



Fig. 2: Examples of distinct brand codes, derived from packaging, product sensory analysis and from ingredients. These codes guide the the consumer's autopilot at the POS and bring automatically and bring relevant contexts of use and the brand and the brand in an unmistakable way. The decisive factor remains the choice of a psychologically effective code and its mentally effective use. (Images: K&A BrandResearch)

The upward flight continues

Salty snacks have been enjoying increasing demand for years. The motto seems to be: the higher the quality of the raw material, the more authentic and artisanal the processing, the more successful the product. An observation by Florian Klaus, Director BrandPsychology at K&A BrandResearch.

The salty snacks product group has been benefiting from a steady upswing for years. Consumers obviously value the selection of natural raw materials and the impression of artisanal processing. This is particularly true for the category winner of the previous year: edible nuts, with more than 15 percent sales growth compared to 2019 - and this at an already high level. The heterogeneous snack specialties segment also continues to grow, with an increase of more than 18 percent. Even the classic potato chips are once again increasing by a good 10 percent thanks to current concepts (see Figure 2; source: Nielsen KW 53/2020). Over the past few years, two major development trends have crystallised in the psychological market research studies, from which salty snacks in particular are clearly benefiting. On the one hand, the continuing dominance of the topic of healthy eating reinforces the need for justification among consumers, especially as confectionery or snacking are generally classified as 'not necessarily healthy'. Hardly anyone can escape the social ideal 'You should eat consciously!'

Strict standards influence the grip on offers, which bring along airtight alibis

Even if this imperative doesn't settle until well into the automated back of the target groups' minds (Daniel Kahneman's System 1), it is significantly likely to be co-activated in the very decision-making environment with which we shop at the supermarket shelf for that evening of Netflix. As a facet of our intuitive decision-making, such strict norms now influence our reach for offerings that bring airtight alibis. So are delicious (basic utility), but at the same time at least socially acceptable. If not even exemplary. More and more brands that can impress with the naturalness of their ingredients end up in the shopping cart.

This is easier for nuts, potato chips, but also for snacks made from lentils or vegetables than for classic sugar products. Additional arguments for the harmlessness of a product help - as long as they do not endanger the perceived basic benefit. Proteins, veggies, animal welfare - what sweet products of all kinds sometimes have to laboriously acquire, salty snacks often already bring with them. And thus strengthen our lifestyle of a good conscience.

The second reason for the positive development lies in the suitability for everyday use, linked with the aforementioned everyday acceptance. In the hectic, if recently reduced to the essentials, everyday life (at least in the analogue area), especially those offers find a place that claim a clear usage situation for themselves. Nuts always go - in to-go packs, in the car, in the (home) office. They are more likely to fulfil the snacking character than sweets and chocolate. The convenient, uncomplicated divisibility of many salty snacks also contributes to their suitability for everyday use.

To anyone who has read marketing articles in recent months and years, these lines probably looked suspiciously familiar. That's right: Many competencies of salty snacks fit extremely well with the nutritional and lifestyle attitudes of the so-called generations Y and Z. From a socio-psychological point of view, this describes age cohorts that have experienced a common socialization phase and are therefore shaping a new zeitgeist. In the case of Gen Y/Z, this zeitgeist is characterised above all by the contrast of seemingly unlimited opportunities for self-realisation and a simultaneous constant limitedness due to ever new experiences of crisis.

Generations Y and Z are plagued by chronic lack of money

Raised in predominantly cooperative and participatory homes, co-determining, eye-to-eye, it seems history kept laying new dramas in the generations' path. While advancing digitalization makes smartphones and their users ever more powerful, the financial crisis, the climate crisis, the Covid 19 crisis are dramatically narrowing the scope. What remains is a chronic impatience - and the sometimes frustrated insistence on immediate successes, flexible and spontaneous positive experiences, long overdue solutions to the big issues of the day (see Fridays for Future).

The theme of "Corona" also acts here as an accelerant. The pressure of a global crisis on the present, everyday life and future prospects of an already impatient zeitgeist craving immediacy, combined with the experience of hitherto unimaginable radical changes of course by entire societies, feeds a fundamental "everything-must-be-possible" conviction. This is the social herald of what authors like the German star investor Frank Thelen diagnoses as first-principle thinking among disruptive technology pioneers.

Generations Y/Z, and indeed a social mainstream that goes far beyond them, are asking ever more persistently for the original reason (First Principle) of our everyday truths and are looking for ever more immediate answers to these original circumstances.

An example from the media world shows this clearly. For a long time, linear television was a central provider of information and entertainment. It has to be more direct than that, right? Netflix! At my convenience, at my time, at my place. Gladly in sprinkling mode, without constantly having to make decisions, via binge-watching series episodes at a stretch. So: away with the intermediate instance of a TV program director, here with the own streaming app.

