



Wrapped to sell

by Fidelis Zvomuya

Boxes, bags and bottles have evolved from mere containers of fluid products to branding elements and in store sales agents of the products within.

According to Nathan Reddy, managing director of Grid, a branding and design agency, a best selling package must not be irreverent, but should have a universal appeal and be a reflection of the brand, as well as creating communications across multiple platforms.

He says packaging that sells should look great - preferably with a unique shape - smell good, be timeless, waterproof, environmentally friendly and easy to open.

"For years consumers have been trying to get manufacturers to adopt frustration free packaging that gets rid of plastic cases and bubble wrap, which are major irritants for consumers.

"A good package must also protect food from its microbial surroundings, it must significantly prolong shelf life, which in turn improves the chances of the food actually being eaten," he adds.

Let the package do the talking

However, packaging is off course far more than just a good container with user information. It determines the identity of the product, grabbing consumers' attention and helping establish that emotional bond that sells product and buys loyalty - or failing to

do so, leaving the product right there on the shelf. Consumers are now also looking for packaging that is environmentally friendly. Nathan says there is definitely an emotional link between the brand's packaging, design and the consumer. "Clever brands are always looking for more innovative ways to entice consumers by producing sustainable packaging."

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Stephen Beattie, sales and marketing manager of Pyrotec, says as brand owners are now moving away from mass media to where the consumer is exposed to the product in store, the packaging must be eye catching and must talk to the consumer.

"It must be able to talk to the consumer and grab his/her attention, provide the relevant information and protect the food in its original state," he says.

Research commissioned by the Point of Purchase Advertising Institute, a global organisation for marketing in retail, showed that 70% of purchasing decisions are made in store and at the point of purchase. The research also shows that not more than 50%

of marketing budgets are allocated to below the line advertising, when this is in fact where purchasing decisions are made.

"The research states that consumers spend an average of only 20 minutes in a store at any given time, therefore packaging is a critical factor in influencing consumers' purchasing decisions," says Stephen.

Good examples

In August 2008, Clover launched its vanilla flavoured Clover Mmmilk packed in Tetra Top packs, which uses SealFresh technology to extend the product's shelf life to production plus 20 days.

Clover says Tetra Pak was chosen for both the processing and packaging, and at the same time this saw the introduction of the Tetra Top carton bottle package to South Africa. This Tetra Top offers increased consumer convenience with its one-step opening and tamper evidence built into the cap. It keeps its contents safe, is easy to reseal and is ideal for chilled dairy and juice products. These one-step openings are reported to be more efficient to transport due to a more rigid plastic in the top, which also improves the stackability of the packages and eliminates the need for a full wrap-around box, reducing secondary packaging costs, which addresses the environmentally friendly aspects that most consumers are now looking for.

Another example of improved packaging is the new eye catching branding and logo from Pure Joy, which has significantly enhanced its customer appeal. Across the ranges, the new imagery is of juicy fresh fruit against a refreshing green background, which appeals to consumers' growing preference for the natural goodness and

great taste of fruit juice. This packaging also clearly reflects Parmalat's ethos of "Fresh. It's in everything we do", as well as the company's drive to bring health-enhancing products to the market place.

"The new technologies will have a massive impact on customers' purchasing decisions. Adding sound, light, colour and movement to packaging will allow early adopters to capture significant consumer attention share, leading to increased sales," explains Stephen.



Labelling regulations

The new Labelling and Advertising of Foodstuffs Regulations gazetted recently, requires brands to amend their packaging and more honestly reflect the benefits of using the product. Food-related brands will be forced to change their packaging to comply with this new legislation. Instead of seeing it as a costly legal requirement, brands should take this golden opportunity to revolutionise their product packaging and so gain a competitive edge over their rivals. **M&J**