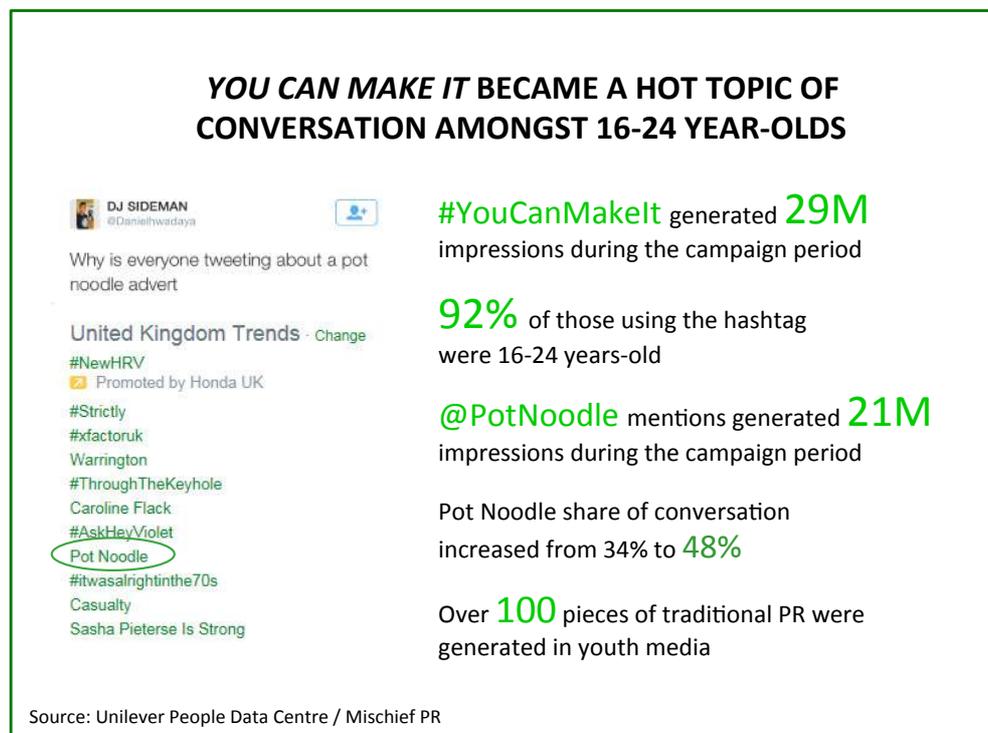
1. 16-24s gobbled up our message

Pot Noodle does not have a huge marketing budget. The total media budget for all the activity described above was £2.5M. Not bad by any means, but not a heavyweight campaign in the world of youth marketing.

So to really land the *You Can Make It* message, we knew we had to get talked about. We needed young people to be actively engaging with our campaign and sharing it with their friends.

And that's exactly what happened.

When the 'Boxer' spot broke in the X Factor Pot Noodle started trending on Twitter (something that had never happened before) as thousands of young people and high profile influencers re-tweeted the *You Can Make It* message. The conversation continued with the live stunt at the O2 arena and Pot Noodle's support of young entrepreneurs, and by the end of December the You Can Make It hashtag had generated 29M free impressions for the brand, increasing Pot Noodle's share of conversation from 34% to 48%.



And young people didn't just talk about the *You Can Make It* campaign, they actively engaged with as well.



Boxer was the most shared viral video in the 2 weeks following launch, garnering tens of millions of views as it was shared in newsfeeds across the UK. The Power Pot promotion smashed all redemption benchmarks and we received detailed proposals for over 80 timesaving inventions in need of funding!

16-24 YEAR-OLDS ACTIVELY ENGAGED WITH AND SHARED THE *YOU CAN MAKE IT* CAMPAIGN

Boxer No. 1 viral video for 2 weeks running with **184,686** shares

Boxer viewed **1.8M** times on YouTube with a completion rate of **82%**

Daily Star post of Boxer viewed **12M** times and shared by **123,000** people

Over **20,000** Pot Noodle phone chargers redeemed by on-pack winners

On pack redemption rate of **14%** versus an industry average of 3-4%

82 proposals received for timesaving inventions

Source: Unruly media / Unilever People Data Centre / Unilever retail data

2. The *You Can Make It* message changed perceptions of the brand

The data above demonstrates that the *You Can Make It* campaign had huge impact and was widely engaged with and shared.

But did it change views of Pot Noodle?

The short answer is yes. In popular culture, the conversation about Pot Noodle altered completely.

Prior to the campaign, the best thing anyone had to say about Pot Noodle was that it was a guilty pleasure. A craving to be succumbed to and a mistake to feel guilty about afterwards.

