

Packaging is key to survival in the FMCG landscape

In South Africa's fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, the pace of change is relentless. Shifting consumer habits, increased private label competition, and rising input costs have made adaptability not just a strength, but a necessity, particularly for smaller brands carving out space on crowded shelves.



Image supplied

Unlike larger players with deep budgets and national marketing teams, small FMCG businesses are often forced to be more nimble. Their growth hinges on the ability to listen closely, respond quickly, and make high-impact decisions, often with limited resources.

This might mean refining their product mix, strengthening retail relationships, or adjusting how they show up in-store.

One of the most important and often underestimated levers for small brands is packaging. Not simply in terms of design, but as a tool for clarity, storytelling, and trust-building.

A frontline communicator

In a retail environment where visual noise is high, packaging becomes a frontline communicator. It must convey key information, reflect the brand's identity, and catch the eye — all within a split second.

For Cape Town-based snack brand Wonder Snacks, recent changes to their Wonder Pop Caramel and Rainbow packaging were not just about aesthetics but about strategic alignment, ensuring the way the brand appears on shelf reflects both who they are today and how customers engage with the product.

The refreshed design is part of a broader effort to improve the brand's in-store impact.

It reflects a push toward range cohesion and responsiveness to insights gathered from both consumers and retail partners.

In a competitive retail environment, the update serves as a reminder that packaging plays a vital role in how emerging brands communicate, differentiate, and build trust at first glance.

“In a small business, you don't have the luxury of waiting for the perfect moment, you respond to what's in front of you,” says Shabeer Parker, director of Wonder Snacks.

“Whether it’s feedback from a customer or shifts on the shelf, staying close to the market and moving quickly is what helps us stay relevant.”

This kind of micro-iteration is increasingly common among South African FMCG startups. With fewer layers between the shelf and the decision-makers, small teams are often able to translate feedback into action with speed, a distinct advantage in an industry where timing can shape visibility and volume.

Keeping brand identity

The ability to evolve, without losing sight of identity, is fast becoming one of the defining characteristics of successful small brands in FMCG.

For Wonder Snacks, that means refining elements like packaging without compromising the core values that made the brand resonate in the first place.

Whether it’s revisiting formats, refreshing design systems, or finding better ways to serve specific markets, businesses like Wonder Snacks aren’t just reacting to shifts in consumer behaviour — they’re building resilience by embracing them.

And while these kinds of adjustments may not always be headline-grabbing, they highlight what sets brands like Wonder Snacks apart: proximity to the customer, agility in execution, and the quiet confidence to change course without needing permission.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>