2027 YOUNG ONES STUDENT AWARDS
Cesar

Make our Westie cool! *Transform perceptions of Cesar dog food from old fashioned and fussy to modern and iconic.*

CHALLENGE
Louna, Cesar's beloved West Highland White Terrier (a.k.a. Westie), is a distinctive and instantly recognizable element of our brand. However, it is also our Achilles heel. The Westie is often seen as a posh, pampered dog for older pet parents, which reinforces the perception that our brand is old-fashioned and out of touch. So, the challenge is to make the Westie cool. He is arguably Cesar's greatest brand equity asset and our biggest creative opportunity. If we can make the Westie feel culturally iconic and effortlessly cool, we have a powerful way to make the entire brand feel that way too.

Our Key Business Objectives include:
1. Sales growth
2. Increase new-to-brand buyers

Our Key Brand Objectives include:
1. Brand salience
2. Increased positive brand sentiment and associations of modern and relevance.

AUDIENCE
Next-Gen pet parents – the under 35-year-old dog parent. These pet parents tailor their lives around their pets, often choosing dogs over kids and treating their pets like their actual babies.
(See "Additional Resources/Insights: Appendix 2" for more consumer, category and brand insights.)

BACKGROUND
Cesar has been a global leader in wet dog food since its inception in the 1970s and carved out a position in the premium, gourmet food space. In the last 5 years, as the Wet Dog category continues to evolve, Cesar has seen its brand sentiment eroding.

Macrotrends include:

1. Evolving consumer expectations: seeking more quality and health benefits and
2. Growing number of brands entering the space, including new fresh food refrigerated/frozen formats.

BACKGROUND (CONT.)

In response, Cesar has driven relevance through the following actions while maintaining our position of building bonds and connections between dogs and dog parents:

1. New Visual Brand Identity (VBI) with focus on modernization and increasing quality and health perceptions (launched in 2026 in US and EU, roll out to other markets in 2027)
2. New Communications platform: **Love Like Crazy**, highlighting the crazy love pets and pet parents have for each other and Cesar's role in driving that bond
3. New Communications campaign: **Say It with Cesar**
4. Continued focus on newer Pantry Fresh sublines
    a. US: Wholesome Bowls/Meals, Simply Crafted
    b. EU: Fresh Bowls

Within this landscape, Cesar has a significant asset in the Westie that has been part of our visual brand identity for decades and is intrinsically linked to the brand. As the category and culture around pet ownership have evolved, there is an opportunity to make this familiar asset feel relevant to a new generation of pet parents. With Cesar currently refreshing its VBI, and continuing to evolve its product positioning and offerings, this brief is an opportunity to build on that momentum by reimagining the role of the Westie by making it feel culturally current, distinctive and cool again.

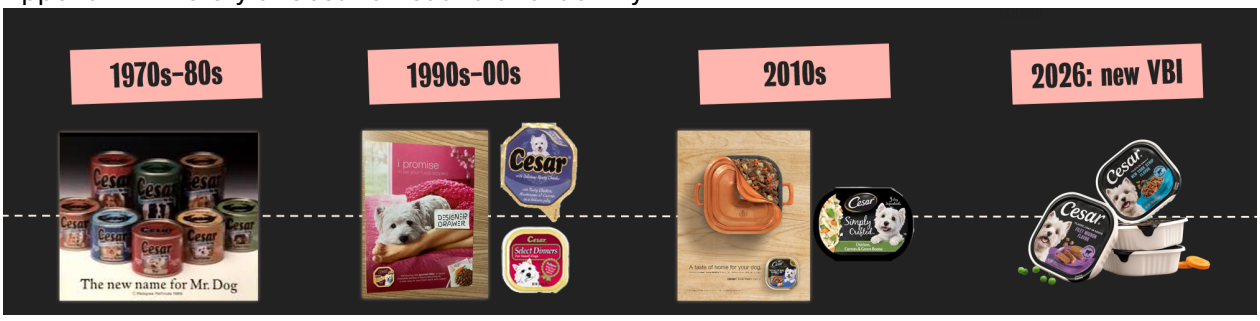
CONSIDERATIONS

CESAR® has a wide portfolio of items across wet dog food, dry dog food, and dog treats. This brief is very focused on wet dog food (the overwhelming volume on Cesar) but there is no mandate to limit the answer to this brief only to wet food. The challenge is relevant to the entire portfolio.

Ideally this would be a globally applicable brief, but open to regionally specific responses.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/INSIGHTS

Appendix 1: History of Cesar's visual brand identity



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES/INSIGHTS (CONT.)

Appendix 2: Next Gen Pet Parents Insights

Pet Parent Insights	• Choose pets over kids and see their dogs as their actual babies
	  ○ 7 in 10 next gen pet parents would rather have pets than kids
	  ○ 94% are willing to make sacrifices to make their dog happy (vs. 88% of gen pop)
	  ○ More likely to spoil their pets with presents, birthday cakes, clothing vs. gen pop

Wet Dog Category Insights	• Under-index in feeding wet dog food. Key barriers include: "don't think of it" and "not relevant to me."
	• See feeding as an act of care
	  ○ Mealtimes provide reassurance with owners reading appetite & health signals
	• Value Matters but Health is non-negotiable & seeing is believing
	  ○ Pre-feeding: visual reassurance plays a major role in quality & value perception
	  ○ Feeding: SMOT enhanced by eager dog, feeding experience, and clean bowls
	  ○ Post-feeding: perceived vitality, digestion, stool quality deliver health signals
	• This pet parent does not trust blindly; brand trust is built by proof. Credible resources include:
	  ○ Internet/online/social resources – 54%
	  ○ Veterinarians – 46%
	  ○ Friends/relatives – 26%
	  ○ Past experiences – 19%

Cesar Insights	• While top associations of Cesar are rooted in enjoyment ("delicious for my dog"), Cesar awareness remains an opportunity with low aided & unaided awareness • Cesar has an equity gap in quality and nutritional reassurance vs. the competitive set, a challenge given the importance of health to pet parents • Cesar household penetration underindexes among Millennials and Gen Z globally

CATEGORIES

By default, each brief will be open to all categories/disciplines, however, Cesar has noted specific interest in responses for an **Integrated Campaign**, **Interactive & Online Campaign**, **Creator Content & Social Media Campaign**, and **Creative Use of AI**.