

Beyond Meat Brand Audit

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STC 410: Branding Strategies

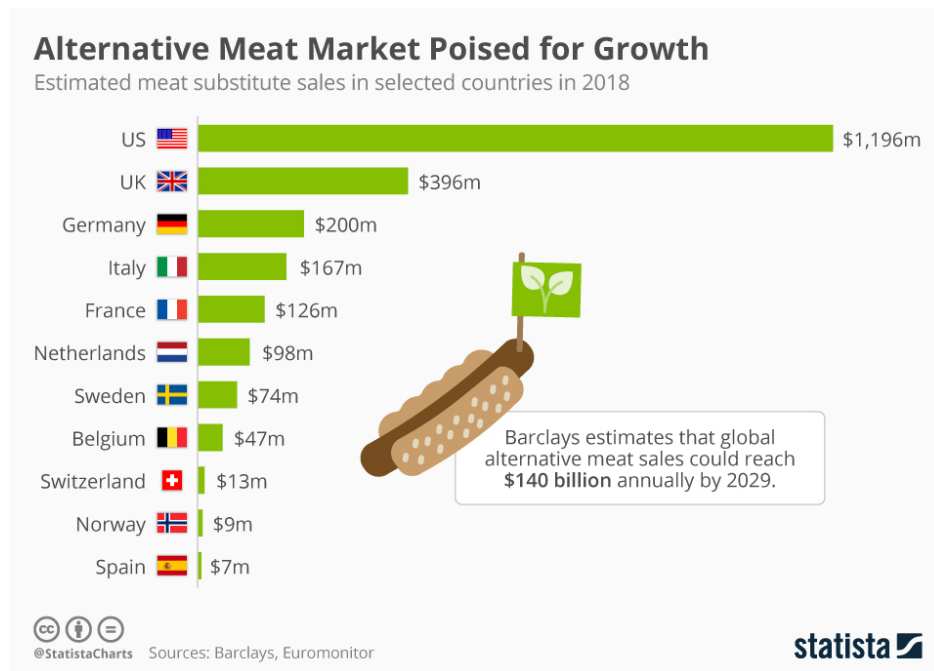
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Introduction & Brand History

Beyond Meat is a company that produces plant-based meat alternatives. Beyond Meat was founded in 2009 by Ethan Brown in Los Angeles, California. Brown worked alongside two University of Missouri Professors who had been working on meatless protein. Fu-hung Hseih and Harold Huff helped produce Beyond Meat's first product, Beyond Chicken Strips in 2012 at Whole Foods. After a successful launch, the brand expanded nationally in 2013. The next product aimed to resemble a beef burger and was announced in 2014 and then released in 2015. This was the first beef-like product produced by Beyond Meat. This then expanded into plant-based pork which was released in 2017. From 2013-2016 the organization received funding from many big names like Tyson Foods and Bill Gates. The most recent product that the organization has released was Beyond Meatballs in 2019. These were introduced through a partnership with Subway before being released in stores in late 2020.

Beyond Meat prides itself on the fact that everyone has the ability to make a meaningful impact on some of the world's largest problems. By creating plant-based meat substitutes that are easily accessible, they are making their impact on human health, climate change along with other issues. The Beyond Meat products are more sustainable to produce compared to animal-based meat. The company is dedicated to making the world a better place to live, one meal at a time.



Brand Inventory & Exploration

Beyond Meat offers a variety of plant-based products that include burgers, ground beef, sausage, meatballs, breakfast sausage, beef crumbles, chicken, and the cookout classic (frozen burger patties). The products are packaged using mostly recyclable materials and feature earthy colors such as brown, black, and green to match their logo and overall branding. Consumers can purchase these products online through their website and have them shipped right to their door in insulated, recyclable packaging, or use a product locator service on their website to find stores that sell Beyond Meat products nearby. Consumers looking for recipe ideas can browse the “Cook” tab on their website to view a variety of recipes to make with each product Beyond Meat offers. Beyond Meat also offers a partner service in which businesses can collaborate with the company to supply and offer plant-based meals for their menu. Many foodservice brands have already partnered with Beyond Meat, such as Carl's Jr., Del Taco, Philz Coffee, Freebirds, Dog Haus, Burger Fi, Veggie Grill, Gregory's Coffee, and TGI Fridays.