But once we'd launched *You Can Make It*, major media outlets and youth influencers came out in positive support Pot Noodle. In particular they praised the positive message about gender choices that the Boxer spot delivered. From Attitude magazine to Perez Hilton (who has 6.1M Twitter followers alone) major cultural voices spoke up for the brand. During the campaign period positive reports of Pot Noodle in the press outweighed negative ones by a factor of 10 to 1.

YOUTH MEDIA OUTLETS AND INFLUENCERS THREW THEIR WEIGHT BEHIND THE YOU CAN MAKE IT MESSAGE

Positive media coverage outweighed negative by a factor of **10 to 1**

TWEETS 252K | **FOLLOWING** 650 | **FOLLOWERS** 6.12M | **FAVORITES** 99K

Perez Hilton (@PerezHilton) · 24h
This @Pot_Noodle commercial is so unexpected and brilliant!!!
#FollowYourDreams

The Daily Star
September 4 at 4:00pm
Pot Noodle you bloody geniuses – this new advert is GOLD.

Dane Bowers (@danebowers) · Sep 5
Loving the pot noodle ad!

Attitude (@attitudemag) · 8 Follow
Pot Noodle advert flipping gender stereotypes is a big hit attitude.co.uk/this-pot-noodle

METRO NEWS... BUT NOT AS
58.3M SHARES
The star of THAT Pot Noodle advert just became a ring boy for real at an O2 Arena boxing bout

MailOnline
Teenager who gave up boxing for acting becomes internet star after parading in skimpy satin shorts and crop top as a 'ring boy' in Pot Noodle ad

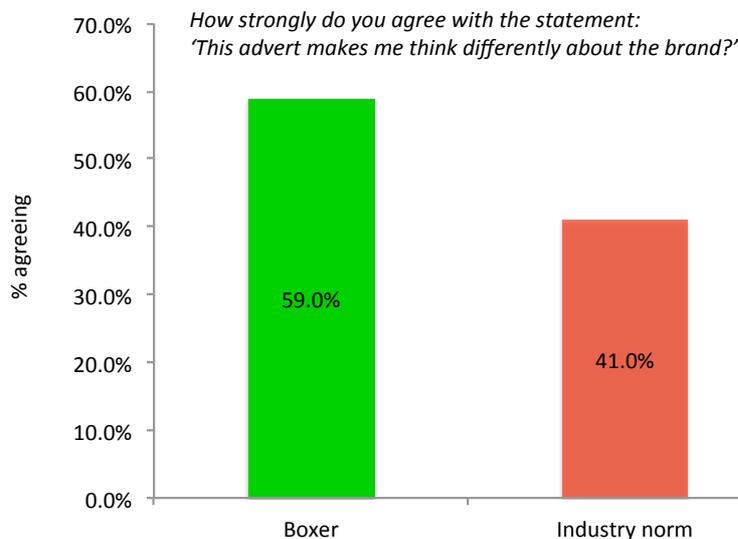
PinkNews
New Pot Noodle advert smashes gender stereotypes (VIDEO)

BBC SPORF
VIDEO: The amazing new Pot Noodle advert that is sweeping the nation! This is genius! BE/YNUCK2z

Source: Unilever People Data Centre / Mischief PR

We can also prove that the campaign changed the audience's views of Pot Noodle directly. Millward Brown pretesting of Boxer showed that 59% agreed it made them think differently about the brand – a significant difference versus the industry norm of 41%.

The campaign changed how people felt about Pot Noodle



Source: Millward Brown

This sentiment was echoed in qualitative research, where those exposed to *You Can Make It* communications praised Pot Noodle for making itself relevant, contemporary and even aspirational.

THE YOU CAN MAKE IT IDEA MAKES POT NOODLE MORE RELEVANT AND ASPIRATIONAL

It's clever. Anyone can make it. Just boil the kettle – as well as having more time to make it in your life. To achieve your dream.

I like it being linked to success and the future.

I think it makes me feel less guilty about eating it. You're busy. You're working hard. Makes me feel better.

It definitely reflects you can be focused on so many things without having to stop to eat. I think it's a great slogan. It definitely appeals to people like me.

It's not just for fat people! You can be busy and rich and still eat a Pot Noodle!

Source: Elstien Research / Lucky Generals qualitative research

And finally, the change in perceptions was literally visible in their social media behaviour as they aligned their own dreams and ambitions with the *You Can Make It* idea.

