

Commentary

What To Know About Brand Packaging

Terri Goldstein, Mar 15, 2011 07:30 AM

As principal of a brand identity firm for 15+ years, I have too often seen how brand-packaging redesigns fail due to inherent client subjectivity. And unlike brand advertising, which is readily malleable, "brand dress" -- the most long-lasting of all marketing media -- must remain competitive and relevant for, on average, three years.

Still, brand packaging is the most potent weapon in the CMO's arsenal in the battle for the hearts and minds of consumers on the actual playing field -- the retail shelf; the last moment of truth where ROI is tracked daily!

By following three steps, your brand packaging will be seen (visual), felt (emotional) and understood (rational) in the five seconds or less that your consumer takes to select your brand ... or to pass it over.

1. Get the right resource onboard

Ensure that your RFQ process removes politics and potential favoritism to actually reveal the firm most appropriate for the project. Then ask for proof of trademark/infringement insurance, while inquiring that a trademark/trade dress attorney is connected to your firm of choice. Only in this manner can you trademark newly developed brand assets and protect them from private-label copycat activity.

2. Understand the brand's current communications (visual vocabulary)

Take the time to be certain that brand management understands its brand equities/assets before restaging. Then utilize the latest pre-design research tools, such as color crayon research, brand personification and structure share, to determine which assets may be effectively moved forward, which need be left behind and which are ripe for reinvention. Have your branding consultant complete a SWOT analysis of your category and cross-category from a color/shape/ symbol/words perspective to discover the visual/verbal holes that must be plugged while creating a brand USP and RTB that is apparent within your competitive set.

3. Design the brand to the same hierarchy with which the mind retains visual information

Eventually the new brand dress will arrive at your corner office for final approval. Examine it under the lens of the SWOT analysis, which describes how the mind responds to packaging: color is first (the red-and-white milk, the copper and black batteries); shape is second (this can be structure and holding shapes/letterform shapes); symbols are third; words last.

Look for visual shorthand in your restaged brand that communicates the key attributes with the fewest words feasible. Consumers are not reading as they course the aisles in the 17 minutes they shop per week, rather they respond to the communication value of a brand's colors, shapes and symbols to inform them! Finally, ask to see your brand in a competitive shelf mockup -- not just on your conference room table.

Follow these three steps to create a refreshed brand dress that will emotionally connect with consumers to produce that happy ka-ching at checkout.