Beyond Meat does have a variety of existing competitors that offer similar plant-based product lines. These companies include Impossible Foods, Kelloggs (Incogmeato and Morning Star Farms), Gardein, Amy's Kitchen, and Quorn, just to name a few. Beyond Meat has the most similarities with the brand Impossible Foods, as they offer a very similar product line and use similar packaging and branding. The other competitors aren't very close matches, but all of them offer plant-based meat products that are either refrigerated or frozen. However, all competitors listed use green coloring on their packaging, likely to signify their plant-based ingredients and environmentally friendly nature, but using similar coloring and packaging strategies can cause consumer confusion when attempting to differentiate the products. Another important competitive factor to mention is the brand's reach on social media. Beyond Meat was the first plant-based protein company to hit the mainstream, and they have the largest follower base among other brands by far. Beyond Meat has over 1 million Instagram followers, as well as high counts on Facebook and Tiktok. Their competitors have much lower follower counts, such as Impossible Foods, which has a mere 326,000 Instagram followers. This factor allows Beyond Meat to reach a larger audience than its competitors and thus likely has higher brand awareness among consumers overall. Competitors can be further analyzed by price point and customer rating by the perceptual mindmap located in Appendix 2.



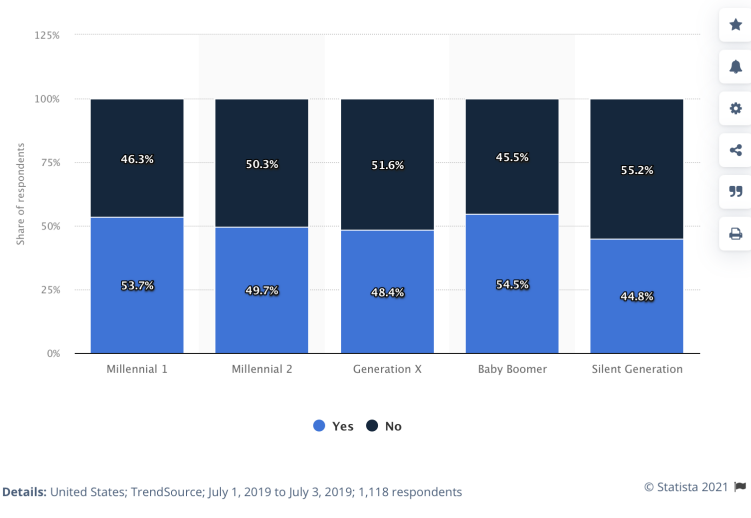
This image shows Beyond Meat’s Beyond Beef and Impossible Foods’ Burger side by side. From the images, we can see how similar the product packaging is as well as the use of shades of green in the product branding.

Beyond Meat uses various advertising strategies to increase brand and product awareness. One of the main strategies utilized is promotions through brand ambassadors and celebrity partnerships. The brand ambassadors listed on their website include Liza Koshy, Kyrie Irving, and Alex Honnold. Each celebrity resonates with a different target market and represents the brand in a positive manner through advertisements, social media posts, etc. Various celebrities are also featured on Beyond Meat’s social media platforms enjoying various Beyond products such as Snoop Dogg, Lizzo, Dixie D’Amelio, therefore appealing to even more consumers and increasing brand awareness. User-generated content is another form of marketing used on the company’s social media platforms, especially TikTok. This is used to increase credibility and trust in the brand by showcasing real customer’s opinions. Yet another strategy used by Beyond Meat is the use of public relations efforts. Most of the press releases the brand publishes focus on new foodservice partnerships that offer plant-based menu items, as well as corporate news, such as strategic global partnerships, expansion of product distribution, product launches, etc. Consumers can find all press releases, fact sheets, and media in the “Newsroom” section of their website. In 2021, Beyond Meat launched its first television ad campaign “What If We All Go Beyond” that displayed who the company is, the simplicity of their plant-based food production process, and their commitment to their missions. The messaging and strategy for this campaign has been consistent with the company’s advertising messaging for 2021 as well.