THE CHANGE IN OPINION OF POT NOODLE WAS CLEARLY VISIBLE IN SOCIAL CONVERSATION

92%

of all social media comments about Pot Noodle were positive or neutral

Samantha @j3weizndrugz 31m
That pot noodle advert should be the xfactor sponsor advert #youcanmakeit #encouragement

Michael Weeks @Lucky_Ac3 31m
Loving the new @Pot_Noodle advert! Sorry @SuperNoodles I've converted :x #youcandoit

Mark Bradley @mbradley01 18h
The Pot Noodle advert, very inspirational #youcanmakeit

mark andrew @Invisiblegay2 31m
Loving the new Pot Noodle advert breaking down stereotypes and expectations

Jodie Logan @JodieLogan 33m
'Ever since I was a kid I wanted to be something special that's why I ate pot noodles' 🥰 pot noodle advert going for it

Kem Ibs @Kemtuckey 11m
@Pot_Noodle The new ad has, at the very least, made me reconsider! Pmsl. Good job! 🙌👍🥰🥰 #youcanmakeit

Aaron @B4DS1GN4L 4m
The new Pot Noodle advert is where I see myself in 5 years.

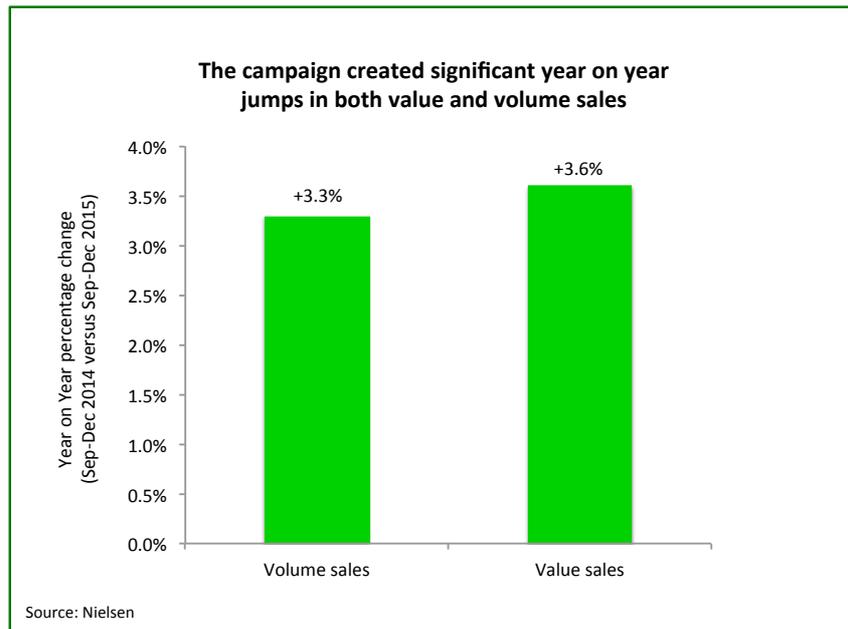
Lily Robert @LilyEmmaRose 32m
The pot noodle advert gives me hope

Source: Unilever People Data Centre / Twitter

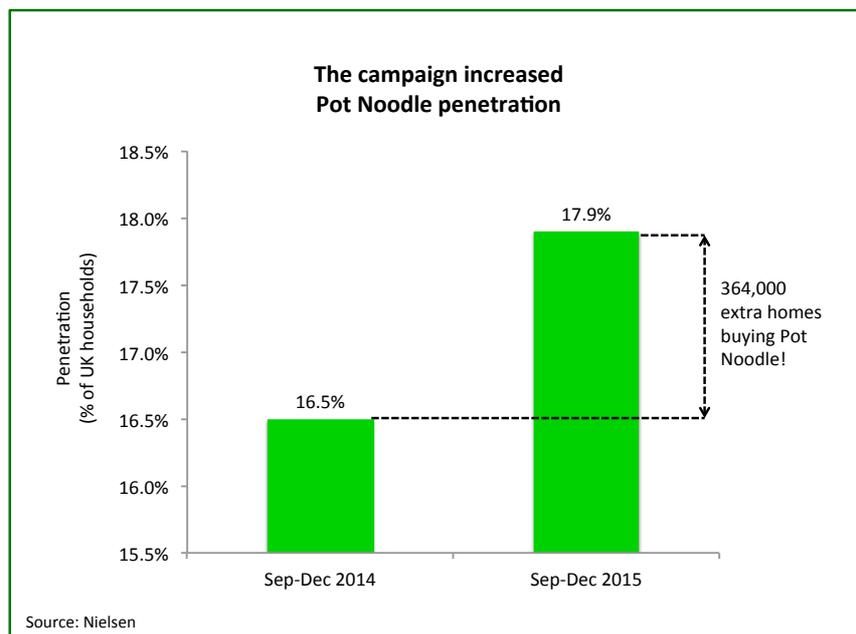
3. The change in perceptions increased sales, penetration and market share

We know from Unilever Market Mix modelling that Pot Noodle is particularly responsive to TV and Social investment, but even given that fact the commercial impact of the campaign went beyond our expectations.

