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Strategic Insights On:

Packaged Goods

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Packaged Goods

We construct brands and packaged goods with messages that consumers relate to and celebrate with engagement. Today's consumer is savvy and more refined, which is why our designs push the envelope on innovative breaking through the clutter.

We hope you enjoy this content and evok's commitment to effective package design. If you would ever like to be a guest writer or suggest blogs for us to write, please contact us at info@evokad.com.



5 PACKAGING DESIGN TRENDS TO CATCH CONSUMERS' ATTENTION

Brands Strive to Win Consumers in Seven Seconds

Seven seconds. That's all the time brands have to make a positive impression on a potential buyer. The vanilla half-caf latte you drink from Starbucks every week, the BarkBox subscription you pamper your miniature schnauzer with and that pint of Halo Top you can't pass up when you grocery shop all have one thing in common: great product packaging.

Quality packaging increases consumer loyalty. How many times have you unboxed an iPhone? The box intentionally opens slowly to add suspense for what's inside. This sensation you might feel is because of effective product packaging. Apple, along with many brands, are able to create these experiences and attract repeat customers through their design packaging.

Here are a few examples of how brands have accomplished this by leveraging proven packaging design trends.

Minimalism: Less is More

The rise of Tide PODS lets us throw a ball of detergent into our washing machine instead of taking the time to pour it into a cup. The Amazon Echo lets us turn our lights on with our voice. These products fulfill one basic goal: to make life easier. So why not incorporate this trend into product packaging?

This less is more trend focuses on decluttered designs that convey a clean and clear brand message. Business Insider says that a first impression takes about seven seconds. So in that short amount of time, brands have to provide quick and easy information to win over the consumer. Check out a couple examples of brands that have tackled this obstacle.



Big Words Mean Big Message

How do brands promote new products and persuade consumers to choose their brand over others? Big font.

Whether it's witty or simply informative, sometimes the best way to distinguish a product is to promote a voice that's loud, clear and draws attention. Give-A-Care goes for the witty side and defines a specific purpose for the tea: uncomfortable conversations where you can spill the tea and drink some too. BOOMCHICKAPOP is fairly new to the healthy snack market, so using a large font was an effective strategy to increase their brand awareness. Check out examples from these two brands below.



Hey, snacking should be fun right?

Vintage: A Passionate Past

Vintage designs incorporate a sense of nostalgia with the consumer's relationship with the brand. Brands that use this design trend motivate consumers to look back on the past and remember how the product has influenced their lives over the years. Vintage designs tell a story—one that's passionate, respected and dedicated to high quality. Check out these vintage examples that showcase their long-lasting identities.

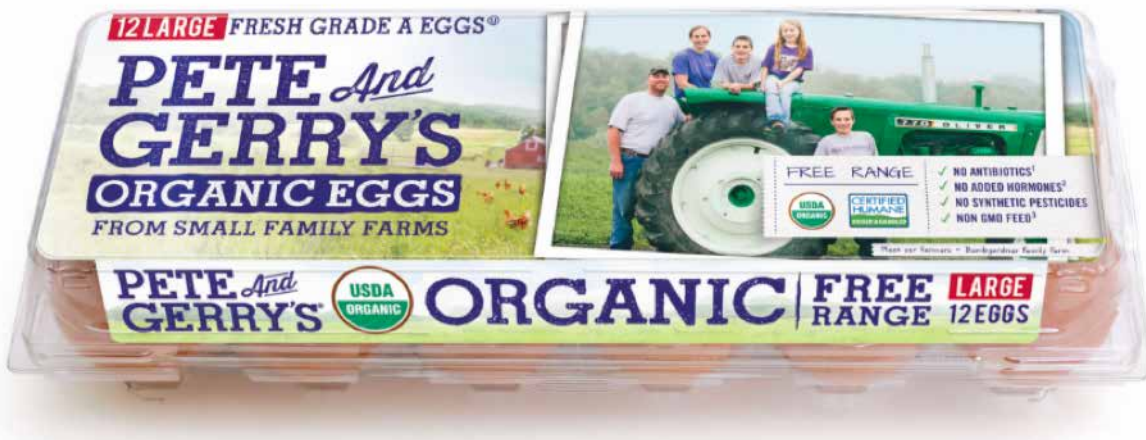


Photography: The Power of a Pause

In the few seconds a consumer decides between a brand and their biggest competitor, an effective way to win them over is by telling a story, one that words can't.