Consumer Analysis

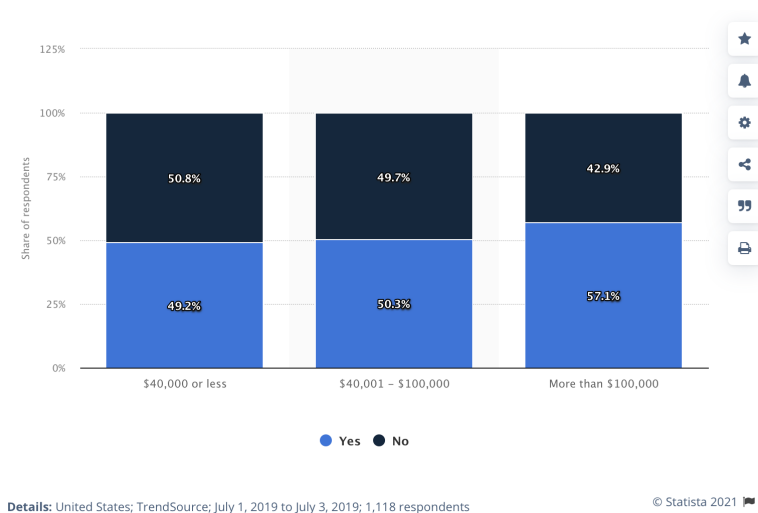
When investigating Beyond Meat's target market a few factors stood out the most: lifestyle, age, income, gender, and education. In terms of lifestyle, the primary market consists of individuals who enjoy the taste of meat however due to ethical or health reasons start eating alternatives. This group is often referred to as flexitarians because they partake in a mostly vegetarian diet but do occasionally consume meat. Unlike their vegan and vegetarian counterparts, they don't have strict diets and are often willing to explore new options. This market is especially susceptible to Beyond Meat because their products' aim to replicate normal beef and chicken experiences. Catherine Lamb, a vegetarian blogger, explains that Beyond Meat burgers not only taste like beef but also form and cook like it. In fact, there is coconut oil added to the patties to replicate the effect of fat (Lamb, 2019). Due to these details, the flexitarians may find it easier to transition to the plant-based meat diet. The company recognizes the potential in these consumers and as a result, strategically chooses the placement of the products. Within grocery stores, they request that their merchandise be placed by the meats (2020 Annual Report, 2020). This allows consumers who are on the fence about switching to a flexitarian lifestyle easy access to the products. It's especially beneficial because it eliminates the need for the consumers to seek out a change in diet.

Beyond Meat's target market includes individuals between the ages of 20-40 years old. This age group is the best market for Beyond Meat for a few reasons. Firstly, these individuals have a proven history of supporting sustainable products and caring about the environment. According to a 2018 study, Generation Z and Millennials are most willing to spend more money on sustainable products (Tighe, 2020). This demonstrates that this age group is likely to pay for Beyond Meat's environmentally friendly products regardless of increased the price tag. Secondly, these individuals tend to be the ones doing the grocery shopping. Since a majority of the company's products are sold through retail it's important that the market has money and is consistently spending it on food. Although a younger demographic would also support the environmental mission, they are unlikely to be the ones picking out groceries. Lastly, this age group has demonstrated interest in the company's market. Based on a 2019 survey, 53.7% of millennials have tried plant-based meat products, which is a larger percentage than the other age groups (Wunsch, 2021). This statistic further backs up the earlier points by demonstrating that these consumers have both the interest and the means to buy the plant-based meat products.



Statistica data of the share of consumers who have tried plant-based meats in the U.S. 2019, by generation

The main income for the target market is those who make \$100,000 dollars or more a year. A study shows that this income level has the highest number of people who have tried plant-based meats (Wunsch, 2021). This statistic makes sense because meat alternatives are more expensive than regular beef and chicken. Beyond Meat's products cost more to produce because they are more environmentally conscious. The higher production costs result in steeper price tags. Therefore it is more difficult for lower-income families to afford this company's product.



Statistica data of the share of consumers who have tried plant-based meats in the U.S. 2019, by income

The last aspects of the target market are the gender and education levels of the consumers. Although all genders buy the products, it steers towards females. In a study conducted to discover consumers' perceptions of meat substitute products, females more often expressed concerns about animal welfare than men. In contrast, the males tended to comment on the taste and variety of the products (Michel, 2020). Because the women had a stronger emotional connection with the product, they were more likely to speak favorably of it. Education plays a similar role. When individuals have more knowledge about the meat industry and its negative impact, they view alternatives more positively.

