

## Packaging Form: An in-store perspective



The importance of the front of the package cannot be stressed enough when it comes to the in-store shopping environment. In previous newsletters we have talked about the first moment of truth and how your package has a miniscule 2-7 seconds to pop off the shelf AND convince shoppers that your product is worth a share of their limited grocery budget. However, colors, graphics, and words are not the only packaging components that send messages to shoppers. The form packages take can also have powerful ramifications at the point of purchase.

The form of the package can be dictated by manufacturing/logistical motivators or by “standard category operating procedure”. Regardless, the form the package takes has implications to shoppers which should be considered when deciding which form new package or redesign should take.

When it comes to package form, shoppers are trained to expect certain things. **The mere structure of a package can communicate a great deal and lead to either an efficient shopping process or great frustration upon arriving home.** There are many shoppers that do not read packages, but rather look for visual cues such as color or shape to find and select products. It is with these people in particular that a package’s form needs to be clear in communicating what is inside. Package innovation can be good, but not at the expense of clarity. A personal example occurred when I went to purchase soap for my dishwasher. It is something I had purchased before, but decided to try a new, environmentally friendly brand on one particular trip. I selected a product, brought it home and was disappointed to see that every time I used it, the dishwasher would be filled with suds. I took a closer look at the package and then read “dish soap”, not “dishwashing soap”. I don’t consider myself an ignorant consumer, so what caused me to buy the wrong thing? It turns out the shape of the bottle I bought was more similar to dishwashing liquid than dish soap. A few months after that that dish soap started being sold in more traditional shaped bottles. Apparently I was not the only one.

**ALTHOUGH PACKAGE INNOVATION IS GREAT, MAKE SURE CONSUMERS ARE WILLING AND ABLE TO INNOVATE WITH YOU.**

**Environmental sustainability** is something that is prevalent throughout all areas of our lives nowadays, but also shows up in how shoppers react to packaging. Shoppers are looking for ways to be environmentally friendly and seeing unnecessary or wasteful packaging can turn some people off and may even cause them to not buy it.

**Storability** can also be considerations for consumers while they are shopping. Shoppers are savvy and know what fits in their refrigerators and how much room they have in their pantries. Those considerations not only impact how much of something they buy, but also what they buy.

**What are the research implications of all this?** Usability testing with new packaging is a common practice that is necessary if experimenting with new packaging forms to learn how easy it is to open/hold/close, etc. The easier the package is to use, the more likely consumers will be to purchase it again. However, more must be learned about whether a package structure motivates shoppers to buy a product or if it potentially causes them to avoid it. To answer this, it is necessary to learn about shopper reactions to package form while they are in the “shopping frame of mind” and can react to new forms in their category, surrounded by its competition. This can only be done in-store.

- **Luke Cahill**

For more information about exploratory in-store research or what is discussed in this newsletter, contact Luke Cahill at

## Marketing Roundtables

For more information visit our website at:

[www.marketingroundtables.com](http://www.marketingroundtables.com) or

contact us:

[info@marketingroundtables.com](mailto:info@marketingroundtables.com)

2420 E. 117th St. Suite 200

Burnsville, MN 55337

952.920.7644