Brands can use photography to illustrate their message. Pete and Gerry's uses a photo of their family to emphasize how proud they are of the quality of their eggs. This organic eggs company demonstrates a growing trend: consumers look for authenticity and truths that lead to personal connections with brands. Photography has the power to do that, the power to make the consumers pause and absorb a brand's identity.

Sprout, a baby food company, also uses this strategy with a gardening-inspired design to promote the product's freshness. Scroll down to see what we mean.



Pete and Gerry's organic eggs



Sprout Baby Food

Doodles: Channeling Our Inner Child

A happy customer is the best customer, so product packaging that brings on smiles is always a good idea.

Whether you're a CEO of a large corporation or a third grader in math class, you doodle. Freestyle drawing brings out our energetic spirit and ability to use our imagination. Doodling cheers us up and when seen on packaging, it can associate the brand with fun, liveliness and honesty. Check out these doodle designs.



Made with Local food bar



Nuts.com shipping packaging design



Cat Cookies design by melva



Packaging of the World:
Cup Noodles by Janet Lee



Product packaging directly affects purchasing behavior. When the average consumer spends about seven seconds deciding whether they are going to buy your product, it's critical for brands to choose designs that highlight their identity and the message they are trying to get across.

These design trends are just a few of the many that can help brands create long-lasting impressions with consumers. Whether you want doodles all over your product, a photo to illustrate your brand's story or even big words to make your product pop, there's a design strategy for you.

Make sure to check out a case study evok created for Lighthouse Seafood Company. Using the photography design element, we constructed a unique package that helped separate the high-quality seafood company from its competitors. For more information, visit our packaged goods page where you can read about our passion for designing packaged goods that create lasting relationships between brands and consumers.



HOW TO LAUNCH A BRAND AMBASSADOR PROGRAM FOR YOUR APPAREL BRAND

5 Steps to Creating a Brand Ambassador Program for Your Clothing Brand

Congratulations! Your apparel brand has made it onto the (sometimes virtual) shelves of key retailers. What comes next? Many would argue building customer loyalty is the make-or-break objective of any brand, whether you're selling high-end socks or vintage-inspired jeans.

While there are a number of ways to go about that, including extensive marketing, experiential campaigns and grassroots efforts, no method has proven as powerful as the existing customer referral. One study found referral customers are about 25% more profitable per year and carry approximately 25% more lifetime value than customers acquired by other means.

Today, those referrals have evolved from in-person recommendations to online through social media and similar channels more and more often.

So, how can you get your hands on sales-driving referrals?

You could count on organic, online reviews left by satisfied customers, but the reality is that although 83% of satisfied customers are willing to refer a product or service, only 29% actually take the time to write a review or make a recommendation. Or, you could take matters into your own hands by launching a brand ambassador program for your clothing or accessories line.

Take athletic-wear behemoth Lululemon for example; their brand ambassador program propelled their yoga attire from small-time sales to household name. With over 1,200 ambassadors worldwide ranging from yoga instructors to professional athletes, Lululemon still manages to maintain the three elements most important to any brand program—loyalty, relevancy and authenticity.

If your apparel brand is looking to join the ranks of Lululemon and other highly successful brand ambassadorship programs, here's your guide to getting started.

Brand Ambassadors vs. Influencers

From meetings with marketers to your own online research, you've probably heard the terms brand ambassadors and social media influencers thrown around like confetti. Sometimes, the two are used interchangeably, but there are major differences between ambassadors and influencers you can't ignore. Before we dive any further, let's take a beat to lay out the differences.

Influencers may range in fame from Instagram to Hollywood with the lines between movie star and "lifestyle personality" blurring more and more each day. These individuals have large, engaged audiences, typically in a specific area of expertise, like fashion, wellness, technology, etc., as well as the power to influence the purchasing decisions of others. While influencers often take on brand partnerships, featuring products on their feeds in exchange for free merchandise or payments, these engagements are often on a single project basis or short-term arrangement.

Brand ambassadors on the other hand are brought on by companies for extended periods of time and may act as the face, or faces, of the brand. Ambassadors truly embody everything the brand they represent stands for, from their values to their process and beyond. They may create and post content on your brand's behalf, whether on their channels or yours, as well as attend or host events representing your brand, appear at pop-ups at local retailers and more.