The secondary target market for Beyond Meat is vegetarians and vegans. These individuals tend to care about the environment and the living things occupying it. A significant part of Beyond Meat's mission is to help protect the earth through their products. In particular they highlight their efforts to fight climate change, preserve natural resources, and help protect the lives of animals. By supporting this business, consumers are also supporting these goals. Therefore individuals who partake in this dietary lifestyle will likely at least try Beyond Meat's products. The age and income demographics remain the same for this secondary market.

The target market is also further defined by their psychographics. Many of the consumers of Beyond Meat's products have strong environmental values. They work to protect the earth in various ways such as recycling and conserving energy. They also tend to be animal lovers, therefore it is likely that they will have pets. Their consumers seem more liberal as that political group has worked harder to protect the planet and its inhabitants. They also are adventurous and willing to try new things. Beyond Meat is different from other plant-alternatives so the consumers have to be willing to expand their palates and leave their comfort zone. Additionally, they will likely enjoy cooking and sharing their food with friends and family. Beyond Meat sells various products that help consumers cook vegan food. This also helps guarantee that the meals will be healthier which lines up with the products' advantages. Other ways that the audience may stay healthy could be exercising and spending time outdoors.

One of the hurdles that Beyond Meat has to overcome to gain more consumers is the stigma that surrounds meat-alternatives. Many alternative meat products taste very different from the meat they are replacing. Therefore, consumers who have tried veggie burgers or tofu might be put-off by the idea of Beyond Meat. Additionally, many individuals associate the products with vegans and vegetarians. Some meat eaters have had negative interactions with vegans and

as a result that negative association passes to the meat substitutes (Michel). Since many consumers currently have a negative view of plant-based alternatives, the company has to work even harder to grow its network of meat-eaters and flexitarians.

According to Beyond Meat's annual report, buyer rates increased 66% year-over-year to a category-leading level in 2020. This increase in consumption demonstrates that the consumers were willing to try new foods during the pandemic and may have altered pre-existing lifestyles. There was also an increase in purchase frequency by 39% (2020 Annual Report, 2020). It's always important to attract new customers, but it's just as integral to create brand loyalty with your growing audience. This statistic demonstrates that consumers are enjoying their current experiences with the product and brand.

Current Brand Strategy

Beyond Meat has been focusing their efforts on the “Go Beyond” campaign. The brand has continuously worked to further strengthen their branding efforts in the recent months. This campaign aligns with the brand’s simplicity of converting plant protein to meat protein (2020 Annual Report. 2020). The goal of the campaign is to play a powerful role in helping people to be and perform their best. Beyond Meat wants to encourage their consumers to Go Beyond their own expectations while making a small change for the greater good.

Brand Attributes

Persona

A brand persona is a set of human characteristics or a personification that is attributed to a brand. A brand persona embraces moods, attitudes, opinions, etc., and these characteristics inflict what consumers feel about the brand. Beyond Meat is a friendly, modern, eco-friendly, thought-leader, and health-conscious brand. These characteristics are applicable to their plant-based, health-conscious meat products, their environmentally friendly processes, and future goals, as well as their fun and modern energy as a whole. Their persona could be described similarly to a life coach; someone who is supporting you to make the switch to plant-based protein, inciting your environmentally conscious decisions, and encouraging you to have fun at the same time.

Voice

Brand voice is the uniformity in selection of words, the attitude and values of the brand while addressing the target audience or others. It's voice is how a brand conveys and expresses its brand personality and other attributes to the external audience. Beyond Meat's brand voice can be described as approachable, inspirational, heartfelt, and fun. These voice expressions are applicable to the brand due to its casual choice of words, its tone used to inspire change among its consumers and of course the environmental and health conscious reasons behind its goals. The brand expresses these voice characteristics through its external communications, such as social media, public relations press releases, advertising campaigns, etc., brand mission and values, as well as website and packaging/product design. An example of Beyond Meat's approachable and fun voice is a recent Instagram caption, "It's the sustainability for us" that taps into a trendy saying being used frequently on social media platforms.