If we take into account the particular proximity of salty snacks to this current zeitgeist shift, then there is no end in sight to the positive development. The overall market will continue to grow. And it will become more crowded in this market. More vendors, more brands, more crowding out. This means that it will foreseeably become even more important for a brand to quickly and intuitively signal its affiliation to the relevant consumer contexts. In times of information and supply overload as well as the target groups' desire for immediacy, FMCG brands are primarily concerned with maintaining a high level of physical (distributive) and mental availability to the consumer. This is particularly successful when brands focus on codes that quasi-automatically guide the consumer's autopilot at the POS because they bring together relevant usage contexts and the brand in a distinctive way. The Pringles brand, for example, has succeeded in this by staging what is actually a generic pack format. With Nic Nacs, it is the equally staged sensory characteristics of the product. And Treets convinces through the glorification of the defining ingredient (see Figure 1). The decisive factor remains the choice of a psychologically effective code and its mentally effective use.

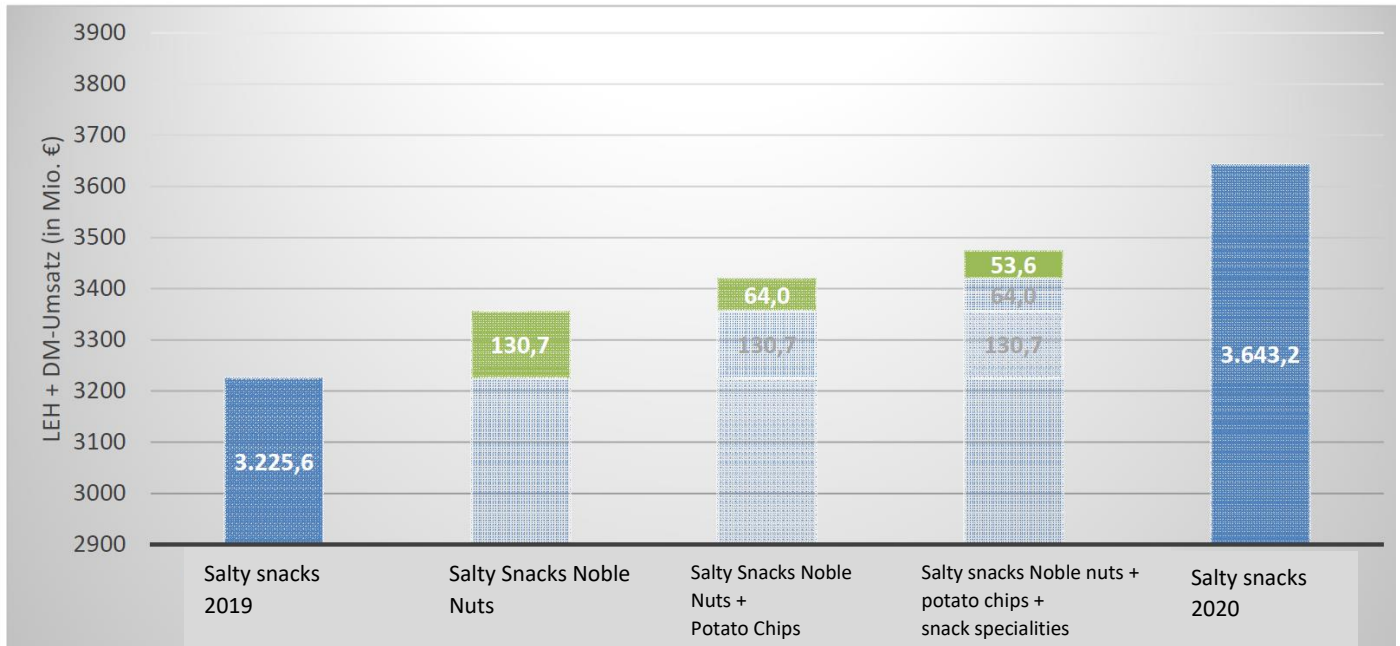


Fig. 2: The Nielsen Confectionery Monitor underlines the positive sales development of salty snacks in 2020, which already grew disproportionately in the years before.

Last but not least, two important contextual dimensions of recent months must not be confused when it comes to the viability of a Corona strategy. Not all lockdown effects are crisis effects from which our societies might (!) learn something. Lockdown-free phases across the globe have shown that deficits in self-reward, variety and, above all, interpersonal contact have built up as a result of social distancing, and that these deficits can be expected to explode as soon as doors and gates open again. With the advertising words of the software service provider Tobit in the beverage specialized wholesale (GFGH): "In the Middle Ages orgies were celebrated after the plague was defeated. Okay, GFGH: Start packing the orgies!" ka-brandresearch.de // Literature: Kahneman, Daniel (2011). *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Thelen, Frank (2020). *10xDNA: The Mindset of the Future*. Ohnemus, Ralph; Lebok, Uwe; Klaus, Florian (2021): *Context Marketing*.



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