Now that we have a working definition of what qualifies as a brand ambassador, it's time to begin shaping a program that works for your ideal audiences.

Identify Your Goals

Before setting off on any new adventure, you'll need to define your destination. Only then can you map out your journey. Creating an ambassador program for your clothing brand is no different.

The first step in creating an army of devoted ambassadors is to figure out your goals for the program. Are you trying to reach an audience you've never quite tapped into before? Working to boost word-of-mouth marketing for your brand? Generate buzz around a new product launch?

Once you have your objectives on paper, examine your goals to determine the key performance indicators (KPIs) you'll track to measure success. Those KPIs can include factors like number of ambassadors in your program or clicks to your site from ambassadors' social profiles.

Define Your Program's Structure

Next up, you'll need to develop a program structure focused on delivering a win-win outcome for both your brand and your ambassadors. Here are a few questions to answer as you draft up your program's guidelines:

- Who will be in charge of managing the program and communicating with ambassadors? Will this be an internal employee or are you looking to hire an agency?
- How will ambassadors join the program? Will there be an online application process or will ambassadors be hand selected by your team?
- What kind of compensation will you offer ambassadors? This can vary from free products and covering travel expenses to industry events to cold hard cash.
- Will ambassadors be contracted to produce certain types and quantities of content in a specified period? What will those formats and numbers be?

Let Your Ambassadors Take the Lead

One of the most difficult yet most rewarding parts of having a team of brand ambassadors is sitting back and letting your brand be represented by an external force. Remember, your brand ambassadors are independent of your brand—they are advocates for your products and messaging because they truly believe in what you have to offer.

A key component of any successful brand ambassador program is authenticity. The most effective way of achieving the level of transparency your ideal audiences are looking for is to allow your ambassadors to truly own their work for your brand. If you're constantly in your ambassadors' ears telling them what to say and how to act, your customers will see right through them and disqualify your brand as a viable option.

Keep Ambassadors Engaged

Loosening the reins on your ambassadors doesn't mean you can stop working at keeping them engaged. In fact, the hands-off nature of ambassador management means you can spend more time devising valuable opportunities for your ambassadors to get involved with your brand. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Host private events exclusively for ambassadors. National or international brand? Foot the bill for your top ambassadors to attend your event and make it an experience they won't soon forget. Don't forget to create a hashtag for your shindig so your ambassadors can keep sharing their passion for your brand and all you do on their social channels.

Make your ambassadors the stars of your next marketing campaign. From TV commercials to social media campaigns, featuring your brand's ambassadors on your advertising efforts does double duty by showcasing real people wearing and loving your product while showing the world yours is a great brand to partner with.

Highlight top ambassadors on your social profiles, linking back to their feeds or websites to generate additional exposure for them while showcasing your gratitude and appreciation for the work they do for your brand.

Measure and Reward Successes

As mentioned earlier, measuring progress is a cornerstone of any successful ambassador program. To get where you want to go, you need to know both where you're coming from and how far you've come.

While quantitative data like impressions, sales numbers and follower counts may be part of your program measurement, don't discount qualitative sources, such as ambassador videos gone viral, countless hours of quality user-generated content and more, as indicators of your program's achievements.

And of course, everybody wants to feel like their actions are making a difference. Recognizing your brand ambassadors for the work they do will help not only retain your current talent but attract new waves of loyal brand representatives. Do this through social media shout outs, handwritten notes accompanying a shipment of new products or developing a section on your brand's website to feature and highlight ambassadors.

Ready to tap into the referral power of brand ambassadors for your apparel brand? Follow these five steps to create and launch a successful, bottom-line boosting program or reach out to our agency and let the pros take care of you.



HOW TO WIN OVER MILLENNIALS WITH PACKAGED GOODS

Tapping into the Millennial Purchasing Power

Today, millennials hold the most spending power of any generation. If your brand doesn't have a marketing strategy in place to tap into that spending stream, now's the time to start listening to what this chunk of the population wants from the packaged goods sector. Here are four findings to get you started.

It All Comes Back to Social Media

If it's not posted on social media, it didn't happen, right? Well, at least that's how it goes in the millennial's mindset.

That means brands need to get crafty and creative with how products are portrayed online—your marketing must be worth the share. From out-of-the-box packaging to unique ingredients and an authentic brand voice, for millennials, it's not just about the product itself but more so the complete story it tells.

