

# Innovative Packaging Design - A Key Differentiator For Brands Today

In an extremely competitive FMCG market, brand managers and marketing professionals are constantly under pressure to introduce new products with a twist of differentiation. Be it in the form of new and improved product features, easy to open packaging design, or a complete identity overhaul, organizations need to persistently create a product differentiator for the brand to succeed in a saturated product category.

Also the total number of products to which a consumer is exposed to is almost equal to the number of new products launched in a given year. It's only 5-8% of these new products that have a chance of survival in today's tough competitive scenario. With numbers as staggering as these, the need for innovative packaging design to differentiate and stand out on shelf becomes vital for a brand's long-term success which cannot be overruled.

### Increasing importance of Packaging Design

The Indian consumer has also undergone a radical change over the last decade. The growth of the Indian middle class with large amounts of disposable income, and an open market scenario has brought about a radical shift in their consumption patterns. Indian consumers have become value conscious. It is no longer about cheap products but products that create value. Thus simplistic but efficient products that are easy to use and store and are cost effective at the same time, are more preferred. This is seen not only in India but is gradually becoming a global trend.

Therefore the requirement of combining design aspects with cost effectiveness is not just by choice but by demand of the industry. To meet the demands of the new breed of consumers the companies have notably increased their design spends. Packaging has now become not only about the look and feel of the product but also about the efficacy, sustainability and cost efficiency.

### Packaging Design as a key differentiator

Packaging Design today is one of the key drivers of sales, across sectors since consumers are looking for brands and products that are multifunctional, efficient, consistent yet affordable, factoring in innovation, latest technology and simplicity. It is now identified as a key product differentiator that accentuates the product's attributes and benefits and thus is an integral part of the product experience altogether. It is also instrumental in creating brand loyalties.

In a market that is overflowing with a number of products in the same category with similar if not the same offerings, at neck to neck

prices, packaging is the only differentiator which helps a consumer choose one brand over the other. Also Packaging ultimately represents the brand and it is the first point of interaction with the customer. Therefore, packaging does much more than just being an enclosure for contents.

Organizations are thus looking at innovative packaging designs to differentiate their offerings. For example, it is nearly impossible to ignore the vibrant colors and striking shape of a Junior Horlicks bottle and not know which brand it is—long before you even see the name on the label. Or for that matter the iconic 'contour Coke bottle' recognized around the world, with its ridged glass, bowed middle and unmistakable curve appeal are classic examples of great packaging designs for building differentiated brands.

Innovative, cost effective, and visually appealing packaging is therefore essential in laying the foundation of building a powerful brand. For instance in the food industry the packaging design has to address several critical requirements to make the product accepted at both the functional and emotional level. Are the products easy to open and close? Are they easy to dispose? Does the packaging allow one to store unused food portions into their containers or the increasing demand for on-the-go packaging, with busy consumers demanding a 'right here, right now' service from their shopping experience. Also is the product sustainable and reduce the overall usage of plastic?

Thus, with commoditization racing at an accelerated pace, true innovation is essential. They also create excitement for package design consultancies, and push them to innovate. In the past, one of the major considerations in the packaging design industry has been to increase the aesthetic appeal of the product so as to ensure improved visibility at the point of sale, thus leading to higher sales. This is now being taken forward to making the packaging appeal to other senses as well – Smell and touch being the key ones.

### What's the future?

Powered by the radical consumer empowerment, through the internet and mobile revolution in the country the new breed of consumers are inclined towards products which not only look and feel good, but allows ease of use and access, thus creating higher value.

Some of the innovative packaging design solutions that are set to drive the future would be:



- Packaging that is "tamper-proof" and addresses the aspects of safety
- 'Resealable Packaging' that would allow consumers to easily store unused food portions in their own storage containers. Good examples could be the standup bags and pouches which are easy to open, reseal easily and are portable. Standup, zippered freezer bags are more user-friendly and take up less space in storage.
- Demand for on-the-go packaging would drive the future packaging consumption as the busy lifestyle of consumers would demand a 'right here, right now' service from their shopping experience.
- Minimalistic Packaging design which is simple, elegant, makes the functionality and aesthetics appealing as well as communicates an idea by eliminating all non-essential forms or content would be another key trend. It would also include right-size packaging in terms of efficient package shape/size, package material and ultimately eliminating package failures.
- Green packaging would be another important trend to drive the future. This takes into account the various environmental issues prevalent, thus paving way for eco-friendly designs. This newest form of packaging allows for recyclability as well as palette maximization. Depletion of the ozone layer being another of the key environmental concerns today, eco-friendly packaging also tries to reduce the emission of greenhouses gases into the environment.

Therefore in today's context the packaging design industry is always striving to create packaging that is sustainable, feasible, create exponential value as well as provide an enhanced experience to consumers. In the near future we can definitely see several new forms of packaging that combine high performing materials with innovative applications like nano materials, smart packaging and multi-sensorial packaging to take the brand experience to the next level.

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