Identity

Brand identity is the way that a brand portrays themselves to consumers. Identity can also be broken down into two categories, tangible elements, and intangible elements. Tangible elements include physical attributes like products, packaging, name, logo, and more. Intangibles are the factors that there is no control over such as corporate personnel, ideals, beliefs, culture, and more. Beyond Meat identifies itself as a plant-based protein brand that promotes awareness for the struggles within the environment and meat industry while advocating for a healthier

lifestyle. They use their packaging to further represent their mission by using recyclable materials, thereby offering a fully environmentally friendly shopping and eating experience. Their logo features a bull wearing a cape in a bright green color. Rather than focusing on plants, they choose to honor the animals their products are based on. Beyond Meat is very vocal about their ethics and the social issues that they support. They are a brand that is focused on fighting climate change, preserving natural resources, and helping animals live better lives.

Image

Image is the way that the general public views a brand. This is something that can be different from person to person. Consumers typically form their opinions about a brand based on reviews and what they have absorbed from the media. To gain a better understanding of Beyond Meat's image, we spoke to members of their target market. One consumer shares that it is a vegan-friendly brand that has recently become more popular. Another consumer knew they were a meat alternative but did not believe that it was a healthier option. Many consumers also mentioned that they have not seen many advertisements for the brand, therefore they do not know much about the brand's ethics and mission. Brand image is important for a brand so that the consumers continue to buy the products. One thing Beyond Meat can improve on is reaching the customers who are aware of the brand, but not aware of the benefits of the brand.

Social Media

Beyond Meat has social media accounts on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Tik Tok, and Pinterest. Their most popular platform is Instagram with one million followers. The main purpose of Beyond Meat's social media accounts is to educate their audience about the plant-based meat market and their brand mission in fun and interactive ways. They tend to use celebrity content and memes to gain engagement and shareability in their posts. They use lots of short captions with emojis or hashtags depending on the platform. These captions allow for increased audience engagement. Their visuals consist of posts with bright colors. The main palette consists of greens and oranges. In addition to presenting the brand, social media can also give further insight into consumers' impressions of Beyond Meat. Their Instagram has strong engagement, with one of their latest posts receiving 147 comments. A majority of their comments are all positive, with the audience appreciating either the post or the products. Their

Twitter does not have as much engagement but there are more interactions with consumers. Beyond Meat responds to consumer questions and retweets their food creations. Most of the posts are sharing excitement about their products, especially with Thanksgiving approaching. The negative opinions stem from Beyond Meat's stock performance rather than products or customer service complaints.