Embrace User-Generated Content

User-generated content is a reposted picture, a review, a testimonial—anything users create, rather than your company. With Bazaarvoice reporting 84% of millennials are influenced by user-generated content in purchasing decisions, it may be time to pass over the baton and let your users start running your content.

The Guybar, a beard shaping comb, is a great example of integrating user-generated content into a complete marketing strategy. On Guybar's packaging, they asked users to upload videos of them using their comb for a chance to win \$100 weekly. To take it a step further, they have a "Guybar Guys" section on their website, which features the videos.

What's Inside Matters

Inside your company, that is. In the eyes of millennials, everything your company does and says is rolled into your brand's identity. This generation wants to buy from companies align with their own values, whether that is sustainable practices, cruelty-free testing or organic ingredient sourcing.

Show Your Eco-Friendly Side

From your packaging to your company's processes, sustainability matters to millennials. With green practices becoming a shopping priority for this generation, indicate how and why your products are created with the environment in mind. The same goes for your company's culture. If you're taking part in eco-friendly initiatives, millennials want to see it. Consider sharing pictures and videos on your website to showcase how sustainability is embedded into your company's culture.

Although there is no blanketing approach to marketing to an entire generation, the findings above can be a stepping stone for your brand to finally break into the millennial market.



DITCH YOUR MASS MARKETING FOR MASS CUSTOMIZATION MARKETING

The Emergence of Mass Customization Marketing

Mass producing just won't cut it anymore. Consumers want individualized, distinctive products—they want what is known as mass customization.

Mass customization can range anywhere from custom printed packaging to custom shipping. It can entail personalized designs on candy bars or a unique granola blend with user-selected ingredients.

If you choose to embrace this change, a challenge may lie ahead for you. This increase in mass customization shouldn't reflect an increase in costs for the consumers. With this retail industry trend, consumers shouldn't scoff at the dollar sign of these products but rather be delighted with the equal pricing and feel an urge to grab the product off the shelf and throw it into their cart.

Who's Leading This Trend?

Millennials, of course—who else would be spearheading this? Nearly 25% of the U.S. population is between the ages of 21 to 39, so what they have to say has a whole lot of weight.

And one thing a large percentage of millennials have said and agreed on is that brands “say something about who I am, my values and where I fit in.” They have a personal connection to their brands. To that name, they want intimate products that say something about them. Manufacturers have to flip the switch and take their packaging designs and packaging products and make them unique and creative.

How It'll Affect Your Bottom Line

Whether you're in or out, mass customization is becoming more of an expectation rather than an extravagant trend. It's evolving into a standard because consumers want some type of say in what they buy.

But at the end of the day, you'll be able to boost sales, expand your offerings, promote your brand, gain an edge on competitors and most importantly engage directly with consumers. Just look at Coca-Cola's stellar success with their “your name on a bottle” promotion—and those bottles are still being sold today.

The facts are the facts—no alternative facts here—and brands who offer customization enjoy a 50% higher loyalty rate. So, give the people what they want, and they'll keep coming back for more—and more.



THE FUTURE OF PRODUCT PACKAGING: UNWRAPPING THE INS AND OUTS

In an age where digital experiences are quickly becoming the new norm, product packaging now has a new set of challenges when it comes to staying relevant, engaging, and above all, environmentally friendly.

To combat that, here are some ways in which packaging is trying to change the game, and how you can amp up your own approach.

Innovation and Technology Collide

With the rising popularity of sustainably sourced and processed materials, many industries are being encouraged to create clean label packaging and bring it to market. Much of this progress is already happening in certain sectors.

For example, high-pressure packaging technology, more recycled materials and 3D-printed packaging are all innovations that are currently changing the way consumers interact with brand products.

Food safety is another major driver of innovative packaging. Reducing food waste and streamlining the packaging processes have been proven to extend the shelf life of food, but technology has taken it a step further by alerting consumers about the freshness of their food using sensors that predict the safety of their food in real time.

Other companies have also started taking more holistic approaches to packaging, but in order to face many of the new challenges in the industry, companies will need to stay a step ahead of the competition by constantly innovating the ways in which they share their products with the world.

