When Packaging Makeovers Go Wrong

By JoAnn R. Hines, Packaging Diva

Recently Tropicana made major change in its orange juice packaging. Several article were written about the successful rebranding of the packaging from a design standpoint. I'm sure they put a lot of thought and research into the new packaging but the question is what were they thinking? Consumers hate it.

My question is did they ever connect with their core customer before making the packaging design changes?

Several companies are now using the power of the Internet to reach out to consumer to help them make the packaging decision by asking for feedback. Both Nestle and Eight O'Clock coffee are reaching out with the specific intent of engaging consumers online in the process.

The New York Times covered Tropicana's new packaging change and that got quite a bit of the feedback from their readers. Most readers were quite critical of the product packaging and the consensus was that the packaging was to a generic for a premium price.

Twitter users also came to the same conclusion. There were numerous discussions about the Tropicana new product packaging on Twitter (not sure why Kellogg's isn't there monitoring the Twitter discussions and weighing in). Most tweets complained that they could not find their trusted brand on the store shelves. Everyone with few exceptions felt the packaging was to generic and looked low end not upscale which is the message that Tropicana is trying to convey. Quite a few recommended replacing the straw (which might be a dated look but consumers like it) and that the orange be added back to the packaging.

Given that the outcome of this packaging makeover the question arises when should a brand make over their product packaging? How and what will consumer products companies do to keep from alienating their core customer. With the growth of private labels, branded goods are suffering. Was it Tropicana's intent to look more like a private label or a generic brand?

I didn't speak with them directly but in the New York Times article Tropicana expressed the fact that they were branded with the 100% orange to represent fresh oranges and no added sugar. I'm not sure how relevant this is to changing their brand but in doing so they may have alienated their core customer.

People shop by rote and look for what they have purchased in the past. If they can't find it they move on. This is especially important with the proliferation of brands. Don't confuse your core customer for once they make the switch to an alternative product they may never come back.

When considering a packaging makeover think about the expectations of your consumer. Changing a package esthetically might appeal to the 'creatives' but what will it do to your brand? So before you do a major packaging makeover the wrong way be sure 1st that your consumer is connected to the new packaging image and message.

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