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Finding Right Look Meant Monkeying With 100 Designs

June 20, 2009

-By Elaine Wong

The problem: In case you haven't looked, the beverage aisle of just about any grocery store is increasingly becoming crowded with bad-for-you, sugary drinks. Enter Adina for Life, a five-year-old holistic brand that was just starting out. Competition, however, was stiff. PepsiCo had its SoBe, Coca-Cola touted Vitaminwater, Honest Tea had been pushing its organic teas. How was this start-up -- the brainchild of former SoBe and Odwalla execs -- to make its splash?

The monkey's genesis: The marketing team at Adina for Life knew it had to develop eye-catching packaging to win consumers at shelf. The San Francisco-based company tapped Affinnova, an optimization technology firm in North Waltham, Mass., to come up with the design. Aiming to convey the brand's tagline of "Drink no evil," and a product philosophy grounded in the benefits of Ayurveda -- a system of alternative medicine from India -- the team, in the end, chose a monkey.



The monkey's evolution: Before settling on the final design, however, Affinnova generated more than 100 iterations and tested the results with a 900-member focus group. In its early stages, the monkey exhibited a calm, meditation-like pose. This final version (see top right) was meant to stand for "energy, character and appeal," and evoke the Ayurvedic connection, said CMO Bruce Burke. "The monkey conveys that yogic and holistic feeling to the consumer in a way that if you are not into yoga or holistic, Ayurvedic science, it still has transgenerational appeal," he said.

Wellness at a price: Adina's drinks don't come cheap. Prices range from \$1.99 to \$2.99 (first year retail, with promo), and a 14-ounce bottle contains 90 calories, just enough for thirst-quenchers looking to "drink no evil," Burke said of the brand's tagline. Adina for Life comes in five flavors -- Honey Lemon Aloe and Mango Orange Chamomile, among others -- and it's currently being distributed in the Northeast (minus New York) and California. Whole Foods and Jamba Juice have signed on as national partners, and it's also looking into a test market with Safeway. The brand is currently being advertised via outdoor ads, PR, digital and social media, and a new site design (soon launching) by Gershoni, San Francisco. (Countdown, as of press time, is 27 days.)

Best of all, each bottle of Adina for Life contains witty sayings by the monkey. ("Everybody's got something to hide except me and my monkey." "If there's a will, there's 500 relatives.") Those who want their daily dose of monkey can also do so via Adina for Life's Twitter feed.

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