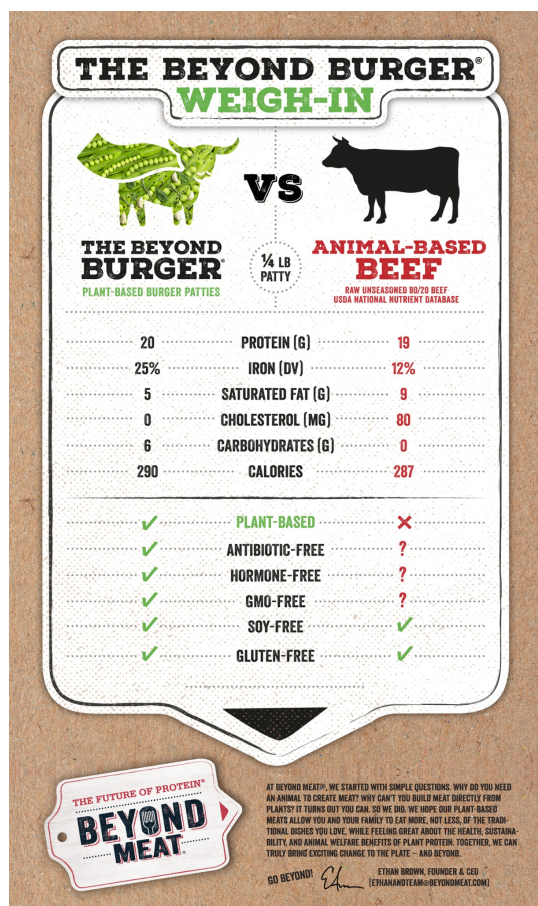
Reviews/PR Coverage

Beyond Meat does a good job at gaining Press Coverage. One of the articles written about their products was from BuzzFeed, and Beyond Meat offered them an advance tasting on the release of their new Beyond Meat chicken tenders. They sent a food truck to ensure the chicken was cooked properly and to give the full experience. The company has strong reviews from consumers with 4.6 stars on Amazon; 78% of the ratings for the beyond burger are 5 stars. Most of their reviews are very positive and consumers continuously rave about how close the substitutes are to actual beef and chicken products. The largest concern seen in other reviews is that it may be too realistic for some vegans and vegetarians. Since many individuals who partake in the limited diets have given up meat products, the feeling of eating something meat-like can be unsettling. In fact, the BuzzFeed reviewer had a fleeting internal dialogue expressing concern over whether the products were really vegan. In the end, it was her trust in the brand and their mission that let her dismiss her worries and enjoy the food. This commonality demonstrates how important brand trust is for these products.

Recommendations for Brand Strategy

Our recommendations for a rebranding strategy for Beyond Meat would be to increase education of the long-term health benefits from switching from red meat to plant-based meat, increase education on the negative circumstances and environmental effects of the animal meat industry, as well as further differentiate themselves from the competition.

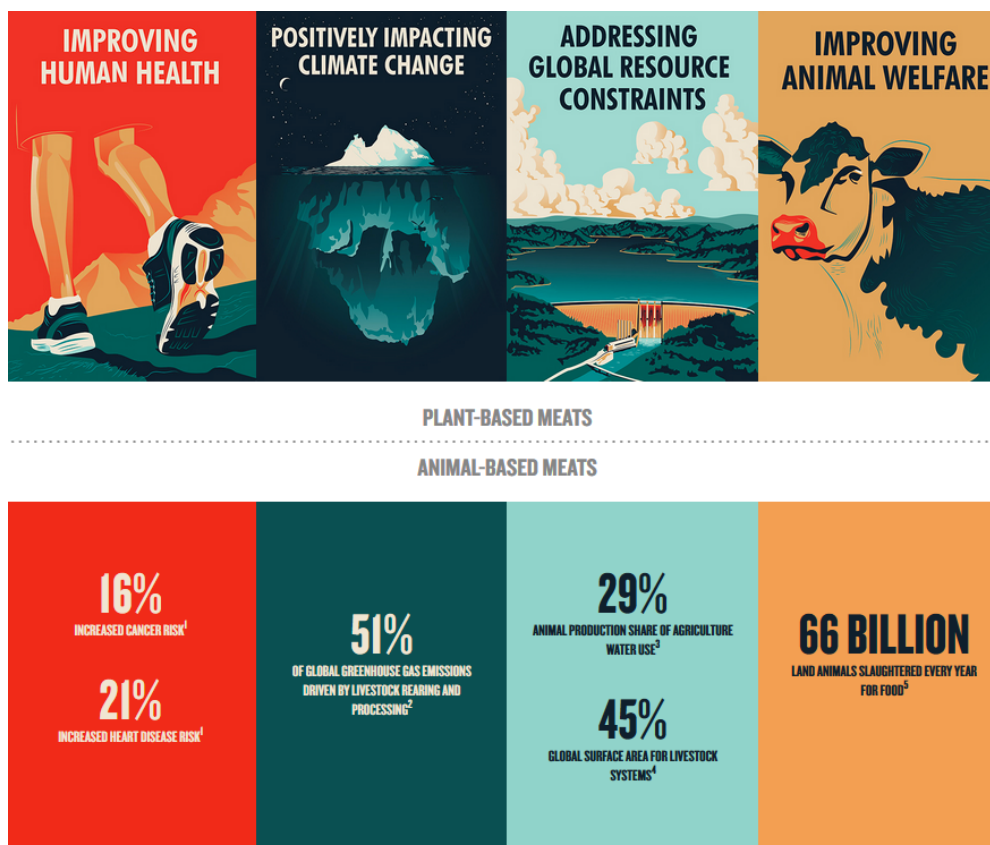
Recommendations for Branding or Rebranding



