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Pringles got game-right on the chips

by Stephanie Thompson

Pringles' Secret Weapon . . .

. . .in the war against Lay's Stax is a new technology that allows promotions to be printed right on the chips.

The Procter & Gamble Co. brand's new technology, dubbed Pringles Prints, will be unveiled in a partnership with Hasbro this fall surrounding the relaunch of Trivial Pursuit Junior with new packaging and new questions and answers, many of which will be carried directly on Pringles chips. The effort is expected to be the first of many tie-ins with Hasbro and other partners as P&G looks to protect its \$1 billion Pringles business and differentiate it from Frito-Lay's competitive canister snacks.

Innovation

"Pringles has always been about innovation, since we created the whole stacked-chip category, and now we have a new way of innovating and customizing our chips," said Pringles spokeswoman Jenny Becker. Ms.

Becker said a full-scale national marketing plan to support the Trivial Pursuit effort is in development. Grey Global Group's Grey Worldwide, New York, handles advertising for Pringles.

Frito-Lay's delayed national launch of Lay's Stax last August has caused Pringles to lose roughly 2% of its business, according to one P&G insider, losses that are actually smaller than expected. Taking no chances however, Pringles began for the first time to customize Pringles for special occasions, first with a successful Halloween packaging and chip-coloration and subsequently with Easter, Valentine's Day and, now, Fourth of July promotions. The ability to further customize by printing words and pictures on the chips is something that Ms. Becker said **"has all of our retailers and consumers [who have seen the product] very excited."**

Grey's Alliance, Pringles' agency of record for branded entertainment and strategic partnerships, is hard at work **"forging many partnerships for Pringles to utilize the new technology,"** said Brent Stafford, senior development director at Alliance. Although the agency has in the last few years developed deals with Comcast Communications Corp.'s 24-hour video-game channel G4 and the "Lord of the Rings" movies, **Mr. Stafford said "there's certainly going to be more news than ever out there."**

Hasbro manufactures a wide variety of games under its Milton Bradley and Parker Brothers brands that are ripe for tie-ins, among them Scrabble, Candy Land and Monopoly. Games account for roughly 40% of Hasbro's sales and the division has been stepping up efforts recently to promote its better-known brands through product tie-ins, among them a limited-edition Monopoly cereal from one-time Parker Brothers owner General Mills.

Young Targets



According to **George Burtch, VP-marketing, Hasbro Games**, the program with Pringles **"is a great way to present Trivial Pursuit to a younger audience in a fun way."** The questions used for the tie-in, carried upside down on the bottom half of the chip, are aimed at kids 8 to 12. **"If you entice them to a game when they're young, they carry that with them the rest of their life,"** Mr. Burtch said.

In addition to a ramp-up in promotions, Pringles will also get a bump in advertising spending. P&G spent \$35 million in measured media on Pringles during January through November last year (up from \$31 million in '02) while PepsiCo spent \$13 million on Lay's Stax during the same period, according to TNS Media Intelligence/CMR.

A recent TV spot from Grey touts Pringles' new Fiery Hot variety while the Stax campaign, from Omnicom Group's BBDO Worldwide, New York, talks up double-blind taste tests that showed consumers prefer Stax to Pringles. P&G sent a letter to Frito-Lay asking that they stop the "false advertising" claim but the company maintained the credibility of their data and refused.

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