



**Tomas Vucurevic**  
Founder & Managing Director  
Braind



## **Millennials buy brands because of what they stand for, not for what they make**

*Braind is an international brand strategy consulting firm working exclusively on ingredient branding and strategic brand partnerships. Since 2012, it has served clients in over 10 countries, and its clientele includes Primaloft Inc, Aquafil / Econyl, ISKO Denim, W.L.Gore & Associates / Gore-Tex, Amsilk / Biosteel-Fiber, Recticel / Geltex, Westport Fuel Systems, MSIN Group and others. Founder & MD **Tomas Vucurevic** explains how brands can create a unique equity and discusses the new age concepts of branding.*

### **Co-branding seems to be trending. Is it just a fad or a macro-trend for survival?**

Co-branding or "ingredient branding" has a tradition in the fashion/apparel industry. We can go back to 1901, when Indanthren was registered as a colouring agent by BASF. The introduction of nylon by DuPont in 1938 was a tipping point. From the 1950s-driven by large chemical companies-we have seen the introduction of ingredient branded synthetic fibres. Francesco Saroglia's iconic Woolmark logo in 1964 opened the path for co-branding with natural fibres. Today, we find ingredient brands in cotton, cellulosic fibres, synthetic fibres, natural fibres and even in biofabrication where for example our client Biosteel introduced a synthetic spider-silk high-performance fibre. So, it is not a fad, but a long-time established strategy to communicate the added value of specialty and high-performance fibres and materials.

## **How do you think ingredient branding could evolve in the age of social media / digital marketing and ingredient branding?**

At Braind, we have analysed and defined one megatrend in ingredient branding: we call it the Next Generation ingredient branding. We see a shift from performance-driven co-branding of the 20th century towards a purpose-driven ingredient branding today and in the future. In times of social and digital media, the importance of sustainability and the offering of "good products" (good for the people, planet and profit) is constantly on the rise. Brands and retailers are more than ever looking for great stories through which they can differentiate their offer and attract new fans. We predict that it will become increasingly difficult to establish an ingredient branding solely based on product features and properties, unless it is a new-to-the-world technology.

## **What per cent of the brands use ingredient?**

That is probably difficult to name. But, what we can clearly state is that the vast majority of innovations in the apparel and fashion industry are provided by ingredient brands. There is hardly any innovation coming from apparel brands. So, from fibre development to membrane and other performance materials such as synthetic insulation, stretch functionalities or new dyeing methodologies, most of the innovations are provided by technology companies and many of them try to apply the ingredient brand model.

## **Which top fashion/apparel brands do you think are doing a good job with it?**

I can clearly say that my number one fashion brand when it comes to mastering the integration of ingredient brands is Stone Island. No other brand is so precise and takes such an effort to describe in detail the functionality of every product and the contribution of each ingredient to the overall performance. They are staging technology in a unique way, attracting a large fan community and achieving a significant price premium for their products. What I have observed is that many fashion brands are lacking a strategic and long-term approach integrating branded technologies. It takes years to build up such a position and cannot be done by having one or two styles in one collection and then expecting great results. In the sportswear / outdoor industry I would name Arc'teryx from Canada as a great role model.

## **What are the key elements that millenials look for in fashion and lifestyle products?**

Purpose! Millenials don't buy brands because of what they make or sell, but because of what they stand for. This also significantly influences ingredient branding. Parley for the Oceans for example is not a specific product; it is a movement, a mind-set. Nevertheless, it fulfils for Adidas the role of an "ingredient" loading the brand with meaningful and purpose driven story-telling. Brands and retailers are therefore looking for materials, components or services helping them to integrate purpose and story-telling like recycled fishing-nets, biodegradable materials or services indicating a fair and ethical production.

## **How can B2B companies invest in branding activities like B2C ones to increase awareness about their products?**

Companies have to understand the traditional B2B marketing is pretty much dead. If you want to establish an ingredient brand, having a product with a good performance, going to tradeshow, printing catalogues and brochures, sponsoring events and having nice giveaways won't do it any longer. Those are hygiene factors. So, it is not primarily a question of budget, but one of storytelling. We know from many cases that a great story can reach the whole world through the internet and social media within days, sometimes hours. But it needs to be meaningful and attractive. Paid media are losing their relevance. Shared media has to be earned, but you don't earn them by only communicating product features and benefits.

## **Tell us about your latest projects? How have those helped companies?**

Since our foundation in 2012, we have done over 30 projects in more than 10 countries. Some of the most fascinating ingredient brands such as Primaloft, Econyl, Isko Denim, Biosteel, GORE-TEX and Lenzing decided to work with us. Many of the projects we do are next generation ingredient branding solutions, where purpose, transparency or sustainability are the key drivers of brand differentiation. These projects helped our clients condense and sharpen their story-telling and by doing so becoming attractive to brands and retailers. Even though some of them were start-ups or smaller companies, they were able to successfully introduce their ingredient even with the strongest, global brands.

## **What kind of branding do start-ups go for?**

A brand is the ultimate condensation of the performance of a company. Here is an issue with brand-building for start-ups. They do not have a track record of historical performances, which can be analysed and used for defining the brand, but the brand has to be created based on future projections. From our experience, these projections tend to be overoptimistic or sometimes difficult to fulfil. But in general, we can say that start-ups or innovative companies have to develop a professional brand framework at a much earlier stage than ever before. Today, the entire brand story must be developed in parallel with the product or even before. Because brands and retailers are mainly interested in the brand story, and only second in the performance of the product.

## **Your top (5) suggestions for companies looking to go for ingredient branding.**

1. The ingredient needs to provide a relevant benefit to the buyer of the final product. What is relevant though is changing rapidly. It might not be any longer only the performance of your product, but how and by whom it has been made or why you are doing it.
2. Ingredient brands are living systems as every other brand. So, the ingredient needs to constantly innovate and evolve. It should also come in various qualities and product forms. The one-trick-pony will have a difficult time in the future.
3. Ingredient brands must know the entire demand chain in detail and work systematically with all stakeholders to create win-win situations with the brands and the retailer.

4. It is imperative to control the quality of the ingredient and therefore the consistent delivery of the brand promise through the entire value chain.

5. In order to meet the demands of brands and retailers, you need to have a great story and not only a great product.

We provide a new online tool on our website so interested companies can now run a self-audit by using the ingredient branding Fitness Check on our website. <https://www.braind.co/ingredient-brand-fitness-check>

Braind's definition of ingredient branding is - pars pro toto: a part taken for the whole. This means that the ingredient becomes the trigger for the buying decision of the final product. In effect, the component can be a product or a material as well as a service of specification.