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Packaging and the principles of disruption

Harnessing design
to achieve retail
breakthrough

CONRAN DESIGN GROUP

PACKAGING, AS WE WERE REMINDED BY THE LATE STEVE JOBS, IS ESSENTIAL TO DEFINING AN OFFER. IT DETERMINES INITIAL CUSTOMER PERCEPTIONS, SETS EXPECTATIONS, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, DRIVES THE BEHAVIORS WHICH CAN PROPEL A BRAND FORWARD.

We all lead very busy lives and the details of our day-to-day journeys are often fleeting – blending, as a matter of course, into the ‘noise’ that surrounds us.

It’s not that we (consumers) are not paying attention, it’s more a function of the strain our increasingly digital world has placed on society’s already limited cognitive abilities. Compound this with the fact that people today are inundated with choices, offers, trade-offs – it’s no wonder life can become a blur.

Inherent in this reality lies real marketing challenges that are hinged upon finding new ways to galvanize the attention of retail consumers by creating ‘breakthrough’ instore, at the shelf, online or at the water cooler. To this end, the role of packaging needs to be recognized for the vital retail catalyst that it is – one that both provides a high degree of differentiation and achieves strategic outcomes.

Unfortunately, packaging is often overlooked – cast aside in the marketing mix as a ‘cost center’ with only tactical value. This kind of thinking has proven to be way off the mark. Packaging determines initial customer perceptions, sets expectations, and more importantly, drives the behaviors which can propel a brand forward.

Indeed, not only does packaging help to infer a product’s quality, it also communicates what a product is and what it is not; it projects (through design) the benefits that can cement a buying decision, while expressing a range of intended emotions that drive covet – the ‘I gotta have it’ factor.

Packaging, when approached with this mindset, can launch a product and thereby build a deeper emotional connection with consumers. Yet, in order to truly maximize packaging for the powerful, strategic brand asset that it is, the design thinking needs to be constantly ‘re-imagined’ and brought forward to stimulate, and even provoke, the attention and interest of today’s often distracted consumers.

The principles of disruption

Unlocking the real potential of packaging requires a ‘thinking shift’ from tactical design to strategic design, with a risk horizon that pushes traditional packaging boundaries, and intentionally challenges consumers’ conventional comfort zones in order to capture their attention and gain their loyalty at the shelf.

The following are examples of how 'disruption' can reset a brand's entire packaging experience:

Set and Ros olive oil

Groundbreaking unboxing

- Interactive unboxing experience surprises and delights
- Exterior pack resembles stone slab and has natural feel
- Packaging requires a sense of discovery and adventure
- Sustainable and environmentally friendly packaging created with molded pulp fiber



Tostitos Safe Bag

Sensing your limit

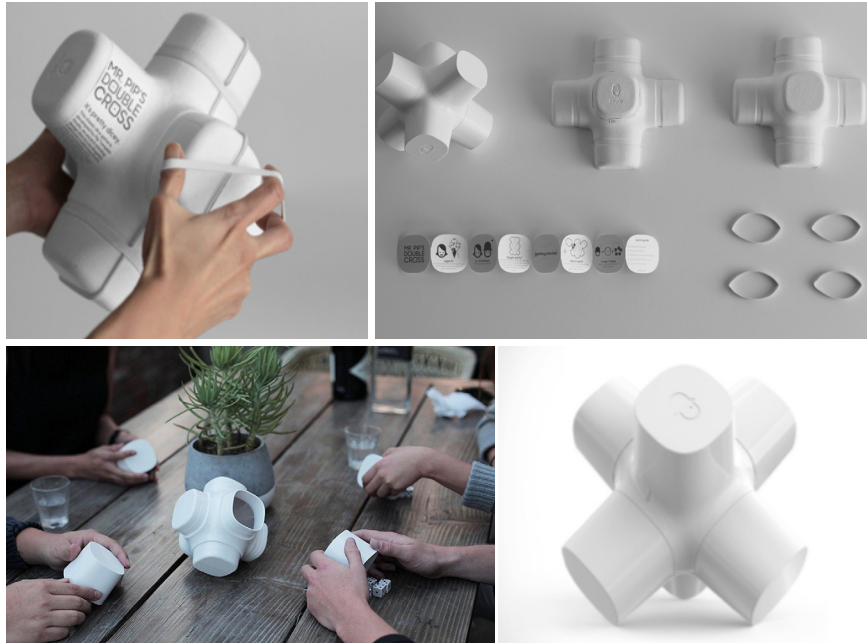
- Chip bag contains a sensor that detects traces of alcohol on a person's breath
- The bag turns red if alcohol is detected and green if it is not
- Equip with Uber connection by tapping a phone against the bag
- Greatly expands the role and purpose of traditional chip packaging



Mr. Pip

Function follows form

- A package that doubles as the product itself
- High-end design enables the game to also serve as a display piece
- Modernizes the classic game of 'Liar's Dice' and encourages face-to-face gaming play
- Sparks personal connection, play, and fun
- Reduces packaging volume



Veve Clicquot

Bubbly disruption

- Striking form and structure concepts creates unmistakable brand association
- Exterior pack takes on the role of 'hero' within design system
- Transforms packaging experience into a moment
- Packaging design used to expand audience reach by inducing greater awareness, trial and consideration



In conclusion

The Principles of Disruption are not abstractions, but rather tangible levers of differentiation. These are based on using 'design intent' to build uncommon meaning into packaging across form, structure, graphics, materials, photography and assembly. ■



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David is responsible for building and growing the branding and design offer in North America.

A brand consulting veteran with more than two decades of experience at firms such as Landor and Siegel+Gale, David also worked in client-side marketing at Unilever and Time Warner. He brings a deep understanding of branding in multiple industries across research, strategy, naming, identity design and packaging.

Key brand work:

Unilever, Alcon, National Association of REALTORS®, Roche, Essilor, AstraZeneca, Merck, Teva, Walgreens, Zoetis, Nestlé, Acelity, Sanofi, Citi, Comcast, Coca-Cola, Verizon, Deutsche Bank, Novartis

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BA, Duke University
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ABOUT US

Conran Design Group is a global design agency with a 60-year heritage, specialising in branding and corporate communications.

We believe in the power of design to drive strategic and commercial advantage. We use design to inform, inspire and engage people, shaping the interactions that challenge and influence beliefs and behaviour.

This is what we call Designing Advantage.

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