

A change is as good as a holiday: Packaging trends for 2012

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Marshal Cohen, New York-based analyst and expert on consumer behaviour, once said, "Trends come and go very rapidly. The problem is that they're not catching on for a longer period of time."



Stephen Beattie, Marketing Manager of Pyrotec, a leading privately-owned South African company specialising in product identification solutions, agrees with Cohen's theory but insists that it is not necessarily negative: "This observation is true for all industries, including the packaging sector. As technology advances so does the rate at which our systems evolve. A trend is usually created as a result of industry experts constantly producing new and better systems, which are seen as desirable by the consumer. For the most part, the progression of on-pack devices is a positive thing brought about by the desire for improvement."

Trends for 2012



Brand reversion

With the rapid pace of today's world, there has been an increased need to re-live past experiences as consumers indulge their nostalgia for a bygone era. This is evident in the return of retro packaging on products that range from cosmetics (Benefit) to beverages (Frankie's Olde Soft Drink Company). As technology advances and the world continues to pick up the pace, our longing for a simpler, less complicated era grows.



Conspicuous Conservation

"The demand for sustainable packaging will be greater this year than ever before, as it meets consumers' desire for their purchases to serve a greater purpose. Eco packaging is not only better for the environment, but it also improves consumers' perception of your brand," says Beattie.

Source reduction is vital. "Many pharmaceutical companies aim to do away with outer cartons and separate leaflets by including patient information directly on the bottles, using Fix-a-Form™ leaflet labels. Therefore, fewer raw materials are utilised and the carbon footprint is reduced as less suppliers are needed, which also results in cost savings.



On-pack integration with new media

In the 21st century, on-pack campaigns need to integrate with all forms of media to speak to audiences through multiple channels. "With the explosion of social media and increased mobile usage, brands will need to have a solid cross-cutting marketing strategy in order to remain relevant," explains Beattie.

Advanced technology

According to recent studies, 25% of all application downloads in 2012 will feature some sort of augmented reality. Augmented reality is the superimposition of a virtual world on top of a 'real world'. In simpler terms, this would mean adding a further dimension to your online experience. For example, when using your smartphone to look up a restaurant, you would be able to determine the exact location from the on-screen street view, read other users' reviews and even find other restaurants in your area.

Quick response (QR) codes are a modern barcode technology rapidly growing in popularity. One early adopter, Esona boutique winery, uses the codes on all of their wine labels. Consumers can download an application for their smartphones that allows them to 'read' the QR code. After taking a picture of the QR code with the application, consumers are automatically taken to a website where they can get more information about the wine, tasting notes, history and the wine-making process. QR codes are an easy way for consumers to get more information about a product in-store when having to choose between hundreds of different brands.

"It is important for companies to not be discouraged by the fast-changing nature of our industry and to stay up-to-date with industry trends. They should not dismiss them simply as 'just a fad', as trends are indicative of a change or progression in their target audience's thinking," concludes Beattie. "Trends in the industry can provide important clues as to what the consumer wants, and once we can tap into that thought process, half the battle is won."

What about internationally? What is happening in America's retail industry? Dave Groff, Bedford Industries Sales Manager for South Africa, fills us in.

In our time starved society, US manufacturers are actively engaging their consumers at the point of purchase through on-pack campaigns, which appears to have more impact on sales than above-the-line campaigns which are often swiftly forgotten.

New media and mobile media marketing specifically will become the norm within the next 3-5 years. Technology such as QR codes will evolve and develop into a far more advanced version than what we see today.

Green consciousness will continue to grow, as more and more companies look at how they can reduce their carbon footprints. Eco-friendly materials and biodegradable options is expected to become standard within the packaging industry.

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