

Packaged for success

Forget multi-million dollar advertising campaigns and catchy slogans, if your product packaging isn't working hard enough, you can forget about being the consumers' first choice in-store. Jane McConnell reports.

In the cluttered modern world of FMCG marketing, packaging may be the greatest weapon in the fight to grab the attention of shoppers and influence that all-important purchasing decision. Every year, more and more FMCG products hit the market and are crammed onto supermarket shelves next to dozens of similar products.

In this challenging retail environment, having the best product isn't going to help you if you're outshone by savvy competitors who know how to make their spray, sauce or scrub jump off the shelf and into the waiting hands of consumers. So what to do? The answer is – supercharge your packaging. It's about nailing form and function and ensuring these critical elements work in concert to deliver a visual impact but, also, a functionally effective experience for the consumer that has them coming back for more.

"Driving more effective consumer engagement through better design has been a proven strategy for years, especially overseas," said Scott Bremner, a partner and founder of Darling Brands in Australia and South-East Asia.

"Consumers now expect their brand choices to be both communicative and attractive: never before have they been more design-centric and familiar with what is good and bad design than they are today. Does good design sell?"

Sometimes. Does effective design sell? Always."

A key challenge for packaging designers and brand managers is balancing the demands of the packaging 'look' with the need for it to deliver essential functional attributes, but according to Mr Bremner, packaging design is in and of itself functional.

"It's more akin to architecture than true free art in that it has a purpose, not just an aesthetic," he said.

"Packaging design and its effectiveness is largely measured by whether or not it attracts, engages and ultimately sells the product it's 'cloaking' – that's its purpose. Brand owners who understand the inherent currency of great packaging, both the graphic and structural elements, reap the benefit of selling products that consumers love and are prepared to further engage with. That said, no amount of great packaging can save a poor-performing product that is overpackaged or functions poorly. The simple rule is: consumers aren't stupid – if you want that all-important

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second purchase, they need to feel the value exchange is mutual."

Sara Salter is Managing Director of Saltmine Design Group and agrees that effective packaging is critical to a brand's success and should do much more than just act as a physical shell to contain or protect a product.

"In the current fiscal environment, in which marketing budgets need to work harder and stretch further to ensure that campaigns connect with their target audiences, packaging is often the only guaranteed touch point," she said.

"Consumers can pick it up, read the brand story, be educated about the product they're buying and understand the brand positioning. It's a well-quoted fact that packaging only has a four- to six-second window to grab the consumers' attention and engage with them at-shelf. In this short time, packaging must act as a silent salesperson to grab busy consumers' attention and scream 'pick me up and take me home', so it's essential it does that effectively. Brands need to engage more with consumers and speak to them through packaging."

Technology is also now having a massive impact on the FMCG packaging industry. From lightweight boxes, to unbreakable bottles, technology is allowing packaging designers and manufacturers to develop and produce packaging solutions that would never have been possible 10 or even five years ago. Two great examples of such innovations are digital print and Tapit technology.

Digital print

Digital printing increases consumer interaction with FMCG brands through personalisation of packaging and seamless and immediate integration of seasonal and location-based promotions, online marketing campaigns and sponsorship activation.

Providing a unique, flexible and efficient alternative to traditional decoration processes, digital printing ensures FMCG consumers receive recent, relevant and highly targeted messages.

Tapit

Tapit is a communication platform that links consumers directly to an FMCG brand's website by simply tapping the pack with their phone. It works through near field communication technology: inside each pack is a chip, which is activated when tapped by a consumer's phone. The encoded chip then links directly to the nominated website, alleviating any need for downloaded apps or even scan-code readers.

Connectivity

Siobhan McCrory is General Manager of Sales, Marketing and Innovation at Pact Group Holdings, which recently launched these technologies into the market. She says FMCG brands are increasingly focused on customisation and connectivity with consumers in an effort to build a more emotional connection.

In recent times, one way of driving this emotional connection has been to follow the broader societal trend towards more sustainable living and to produce more sustainable packaging solutions, but it's not always that simple.

"From a consumer's perspective, it's our experience that they are no longer willing to pay a premium for packaging that has a sustainability story," Ms McCrory said.

"They expect it has one and will only choose it over alternatives if all else is equal in terms of



value, taste and functionality. Increasingly, we're seeing evidence that it is a retailer-led agenda – there are retailers that have made sustainability incredibly important, therefore the products on-shelf need to meet set criteria.