One of our recommendations for rebranding is to increase education on the health benefits of plant-based protein through Beyond Meat's general communications. Many consumers understand that it is beneficial to switch from red meat to plant-based meat, but they may not fully understand why it is better for their health long-term. In a study funded by the US National Institutes of health, researchers found plant-based meat products to be good sources of fiber, folate, and iron, and contain less saturated fat than animal meat products (Harnack et. al., 2021). The study also discussed how the World Health Organization (WHO) has classified processed meats, such as bacon, to be potentially cancer-causing, and red meat, such as beef, to be probable cancer-causing. These classifications are due to meat processing, compounds found in the meat, as well as cooking methods. Beyond Meat cares about the research behind why plant-based meat is healthy, and funded a study known as "SWAP-MEAT: Study With Appetizing Plant

Food - Meat Eating Alternatives Trial." Data from this study concluded that "plant-based meat alternative products improved several cardiovascular disease risk factors, including TMAO" (2020). Most recently, Beyond Meat has established a plant-based diet initiative fund at the Stanford University of Medicine to "provide peer-reviewed, clinically-significant studies on the health implications of a plant-based diet, including plant-based meat, and will help to generate data to drive and inform Beyond Meat's research and development" (2021). By funding clinical research on plant-based meat products to inform their strategies, it is apparent Beyond Meat cares about the health of their consumers. As a brand, Beyond Meat should communicate more about their efforts and the informative outcomes of the studies they fund. By communicating the health benefits of plant-based meat, opposed to the negative health effects of animal meat, consumers will become more aware of the circumstances and open to switching their eating habits.

Another one of our recommendations is to further educate the consumer about the negative effects from the meat industry. Many people are unaware of the major effects that the meat industry has on the environment. Beyond Meat can partner with educational nonprofits that focus on the environment as well as the meat industry, such as Mercy For Animals. Their mission is to help create a compassionate food system by reducing the suffering of animals for food. Beyond Meat's goal to help the meat industry closely aligns with this nonprofit group. The strategy behind this recommendation is to gain trust in either new or existing consumers. Beyond Meat currently mentions their efforts to help these issues within the website and Instagram. By working alongside a nonprofit and producing more educational communications, Beyond Meat can teach consumers about the impacts their choices are making. Plus, working with a strong nonprofit with similar goals would benefit Beyond Meats to increase brand trust from their consumers.



Our final recommendation is to further differentiate Beyond Meat's brand from their competition. As a business it is incredibly important to provide a unique product and brand experience, especially in a competitive market. The meat industry is ripe with competitors especially as plant-based alternatives continue to grow in relevance. Based on our research, Beyond Meat should do more to stand out. Although the product has a unique niche in that it replicates the feeling of a meat product, the packaging and branding looks like other substitutes. It is common for environmentally friendly companies to use greens and browns for their package designs. These colors help consumers associate the brand with nature. Although the color association is positive, this becomes troubling when your competition uses the same colors. Beyond Meat, Impossible Meat, and Incogmeato all use variations of green in their designs. Beyond Meat is trying to appeal to flexitarians, who may only try plant-based meat products once before deciding whether or not to change their diets. If they buy the wrong brand, it could ruin their perception of the products. Therefore, it may be beneficial to change the color scheme of the products to something more eye-catching. However, we do note that the color change should not interfere with the recyclable packaging material Beyond Meat uses.



This image showcases the similar colors of Beyond Meat and Incogmeatos packaging. While Beyond Meat highlights brown in this instance their similar color schemes might confuse first time buyers.

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Appendix 1 (The Story)

Beyond Meat represents care and a step forward to helping yourself and the people you love. They create a relationship with their consumers that is based on growth and care. Red Meat can cause negative health repercussions, but has also become the base of many bonding events such as cookouts and family dinners. Beyond Meat aims to recreate that sense of community by providing a meat-like product that can be enjoyed without the stress of eating normal meat. They use their platform and brand ambassadors to inspire others to make conscious decisions for their own health. Imagine you are at your annual family cookout and have been trying to change your diet choices. You don't have to worry about being the only one without food or or being pressured back into your meat diet. Instead you can eat a Beyond Burger and still feel connected with your friends and family. To portray this message Beyond Meat uses ethics, friendliness and humor to connect with the audience and help them feel comfortable. Switching diets can be uncomfortable and there needs to be some trust in the brand for old habits to be swayed. Colloquial language and compelling brand ambassadors sharing their stories helps bond together the brand and audience.



Appendix 2 (Perceptual Mind Map)

