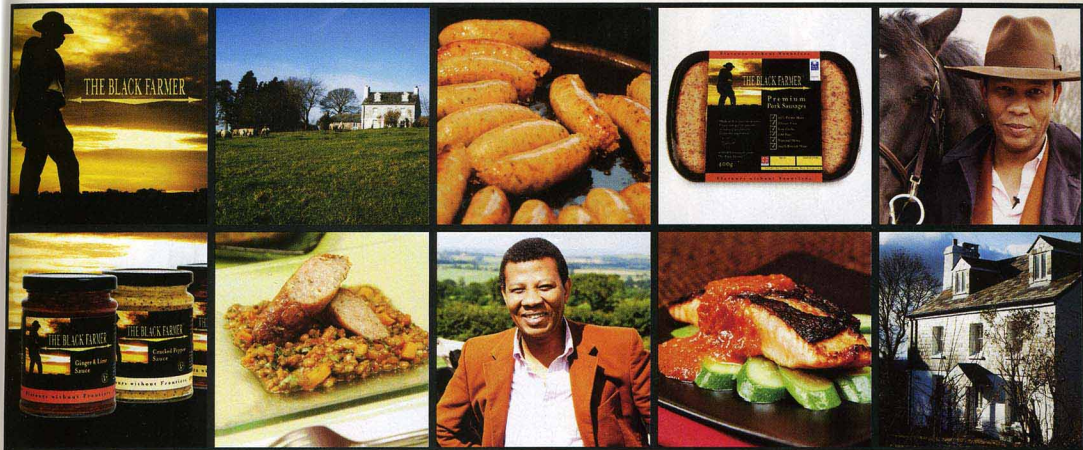


Marketing

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Brand Builders



The Black Farmer

High ideals, ethnicity and traditional rural values make this sausage brand stand out. Suzanne Bidlake reports

Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones picks up a seemingly ordinary pack of sausages from the table at one end of his farmhouse kitchen. 'This is more than just a pack of sausages,' he declares.

The product he is branding belongs to The Black Farmer brand, which he launched last September – and with it his aspirations for something altogether bigger.

This month Tesco joined Asda, Morrisons and Sainsbury's in stocking the sausages, which will be followed by Black Farmer sauces, chicken and hams.

With his USP as a black farmer with a marketing and media background, Emmanuel-Jones claims to be in the privileged position of being able to market a brand that 'makes a difference'.

The Black Farmer's stylish packaging, intriguing name and, ultimately, product quality, are intended to seduce customers. But Emmanuel-Jones' longer-term ambition is for consumers to buy into what the brand stands for. 'Brands are about a belief system,' he says, citing the growth in fair trade as a reflection of consumer appetite for 'conviction buying'.

The Black Farmer provides a direct line between consumer and food producer. The provenance of what we eat has become an important consumer issue, and Emmanuel-Jones believes it is food manufacturers' responsibility to

put themselves on the line and say "put your trust in us".

Packs carry a silhouette of the founder on his farm, a signed message about his passion for food, flavour and quality ingredients, and the strapline 'Flavours without frontiers'.

He further wants the brand to change perceptions about black ethnicity in modern Britain. 'When people see the brand name, they think "What the hell's that about?" and that starts the debate.' Indeed, the brand name itself has been seen as more than contentious by some; Emmanuel-Jones has even received emails threatening to report him to the Commission for Racial Equality.

'For black people to feel trapped in the urban bulkheads they created when they first came here would be a travesty,' he adds. 'My responsibility is to create a second wave so they feel the rest of Britain is available to them.'

To this end, he has set up The Black Farmer scholarship, which will see eight youngsters of black or Asian origin from inner cities live on his 60-acre Devon farm for three months and work in the community. At the end of their stint, two will be given a job.

Emmanuel-Jones' journey from childhood poverty, first in Jamaica, then Birmingham, through to founding a marketing consultancy, has given him both the passion and finances to launch The Black Farmer. He invested £350,000

Timeline

1985 Emmanuel-Jones joins a BBC graduate trainee scheme, although he is not a graduate.

1987 He becomes producer/director of *The Food & Drink Programme* under the mentorship of Peter Bazalgette, giving celebrity chefs such as Gordon Ramsay and Anthony Worrall Thompson their TV break.

1992 Emmanuel-Jones and his wife, Michaela Pain, a former director of Shandwick Media Relations, found food and drink marketing agency Commsplus.

Oct 1997 Emmanuel-Jones buys a 30-acre farm in Devon and rents a further 30 acres. He becomes known by the locals as 'the black farmer'.

Sep 2004 The Black Farmer brand is launched.

Oct 2004 Asda becomes the first retailer to stock the brand.

Jul 2005 Planned roll-out in Australia.

Sep 2005 Retail sales expected to reach target of £1.5m.

of his own money to launch the venture and will plough another £100,000 into marketing this spring and summer.

Despite the commoditisation of the sausage category, which is dominated by Kerry Foods (owner of Wall's) and own-label brands, supermarket buyers are clearly sufficiently convinced The Black Farmer will be a popular choice.

As it is, Emmanuel-Jones has experience of taking on industry Goliaths. His food and drink marketing agency Commsplus specialises in challenger brands, with clients including Loyd Grossman and Cobra Beer.

The Black Farmer's marketing emphasis is on sampling. Emmanuel-Jones and his team spend most weekends at country fairs. A trained chef, he cooks on the stand and sometimes visits consumers' houses to prepare a barbecue and create 'superb brand ambassadors'.

Other guerrilla marketing is planned using the strapline 'Have you tried The Black Farmer yet?'. A *Daily Mail* competition will offer a family the chance to stay in a converted barn on Emmanuel-Jones' farm.

Armed with an intense pride in England, colourful language, a cultivated accent and a big physical presence, it is not Emmanuel-Jones' skin colour that marks him out as he strides across the Devon fields, nor his marketing background. It is his belief that he can change the world – starting with sausages. ■