"As a packaging manufacturer, we also have FMCG customers who have made sustainability a priority and have set specific sustainability targets. From a global perspective, sustainability

is an increasingly important factor, particularly across Europe. For Australian businesses exporting product, this has had an impact on the local industry – for packaging manufacturers, knowledge of the product life cycle and sustainability has become imperative."

So what's around the corner for FMCG packaging in Australia? Alan Adams is Sector Manager (Retail) at Sealed Air and believes that in the next three to

five years we will see packaging evolve to match mega-trends such as urbanisation.

"Increasing population density and the desire for convenience are both behind the emergence of small-footprint retail venues, click-and-collect programs and online shopping," he said.

"All of these have specialty packaging needs, particularly around portion control. Packaging that can provide convenience with cook-in

functionality will appeal to the time-poor and less skilled cook.

"In the longer term [15-20 years], we will likely see the emergence of much more active packaging. Imagine a package that you can touch to see the nutritional impact it will have on you? Packaging will not only tell us about the contents, but will likely monitor and maintain the quality, shelf life and nutrients – use-by dates will be a thing of the past." ♦

Bringing the Avengers to life on-package

Agency: Saltmine Design Group.

Client: Frucor Beverages.

Campaign: V energy drink + *The Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, on-pack promotion.

Background: Frucor Beverages leveraged an opportunity for Australia's number one energy drink brand, V, to connect with consumers by forming a partnership with Marvel movie *The Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, the sequel to *The Avengers*.

The campaign creative centred on bringing to life the Hulk, Captain America, Thor and Iron Man. The large-scale activation began with limited-edition packaging and progressed to include a full generic

point-of-sale suite, account specific POS material, trade material and an out-of-home (OOH) campaign.

Objectives:

- To seamlessly bring together V Energy Drink and Marvel's *The Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, ensuring compliance with brand guidelines for each.
- Create a range of limited-edition V cans, including the new Reactor flavour.
- Create launch support over a range of touch points, including packaging, POS and OOH.
- Develop promotional mechanics and prizes for a major national promotion.

Execution: the first task was to develop packaging for the V

can range as well as the new limited-edition Reactor flavour. The packaging design would communicate V's partnership with Marvel and launch the large-scale nationwide promotion in tandem with the *The Avengers: Age Of Ultron* movie release. The packaging features the Avengers superheroes on front-of-pack for massive on-shelf impact and a 'Win' lock-up and details on back of pack.

When designing the POS material, the creative team utilised elements from the extensive *The Avengers: Age Of Ultron* asset library and injected them with the iconic V green to merge the two brands. A '4 limited edition cans to discover' device was created to encourage shoppers to seek out all four variants.



The agency also designed the larger-than-life OOH media campaign for trains and train station cross-track advertising.

Result: the final result was a strong campaign uniting two leading brands. The promotion ended on May 3, 2015, so results are TBC. ♦



Designed to sell

Of all the mediums marketers use to promote a product, it's packaging that can drive the final purchase decision. Sonoco Australia Consumer Division Business Development Manager Cherie Dorreen says quality packaging is the ultimate brand ambassador.

"You want to avoid your above-the-line promotion driving a consumer to your category only to have them grab a competitor's product over yours because their product packaging suits their functional needs, price

requirements or information needs," she told *Retail World*. "Knowing your target market will ultimately decide what is quality for your category and brand."

The balance of form and function is key packaging. Ms Dorreen says a great design will incorporate both to ensure the package meets your target market's use of the product.

"There is no point in having, for example, a difficult-to-open package when your product could be used in a fast-paced environment," she said. "For example, a busy barrister

trying to open and close snap-lock and trying to get the contents out of the bottom of the bags."

The packaging design sector is constantly evolving and seeking new technology, materials and techniques to provide a competitive edge.

"We are driven by cost reductions in a market where prices are increasing, so technologies are sought for continual improvement and we are motivated by user-friendly designs prompted by our target markets," Ms Dorreen said.

Sustainability is also a driver of innovation, but due to the inherent costs associated with sustainable choices, there remains room for improvement across the industry.

"We certainly aim to make sustainable choices, but I don't think that we are there yet," Ms Dorreen said. "Primarily, businesses are driven by cost and are sourcing packaging that is going to deliver the best results for the budget that will enable them to sell the product for a price consumers are willing to pay." ♦