

Individual Case Analysis: Cracker Barrel's Rebrand

On August 19, 2025 Cracker Barrel launched its new campaign “All The More” with the intention to refresh the brand. In a previous meeting, Cracker Barrel CEO, Julie Felss Masino, stated, “We’re just not as relevant as we once were” (Picchi 2024). Additionally, inside the company people believed that Cracker Barrel had lost some of its shine and did not attract younger generations as much as it should. With revenues flatlining and recent stock stumbling to 40%, the idea was to rebrand the company to win back old customers while also appealing to younger ones by making the store feel less 'old-timey' and more modern (Picchi 2024). They focused on three specific changes, adding more menu items, tweaking a few prices, and making noticeably different changes to the brand and inside stores. While marketing experts agreed that a rebrand was needed for the company, Cracker Barrel faced intense backlash for their campaign. A little over a week after they launched their campaign, Cracker Barrel stated they would be returning to their original logo and keep the old heritage feel of the store. While they will continue to evaluate menu options and reevaluate prices, they are keeping the feel of the original Cracker Barrel. I chose this campaign because I admired how Cracker Barrel listened to their audience, owned up to their mistake, and chose to stay with the original brand logo. I do know that in any career failure is inevitable, and closely analyzing how Cracker Barrel learned from their mistakes is a learning opportunity for everyone who wants to be successful in the world of marketing and public relations.

When it came to Cracker Barrel's desire for a rebrand, it started with their internal publics. Cracker Barrel partnered with Prophet, Viral Nation, and Blue Engine to help strategize and launch their campaign. Ultimately, Cracker Barrel's rebrand was led by CEO Julie Felss Masino. Since becoming CEO in 2018, Masino has constantly expressed desire to revamp their

identity as they were losing ground in the restaurant game. Investors are also big internal publics that were heavily impacted by this campaign. When Cracker Barrel announced its rebrand, they lost nearly \$200 million in market value (Picchi 2025). External publics include longtime customers who have consistently come for the experience, food, and atmosphere. This also includes the younger audience that the campaign was directed at. Unfortunately, the campaign missed the mark with both external publics.

Cracker Barrel took to all social media apps that they decided to rebrand themselves. Since the majority of their longtime consumers are not on specific social media apps, their platforms were based on their modernization of the store to attract younger fans who are the dominant consumers of social media. After diving into their engagement and content reaction, I stumbled across interesting data in terms of their engagement. Since rolling back their campaign, they have since deleted all the posts about their rebrand idea. For instance, before their campaign launched, the most recent Instagram post had around 3,500 likes and comments, and around 600 shares. The Instagram post apologizing for their rebrand and stating “Our new logo is going away and our ‘Old Timer’ will remain”, has over 136,000 likes, over 9,000 comments, and 47,000 shares. Even though the campaign failed, it did reignite their consumer base and content engagement. While using social media, they also took advantage of a press release to express their heart behind the campaign which was to enhance and add more to Cracker Barrel while continuing the old heritage and the special traditions that made Cracker Barrel what it is.

Cracker Barrels main rebrand theme was “All the More” centered around offering more to the consumer while keeping its old heritage theme. While trying to ignite a new consumer base while keeping its current one, Cracker Barrel wanted to highlight its new modern rebrand while staying true to its values of old heritage. Since flatlining in recent years with sales, Cracker

Barrel wanted to focus on the experience that is eating at Cracker Barrel. They believed remodeling the inside of the restaurant would lighten up the mood and draw a younger crowd. They also valued their loyal customers and wanted long-standing traditions to still be an important part of the Cracker Barrel experience. Unfortunately, longtime customers were not impressed or excited about the rebrand. Customers felt as though the rebrand did not align with the old heritage and history of Cracker Barrel. In fact, Cracker Barrel's stock dropped significantly, their engagement on social media was filled with negative feedback, and their reputation was quickly changed forever. Cracker Barrel tried to stick with it and insisted "the heart and soul of Cracker Barrel hasn't changed", but ultimately, the backlash was so strong that just a couple days later, Cracker Barrel withdrew their entire campaign and reverted to its original identity.

Overall, I think the idea was there for Cracker Barrel to change some things to get new customers. Ultimately, I think they should have done deeper research into longtime customers, new customers, staff, leadership, and seen what the overall feeling was of a complete rebrand. Especially from longtime customers who have clearly continued to come back for a specific reason. I also believe they tried to rebrand everything all at the same time and should have tried to change things sporadically to see the impact it could have. For example, start by refreshing the store in small ways and ask for feedback from longtime customers and see what they think. Finally, I did not like the campaign tagline "All the More". It felt dismissive of the history of Cracker Barrel and celebrating what makes Cracker Barrel so special. While there is no right answer to this problem, I do believe small approaches could have helped Cracker Barrel understand more what their consumer base wanted and where they were attracting younger consumers.

Cracker Barrel [@crackerbarrel]. (2025, August 19). “@jordandavisofficial is giving y'all all the more reasons to grab a seat at the table. See you soon!” [Photograph]. Instagram.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DNjC1QEUtf/>

Cracker Barrel [@crackerbarrel]. (2025, August 16). “We thank our guests for sharing your voices and love for Cracker Barrel. We said we would listen, and we have. Our new logo is going away and our ‘Olt Timer will remain. At Cracker Barrel, it’s always been - and always will be - about serving up delicious food, warm welcomes, and the kind of country hospitality that feels like family. As a proud American institution, our 70,000 hardworking employees look forward to welcoming you to our table soon.” [Photograph].

Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/DN1fLPu0ie_/

Picchi, A. (2024, May 24). Cracker Barrel CEO says brand isn’t relevant and needs a new plan.

Here are 3 changes coming soon. Retrieved from

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cracker-barrel-ceo-relevant-here-are-its-new-menu-items/>

Picchi, A. (2025, August 25). Cracker Barrel loses almost \$100 million in value as stock plunges after new logo release. Retrieved from

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cracker-barrel-cbri-stock-down-200-million-loss-new-logo-change/>