Understanding The Critical Role Of The 'Brand' In Product Packaging

By JoAnn R. Hines, Packaging Diva

What is a brand and why is it important?

A brand is a product, service, or concept that is publicly distinguished from other products, services, or concepts so that it can be easily communicated and usually marketed. Branding is today's hot button when it comes to marketing and advertising. We all want our 'signature' brands to be 1st and foremost and easily recognised by our core consumer. The job is to create products with instant brand recognition but very difficult to do in today's over saturated media environment.

But as traditional media declines other opportunities arise through the right packaging with the right message. What does branding mean to product packaging? The package is the first touch point of the consumer at retail. This is when you can 'reach out' to your customer though creative product packaging.

There are many products out there who's package is their brand. The most common packaging brands that we all recognise include the iconic Legg's pantyhose egg, the Tiffany signature blue box and Coca-Cola's hourglass bottle. In other cases it's the orange/gold of Kodak packaging or the kelly green of their competitor Fuji Film. Other examples might include the shape of Mrs. Butterworth's syrup bottle or the once well known TV dinner with its individual compartments. In these cases the package immediately identifies the product within and the company that owns it, hence the branding.

Building a packaging brand seems simple at the outset. The only problem is you have to understand what the consumer wants and expects in their product packaging. That consumer is on the move too. They are time crunched, overworked and overwhelmed with information and even worse you have only 2.6 seconds to convince them to pick up your product for a closer look. So how can you 'connect your message with the consumer' ?

The package has an immense role to play. Besides transporting, protecting and keeping your product secure consider what other things the package is doing simultaneously: educating about what's inside or how to use the product, helping the consumer to make an informed purchasing decision, making it convenient and easier for the customer to use, providing a sense product integrity and trust in your brand. Heard enough? Can your package meet these criteria?

It's the emotional connection that's build today's brands. How you make that connection is what separates successful brands from those that fail to make the grade. The package needs to 'engage' the consumer by clearly stating value, benefits and reasons why a consumer should make the purchase. How will purchasing the product makes someone's life easier? How easy or convenient is it to use? How does it mesh with the consumer's lifestyle? And most importantly, what's in it for the consumer once they make the purchase?

So what constitutes compelling packaging brand? How 'connected' are you to your consumer? Here are a few emotional descriptors that your packaging must convey. Does your packaging Engage, Evoke, and Engross the consumer?

Let's look first at ENGAGE: to attract and hold by influence or power. Can you say that about your product packaging? Or is your product packaging just the opposite? Boring!

Think about what you can do to improve the odds that your package will capture a consumer: Colours, features, shapes, value/benefits or social conscious are all ways to 'reach out' with your package.

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EVOKE: To call forth or call up as in evoking memories. What about your package will makes the consumer recall a successful or enjoyable product experience? How can you make them remember that they were satisfied in buying your product? In case they haven't purchased before, what is going to 'connect' them to your product with your package? What is so special about your packaging that they need to take a closer look?

ENGROSS: To engage the whole attention of (and that's the key point). You have to get their attention to pick up our product before they can even consider buying it. Use features that will capture their interest in seconds because that's all the time you are going to get before they move on.

Another 'feeling' word that conveys a strong and compelling brand is TRUST. You must create a place where people look for information and feel more secure doing so. It's important to understand the strength behind your brand and why people turn to it for a sense of security and information. So what about your product packaging conveys the experience that consumers can trust your brand?

Regardless of the reason a consumer may be in the store or looking at your product, introduce them to a 'lifestyle' experience . . . trust, security, necessity or even peace of mind. Your package presence needs to call out 'Buy Me' because I provide the experience of all of the above emotions.

Product package branding is a powerful influence on everyone. It's important to understand the strength behind the brand and why people turn to it for a sense of happiness, satisfaction, security and information. The best of all brands cross gender, ethnicity and age demographics.

If you have to pick one, the best single word emotional response you can give to the package brand is 'ENGAGE.' People are connected to the brand at all levels. That is a great position to be allied with. So that's what you need to do with your product packaging. You have the brand statement behind you now you need to 'ENGAGE' the consumer.

When you capture the power of the package, people will integrate your product into their everyday life. They will not just turn to it as a convenience but as a necessity for comfortable living. So create your own story through powerful product packaging. Whatever your category, you should strive to engage, evoke, and engross the consumer to build your brand through product packaging. You must understand and incorporate all these factors to create a successful packaging brand.

I'm JoAnn Hines The Packaging Diva. I'm tapped in to the latest packaging news. I can help you assess why or not you should consider changing your product packaging. At the very least I can tell you what your competition is doing.

If you are just chumming the 'packaging' waters then be sure and visit and one of my web sites for lots of information and advice or to get your free packaging report 'Why Packaging Fails'.

Considering that the cost of designing an average retail package is $7,000, what's a few dollars to get it right the first time (or risk spending thousands more to fix it later)! It pays to do your homework!

So if you are seeking packaging expertise, consultation, assistance, design or RFP's, or just plain help, I can assist you with your ideas, goals, questions, issues and challenges. I promise I *will* find your packaging solution!

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