Packaging for the Modern World

There are already several live examples throughout the industry of companies revolutionizing the ways in which they package and present their products. A few standouts include:

- The Clasper™ bottle, which enables two different products to be consumed in sequence or mixed together and then consumed.
- Honest Marijuana Company packages cannabis in earth-friendly, reusable tin cans, a new concept to the industry.
- The Lidloc, which is the first integrated cup that has an extension structure to the cup that folds and locks into an integrated lid.
- Plastic polymers developed by TIPA that biologically decomposes within 180 days, becoming a fertilizer for soil.

As consumer interests and demands change, you can expect to see even more innovative and industry-shifting packaging methods that fall in line with the ever-changing consumer climate.

The Future of Product Packaging

Differentiation and personalization are going to be major talking points in the years to come. As consumers demand more of a customized experience with the products they consume, you're going to see more instances where brands put the power of the packaging back into the consumer's hands. We've already experienced this recently with Starbuck's coloring book-style coffee cup, so it's only a matter of time before other brands follow suit.



HOW THE INTERNET OF THINGS WILL CHANGE RETAIL FOREVER

In this day and age, everything is connected. From televisions to towel warmers, the Internet of Things (IoT) has allowed both consumers and advertisers to be more in tuned with how we interact with the world around us.

Although there's still a fair share of brick-and-mortar stores out there, innovations like Apple and Samsung Pay, Amazon Prime and more have effectively changed the game and how advertisers are expected to play it. With IoT, though, the retail landscape is about to get even more interesting, and here's how you should prepare.

The End of the Cashier?

Amazon caught the attention of the world when it opened Amazon Go, a convenience store in Seattle that takes the cash register out of the age-old formula of retail shopping. Shoppers scan their phones upon entering the store, grab what they want, and leave.

In lieu of a formal checkout, Amazon tracks customers throughout the store and records what they've picked up, recognizes when the scanned phone (and the shopper that owns it) leaves the store, and bills the customer virtually.

It's what IoT is all about. It's the idea that a physical object you own, be it your phone, smartwatch, headphones, appliances or any other tangible thing you can think of, can be connected to the Internet with the flip of a switch and in this case be used to marry e-commerce and physical retail shopping.

How Stores Have Gotten Smarter

The IoT is a powerful tool that builds the symbiotic relationship between store and consumer. A store that's plugged in to its customers, their purchases and their movement within the store can track a lot more than just what they leave with.

Out-of-stock labels could be made a thing of the past with instantaneous data from electronic shelf labels on what customers are buying, when they're buying it, and when more will need to be ordered. By generating data on customers' movement, stores can chart what aisles get more or less traffic.

The consumer reaps an equal, yet opposite benefit—no more out of stock means no more disappointment and frustration that they're unable to get what they need. Additionally, better planning of aisle placement erases overpopulated aisle ways and unnecessary traffic.

Though we may have a few years before the local corner store goes cashier-less, the growth of IoT proposes a lot of interesting new ideas about how to approach retail for the store and consumer alike.



USING YOUR BRAND AND PACKAGING TOGETHER TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

All successful brands have distinctive packaging that sets them apart from the competition. Packaging is an important extension of your brand and, if done incorrectly, it can lead to lost sales and failure of your product.

Apple and Coca Cola, the most well-known brands, make sure their logo, colors, and brand culture are the same from their products to their advertising to their packaging; as a result, when a consumer sees their products they recognize it right away. Consumers buy products they recognize, so consistent packaging needs to reinforce your brand's message.

Importance of Packaging

Packaging is oftentimes your product's first impression—consumers see the packaging first and it is then you sell them or not. There can be two identical products on a shelf and the packaging will determine which one is chosen. This can make or break a new product.

The packaging is no longer just a box to hold and protect the product—it contributes to the marketability, trust, and image of its brand. Sometimes a brand is so successful with their marketing efforts that consumers can identify the product just by looking at the package. Take, for example, the Heinz ketchup bottle—if you take the name off, consumers still know it is Heinz ketchup. The packaging becomes the product.

Social media has made it difficult to earn and keep the trust of customers and even harder to keep them loyal to your brand. This is due to all the reviews and discussions that people can have about your product, and negative reviews can affect your brand perception. Your package needs to convey to your customers why your brand is special and why they should try it. Marketers need to continuously research and evaluate the packaging to make sure it is an extension of the brand and make changes as needed.

Packaging Must Haves

Personal care products are very competitive and packaging is crucial for these companies. Packaging for these products must make them stand out through colors, shapes, and ad copy.

They have to find a way to be special, like adding that they are eco-friendly and chemical-free. Today's consumers are more environmentally aware and are looking for "greener" options, so recyclable materials, PET, and HDPE bottles can promote loyalty and trust in the brand.

For some products, the packaging is so important that the package costs more to make than the actual product. A consumer's perception of your product comes from the package—if you have a quality package, they think your product is of good quality. When designing your packaging, here are some more important items to consider:

1. The package must be strong enough to protect your product during transport and keep it safe until use.
2. Packaging needs to be as light as possible—heavier packaging will increase transport and shipping costs.
3. Brand and manufacturer information must be prominent on the packaging with all the product's information legible to the consumer.
4. Keep the packaging distinctive and creative by using unique colors, materials, and shapes.
5. The shape of the packaging cannot be too crazy as the product needs to be shelved and displayed for easy accessibility.
6. Include logos and slogans.
7. Packaging must be eye catching.
8. The package must keep the product safe and fresh for the duration of its shelf life.

As your packaging is a salesperson for your product and brand, it should be the best it can be.



THE RISE OF ONLINE SHOPPING

Online shopping is on the rise and many stores and malls across America are closing. Many factors contribute to consumers turning to online shopping, including saving time and money, especially since online shopping has gotten easier and more hassle free than ever before.

It used to be that you would have to wait a week to receive your online purchases and the cost to return it would not even be worth your time or money. Amazon has changed all of that with next day shipping and requiring their suppliers offer free returns. The easier it is for consumers to order online, try out the items and return them if they don't like them, the more they will trust shopping online.

Pros and Cons

Moms do a lot of the shopping and, at times, it is very hard to leave the house with the little ones in tow. Online shopping makes for a great alternative for their shopping needs. They can also use their mobile devices when in a car line or watching soccer practice to get those shoes for school their child needed or even order groceries that will be delivered to their front door. Moms also like to use shopping apps and coupon apps to save money and receive alerts on the items they shop for the most.

Online, they can easily search different sites for the perfect item instead of driving to different stores. This ultimately saves time and money, but the one thing they miss is the in-store experience. Many women use shopping as a way to have social interaction with friends and with store employees. They enjoy asking others for opinions and the ability to see, touch, and feel the item. The appeal of shopping in the store is also in the beautiful displays and looking at items that you didn't know you were interested in. People spend 40% more than planned while in an actual store as opposed to only 25% more spent when shopping online. The other benefits to shopping in the store are that you take your items home immediately for instant gratification and you also can make easy returns at the store.

Store Strategy

Stores have been struggling to keep up with online shops since Amazon started 23 years ago, but things continue to get worse. Many large chain stores are closing their doors and selling online only. Stores need to find new reasons for people to shop in their stores, use promotions, demonstrations, and events to get them in the door.

Pricing is a little tricky and it is hard to price your online items the same as your in-store items because the overhead is higher in the store and you would never make money. Retailers should look at pricing like the airlines and Target does. They have different prices for different locations, and different prices depending on when an item is purchased. That being said, retailers should also always say yes if asked to match the price. Think of these times as a sort of coupon for these customers and all customers will not ask to price match.

The female demographic still mostly chooses the brick and mortar location as they love the touch and feel and social part of shopping. Males, along with young people, also love the instant gratification of shopping in a store. Online shopping is good for everyone with the time and cost savings and is expected to grow in the next few years, but nothing beats the old-fashioned shopping experience.



HOW THE FROZEN AISLE IS STANDING UP TO THE HEAT OF FOOD TRENDS

It's 8:30 pm and you're just now getting home from work after a long day. You're starving and cooking up a meal from scratch is out of the question but your lack of time isn't an excuse to settle for a lack of flavor or nutrition. What do you reach for? A few years back, the idea of heating up a frozen dinner sounded like a quick way to undo a day of healthy eating. But with the significant shift in food trends towards freshness and quality, frozen foods have started to heat up as a healthy alternative to quick service.

Grocery markets have taken a recent turn in fashion from not only catering to busy moms and dads, but to Millennials who are hungry for a solution to their independent lifestyles and diverse tastes. Foodies are driven by worldwide flavor profiles and fresh ingredients and many manufacturers of frozen foods are taking action. As manufacturers sizzle up their marketing strategy, it is of no surprise the ecommerce sales of frozen foods increased 13 percent by the end of last year.

