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HOW TUPPERWARE CAN MAKE A COMEBACK—MARKETING EXPERTS WEIGH IN ON THE TROUBLED BRAND

CONNECTING WITH GEN Z CONSUMERS IS KEY

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Connecting with Gen Z consumers is key for Tupperware, experts said.



Tupperware, which distributes its products into nearly 70 countries, is struggling. Credit: Tupperware

For the average consumer, news that food storage brand Tupperware could go out of

business might have come as a surprise. But for some marketing experts, the news was a long time coming.

Tupperware is currently looking to regain its financial footing. The brand recently stated that it was looking for new lines of credit and investors, or it risks folding. Experts say it has failed to connect with new customers and has fallen short when it comes to sharpening its brand purpose and innovation. It also faces more competition from the likes of Ziplock and Rubbermaid, as well as Amazon.

“This is a challenge we see a lot,” said Meghan Labot, chief growth officer for North America at FutureBrand, a brand consulting agency within IPG. “Brands who have long legacies might be established in the minds of consumers, but over time, they have to work to stay relevant. Tupperware has an element of nostalgia. How can they reframe that to be relevant to today?”

One audience that marketers think Tupperware hasn’t connected with is Gen Z. The containers were historically sold exclusively via Tupperware parties that were hosted in customers’ homes, a model that is practically extinct.

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“My guess is that those most loyal to the brand have aged and so they need to become more relevant to younger generations,” said Kimberly Whitler, associate professor of business administration at the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business. “A tried-and-true way is through superior products.”

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Tim Calkins, associate chair of the marketing department at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, agreed. “Perhaps the only potential strategy is to move dramatically upscale. Redefining the brand, perhaps with the help of key influencers, might turn it into a unique, desired item that could justify a major price premium.”

Tupperware, meanwhile, proclaims that “every day we nurture a better future,” on [a page about its principles](#) on its website. “Everything at Tupperware is driven by the desire to help save time, money, space, food and energy,” Tupperware states.

FutureBrand’s Labot also points to Tupperware’s perceived lack of brand purpose and values. “I think there is a great sustainability story to be told, and a food waste story as well,” she said.

While the brand started with plastic containers, it also makes glass storage containers, a product that could resonate with Gen Z consumers who are known to care about brands’ sustainability efforts.

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Tupperware has worked to get in front of customers. In June of last year, the brand

saw a bump in interest from the Prime Video show “The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel,” in which Midge Maisel hosts a Tupperware party. The brand released a line of vintage bowl sets. In October, Target started stocking the containers on its shelves, a first in Tupperware’s 77-year history, expanding the availability to buy beyond Tupperware parties or the brand’s website.

‘Missed an opportunity’

But the moves haven’t been enough.

Tupperware can look to other examples of old brands reinventing themselves. Whitler points to Tide detergent pivoting from dirt removal to focusing on customer needs around color and fabric care and scent. Lego, which was \$800 million in debt in 2003, used brand collaborations, movies and games to help its toy bricks reach new consumers. Virtually all major automakers are working on adding electric vehicles for more environmentally-conscious consumers.

A good time for a brand pivot would have been during the peak of Covid, said Jenn Szekely, president of Coley Porter Bell. Tupperware saw a surge in sales during the pandemic as people cooked more at home and needed storage for leftovers. The interest in storage options has continued on TikTok, where there are plenty of videos of fridge and pantry organization and restocks, but the trend hasn’t extended to Tupperware products.

“Tupperware has missed an opportunity,” said Szekely. “They should own content around leftover hacks, storage issues across categories, shortcuts for entertaining.”

Tupperware was started in 1946 by chemist Earl Tupper. The sealed containers became popularized by saleswoman Brownie Wise, who created Tupperware parties to demonstrate how lightweight and durable the products were.

Over the years, the brand’s advertising played up its versatility for food storage, while

plugging Tupperware parties. Below, a look at some vintage ads.

Tupperware's preliminary 2022 results, released in March, showed an 18% drop in annual sales to nearly \$1.31 billion and a \$28.4 million loss from continuing operations. Earlier this month, Tupperware announced substantial doubt about its ability to continue as a going concern and that it must write down certain assets and goodwill. Shares of Tupperware have fallen more than 93% in the past year.

“The Company is doing everything in its power to mitigate the impacts of recent events, and we are taking immediate action to seek additional financing and address our financial position,” Miguel Fernandez, president and CEO of Tupperware Brands, said in an April 7 statement.

Inline Play

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