

From informational through to experiential: The evolution of packaging

Issued by [Pyrotec](#)

4 Nov 2011

"Over the last few years we have seen packaging gradually develop from primarily an informational tool, into the experiential instrument it has become in today's retail landscape. Packaging has evolved from a purely functional device intended to convey essential information and protect the product, to a key role-player in the purchasing decision-making process."



So says Timothy Beattie, General Manager of **Pyrotec PackMedia**, a leading privately-owned South African company specialising in innovative and top quality product identification solutions.

According to him, customers are not easily swayed by the often inflated claims on the label of a product. "They do not come to a conclusion about the contents therein by simply studying the information on the label, but rather respond to the look and feel of the product's packaging. The label is important, but the information it contains need to be streamlined, simplified, and most importantly add value to the customer experience."

With recent studies revealing that, on average, product selections are made within seven seconds, and that 70% of all purchasing decisions are made in-store, brand managers would be ill-advised to ignore the role that packaging plays in the communication and marketing strategy. Packaging needs to be eye-catching, cut through the clutter and provide visual clues to the quality, safety and value that the brand offers.

The importance of packaging design as a vehicle for communication and creating brand awareness is vital to a company's bottom line. