

THE NEEDS OF A SEGMENT SHOULD DRIVE DESIGN

By Gail Ritacco

With thousands of brands screaming for your consumers' attention, it is important to clearly define your target—to know who you want your package to speak to and what message you want them to hear. One way to do that is to organize your total customer base into groups, to segment your consumers.

Segmenting consumers can serve the brand in a variety of ways. It can help focus design efforts. It can also pinpoint a direction for mining insights, which can help identify strategies and optimize packaging features and benefits. Segmentation also creates the opportunity to have your designs connect with consumers on a functional and an emotional basis.

Of course, there are a variety of ways to classify consumers, but the most common variables are demographics like age, gender or ethnicity; psychographics like lifestyle, attitude or values; and behaviors like purchasing patterns. The logic is that

consumers within a particular segment share certain characteristics that typically cause them to have similar wants and needs.

> NEEDS MOST RELEVANT TO PACKAGING

And while segmenting consumers according to these common dimensions—demographics, psychographics and behaviors—is important to overall marketing strategy, the most significant variable for package design is something called a need state.

A need state is defined by a group of consumers who are alike in terms of the product benefits and attributes they seek in a particular use occasion. For the same product, a consumer can experience different need states over the course of the day or across the occasions they will use that particular product.

For instance, a yogurt user may want a product for weight control that fits into her fitness routine for breakfast, and maybe lunch; at these occasions, she would desire a yogurt that is low in calories and fat. Later in the day, that same person may want an indulgence and seek a yogurt that is sweet, has a bold flavor and is worth the extra calories.

While you can't be all things for all needs, it is important to understand the range of needs, to size each needs-based segment, to understand the landscape in terms of what the competition is delivering and to determine where your product best fits.

Understanding these individual needs states enables you to design packaging that satisfies your consumer on a deeper level—a level that fills the need she is experiencing at the very moment she is considering your brand.

Only when the brand team understands how customers are segmented, determines which segment to target and intimately understands that targeted segment can it connect with the right consumers and deliver long term. >



> Tropicana Twister's playful package structure (left) appeals to shoppers looking for a fun drink, while Odwalla (right) has straight lines that appeal to the practical side of "healthy" shoppers.

Consider the juice category, where consumer need states could range from a desire for something that is fun to consume to something that is healthy to drink.

A juice brand that targets the entertaining end of the need-state range is Tropicana Twister. The brand features a package design that embodies “fun” with a dynamic, playful, active structure, which features a top portion that twists in the form of a tornado.

On the other side of the juice continuum are healthy, premium brands like Odwalla and Bolthouse Farms. These brands have simple, straight-lined, yet sophisticated package structures that communicate health, and appeal to consumers at a time when they desire something more practical—a juice drink that is good for them.

Looking at just these few juice brands, we see how packaging can appeal to different need states (fun vs. healthy) with different structures (active, twisting forms over more static, straight-lined forms).



> Jamba incorporates both “fun” and “healthy” need states in its package design. The twisting form says “fun” while the squared off foundation conveys a more serious practical message around health.

It is even more important for new brands to take need states into consideration in their packaging. A brand that’s new to the market must understand the current category landscape in order to identify the “white space” and connect its packaging to need states not already addressed by the competition.

That’s what Jamba Juice has done. With a foundation in Jamba Juice retail stores, the new ready-to-drink entry in the premium juice category is positioned between health and fun; its packaging was strategically designed to balance the two ends of the spectrum, to incorporate both fun and health needs states.

The slight twist in the brand’s structure, for instance,

conveys the essence of a freshly blended smoothie and is indicative of the fun Jamba Juice retail experience. At the same time, the simple, square foundation communicates a more serious, premium message around health. Consumers who desire a fun product to satisfy a healthy need are attracted to this new brand’s twisted square bottle.

> RESEARCH REVEALS NEED STATES

Needs states can be identified through a variety of means, but they are best captured using a combination of qualitative and quantitative research tools.

Focus groups with techniques like laddering (an interviewing method that invites consumers to reveal specifics), projection (where consumers are asked to role play), and contextual interviews (observing behavior and product/category interactions, either in person or via video diaries), are important qualitative techniques that offer insight into consumers’ different usage occasions with the brand and the needs that define them. These techniques can also elicit consumer language that describes their need states. Combining consumer articulations with our own observations allows us to understand what’s working and what’s not working so that we can interpret design opportunities.

Quantitative tools like online journals and usage diaries (where consumers relay their habits and practices), attitude and image surveys (consumers react to functional and emotional attributes), and market structure (relating product usage to demographics, needs and occasions) help quantify consumer need states and provide a strategic focus for the marketing plan and the packaging execution.

Such tools are invaluable in helping you understand the needs your packaging is addressing. Need-based segmentation helps the brand team identify what makes the consumer tick, both functionally and emotionally. And when you translate those deep emotions into design language, you can be assured that your package will speak loudly to your intended consumer and make that powerful brand connection at shelf. **BP**

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