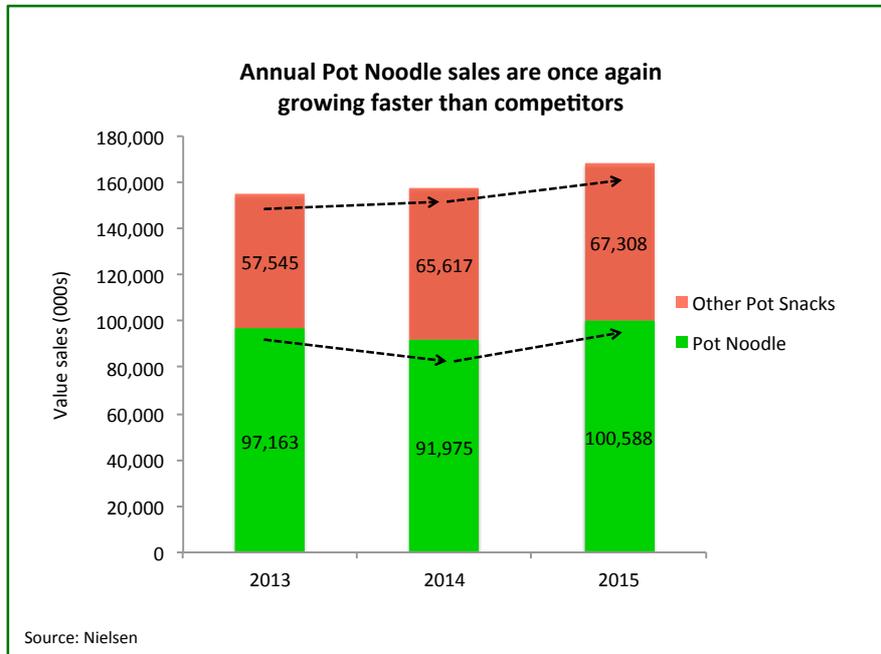
Volume and value sales in the campaign period both saw a significant year on year jump.



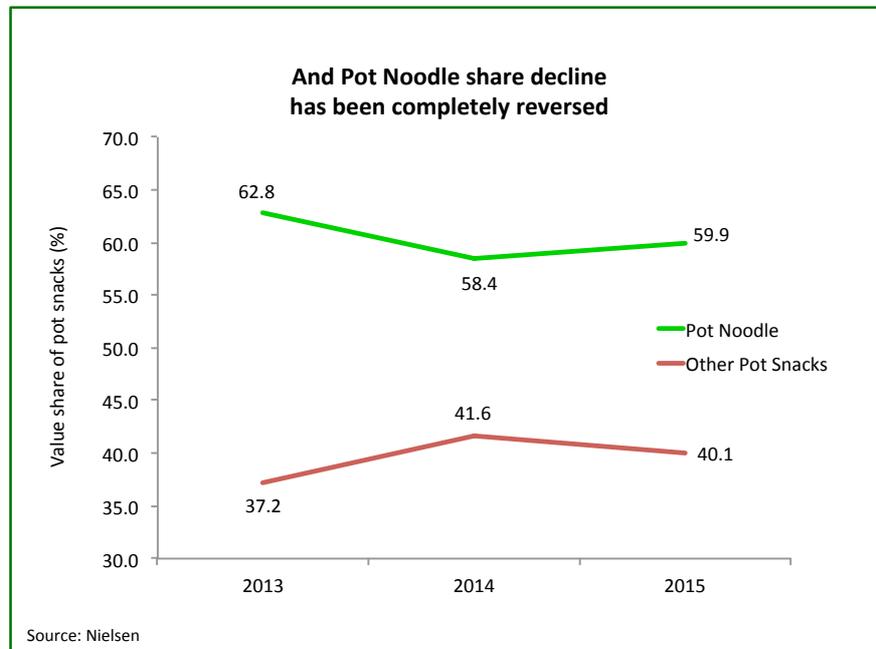
The campaign also brought new people into, and back to, the Pot Noodle brand. In total, 364,000 more houses bought Pot Noodle than had done so 12 months previously.



But most importantly of all, the campaign reversed the declining sales trend so that Pot Noodle was once again growing faster than competitors.



Which of course meant that Pot Noodle's decline in share was reversed.



By the end of the campaign period Pot Noodle was back where it should be – not only the largest brand in the Pot Snacks market but the fastest growing, selling over £100M for the first time ever and necessitating the Pot Noodle factory in Crumlin, Wales to produce a record output of over 160M pots in a year.

Conclusion: Success doesn't come on a plate

Pot Noodle faced a very difficult challenge – making itself relevant to a completely new generation of 16-24 year-olds.

Embracing the fact that this generation was fundamentally different from the previous one, Pot Noodle 'flipped' its main benefit – convenience – to position itself as the snack for motivated young go-getters instead of lazy slackers.

And the results of the campaign show just how much you can achieve if you spend less time cooking and more time chasing your dreams.

Now if you'll excuse us, we have to get going.

Because we've got a 2016 plan to execute... and success doesn't come on a plate.



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