Natural Always Wins

Marketers are looking to the frozen aisle to satisfy customers' desire for more natural foods without added preservatives while avoiding the "junk food" aesthetic. According to the International Food Information Council in Washington, DC, the sale of frozen food, including the word "natural" on their packaging, has increased. Consumers look for recognizable, wholesome ingredients in their meal choices. Nowadays, the nutrition facts panel determines whether the consumer decides to purchase the product or keep walking. Moving these flash terms like "natural" and "fresh" to the front of the packaging can help secure a sale by giving the consumer a sense of security in their meal choice. Many have also introduced new diet trends like "gluten-free" or "paleo," which have also started to make an appearance on package faces.

Choosing Frozen for Flavor and Freshness

The argument stands firm that frozen foods can be marketed as just as flavorful and nutritious as their fresh counterparts. USDA physiologist Dr. Gene Lester told Eating Well magazine that some frozen vegetables may be considered just as (if not more) nutritious frozen as they are raw. Frozen fruit is becoming a popular addition to shopping carts, as their sale increased 35 percent online in 2015. Fruit is a perfect example of packaging approach to all-natural ingredients, as many fruits can be preserved with little to no additives at the peak of their freshness, and their wrappings reflect the simple nutrition inside. Callouts to "fresh" qualities on packaging can become a real success for frozen food manufacturers looking to preserve a spicy or cultural-specific flavor profile. Frozen foods can better preserve spices and marinades in meats, which helps a consumer to stretch the time period they have a flavorful meal on hand. In-store advertisements and circulations that nod to the "fresh" nature of a frozen meal can direct consumers towards the product, since a frozen meal satisfies their desire to stick to their diet plan, but still have dinner ready in under 30 minutes.

The Convenience Factor

As always, Americans are becoming increasingly busy as the workday increases and time at home decreases. Many millennial minds work double hours, straddling school and work, and few have the time to plan or prep meals ahead. Manufacturers have capitalized on this idea by marketing fresh foods that can be made quickly as a meal, or that can be paired with foods that are already prepared. The freezer aisle offers a helping hand for the home cook with the same ingredients that they might use themselves. Additionally, foods that are labor intensive to make or recipes that are far outside the usual fare become accessible with frozen foods. Hispanic and Latino food is extremely popular in the American market, and makes a firm stand in most grocery freezer aisles already. Competition for that square foot of freezer space can be challenging for many smaller companies to buy out, but foods that include the aforementioned freshness and brand awareness can begin to knock competitors off the shelves.

Manufacturers can look ahead at the frozen food market as a resource. If brands position frozen foods as a pause on nature's ripening process, they can keep up with the pace of freshness and quality trends in the market. The convenience and diversity of frozen foods can feed a business opportunity—despite the challenges of shelf space in the packaged food industry.



POWERING UP PRODUCT DESIGN

Consumer demand for good product design is driving the phenomenal success of Apple's iPod, Target stores and even a wastebasket—namely, the Garbo, designed by Karim Rashid for Umbra. Manufacturers who ignore the importance of industrial design do so at their peril, sure to be overtaken by competitors whose products may be equal in quality but superior in eye appeal. Our in-house industrial designer (and multiple International CES Innovations award winner) offers the following advice:

Consider the end-user's needs. When developing a product, make it easy for the consumer to use. A clean interface typically manifests itself as good design—a basic principle known as “form follows function.”

Also consider your materials. Returning to that popular wastebasket, Rashid's use of polypropylene in translucent colors provides the ideal complement to its sleek lines. Contrasting textures can create further visual interest—especially helpful for products that don't offer much room for design innovations.

Keep in your target market's cultural loop. Being aware of trends in music, fashion, entertainment and lifestyles will inform product design. Know how members of your target market see themselves, and your product will be able to enhance their self-image (and perhaps even social status, as owners of a certain portable digital music player can testify).

If you are not a member of the demographic group to whom you're marketing, talk to people who are. Get input from consumers through your website, as well as such face-to-face opportunities as event sponsorships. Meet with members of your sales staff who fit the demographic to learn what they're hearing from retailers and their peers.

Keep up with technical improvements in materials and tooling that allow you to economically bring good design to market. When form follows function, so do profits.