

Brand new?

Last year, Vattenfall decided to maintain the Nuon brand. The decision, however, was not as simple as returning to the original concept. Instead, it meant reinventing the Nuon brand.

Text: David Scherpenhuizen | Photos: Nuon

During Vattenfall's period of expansion throughout Europe, it opted for a mono-brand strategy: All new acquisitions had to be rebranded and incorporated into Vattenfall so that it could pursue a pan-European policy. However, last year Vattenfall decided to abandon the mono-brand strategy and adopt a multi-brand approach.

Ariane Ribbeck, the Acting Director of Brand Management at Vattenfall, explains why: "It has a lot to do with the quickly changing European energy landscape. The European Union was urging for the creation of one big European energy market, which seemed to make local brands redundant. We wanted to become a European player and operate cross borders, with a presence in various regions so we could be everywhere for our customers, operating under one strong brand. Today, we see that customers have a closer connection to their local brands. Having access to Vattenfall energy all over Europe had no added value for them."

Carole Lindmark, the Head of Brand Positioning & Design, adds: "The board decided on a multi-brand strategy, which meant the migration to Vattenfall was stopped mid-stream. The Nuon brand had been dormant for a long time because of the migration. This made it necessary to rejuvenate the



The rebranding campaign addresses all media.

Nuon



Friso Westenberg
Head of Marketing Communications at Nuon

Anna Rose



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Ariane Ribbeck
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The revitalised Nuon brand

With the changing identity, the Nuon logo also received a facelift. The logo was always iconic and recognisable with its two contrasting colours, purple and yellow representing on/off, light/dark, positive/negative. Westenberg explains that now, the brand should not necessarily reflect opposites, but should instead express change and enhance a positive feeling towards the brand. “The bright colours have been kept and made less contrasting and softer, and the sharp edges of the logo have been taken away.”



For any questions about the brand, contact brand@nuon.com.

➤ brand, as well as change the image based on new customer insights.”

According to Friso Westenberg, Head of Marketing Communications at Nuon, research has shown that energy customers prefer something “close to home”, familiar and reliable. “They actually wanted their trusty, old local brand,” he says. “The research further showed that most Dutch consumers knew Nuon, but only 15 per cent were aware of Vattenfall. We were building on this, but the insight that customers want a familiar brand made the Vattenfall migration seem like a step too far and not in the customers’ interests.”

But there are challenges to boosting the Nuon brand, as Westenberg explains. “We are seen as a traditional, reliable but colourless brand. We have to change that perception of being ‘grey suits’, which is the overriding image our consumers have.”

Westenberg, however, hastens to add that Nuon’s name recognition is a firm basis for reinventing itself and changing public perception. This is the crux of what he and his team are doing. “We want to shift the perception of us as men in grey suits to being people’s next-door neighbour, their trusted friend and advisor. We want to go from simply selling energy to engaging our customers in a dialogue, so they perceive us as someone they can go to for help in changing things. We want to give them a good feeling about us. So, the implicit question we now want to ask our customers is no longer; ‘what can we sell you?’, but ‘how may we help you make a change?’ It’s a big shift; it means making ourselves more accessible to our customers and encouraging a dialogue through our communications strategy.”

The new approach is also reflected in Nuon’s advertising: It used to be mainly focussed on selling, but now it concentrates more on building the brand. Nuon’s advertising previously featured a highly successful comedy duo, Ed and Eduard, who ‘protected the consumers’ planet and purse’. Now the message concentrates more on Nuon as a company with a clear identity,

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Friso Westenberg,
Head of Marketing Communications at Nuon

wanting to help people, instead of selling them something.

“At present, the public’s feelings towards Nuon are neutral. We’re trying to change that by gaining a deeper understanding of our customers’ needs and reflecting that in our communications so that people go from feeling neutral about the brand to feeling affinity,” Westenberg says. “A brand has to be seen as giving and not just taking. This is what we are now trying to express. We’re no longer going for the comical soft sell, but we’re striving for something more serious and authentic. We are consciously fostering a closer relationship with our customers by promoting discourse. This means lowering their inhibition threshold by avoiding long-winded bureaucratic language and striving for a more informal tone.”

Westenberg concludes by painting a vision of the future: “In 2020, I would love to see that Nuon is still a household name, but more importantly, I hope we are seen as a trusted friend and enabler.” ■

Photography

Nuon is primarily a photographic brand. "We prefer to use photography over illustration as it is truer to real life. Within our photographic style, we choose to shoot at eye level and be in amongst the photo subjects. That way we do not appear to look down on people and we reflect a feeling of togetherness," Westenberg says.

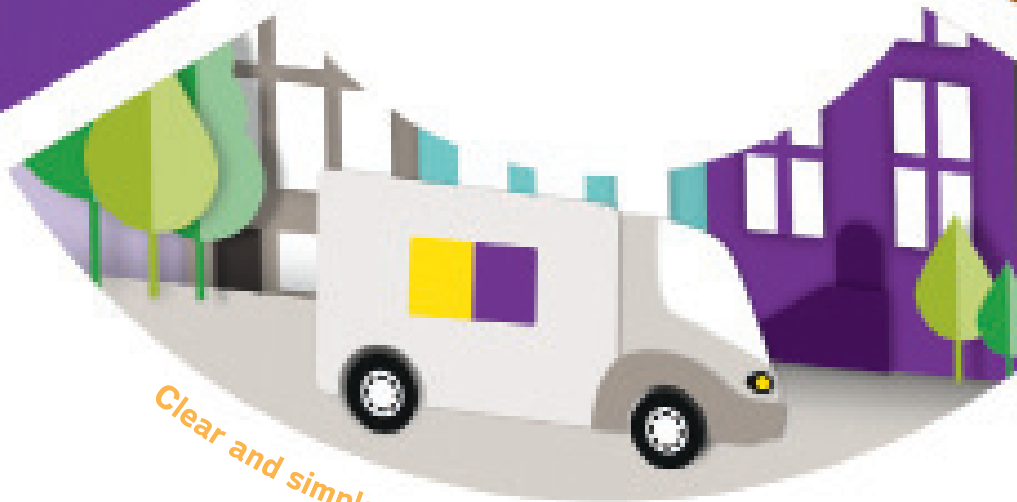


Nuon prefers using photography

Purple is Nuon's main colour

The colour purple

Nuon purple has been chosen as the brand's primary signal colour. Westenberg elaborates: "Of the primary brand colours (Nuon Yellow and Nuon Purple), it is the most powerful and memorable. In usage, it has the added benefit of increased legibility and it stands out."

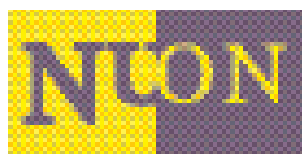


Clear and simple design

Simple, clear design

"Designs for the Nuon brand are always simple and clear. We avoid being overly complicated or decorative, in order to stay true to our brand values," Westenberg explains. "Our design style in communication should always be easy to understand."

old



new



The old logo underwent a facelift: The colours, font and sharp edges were changed.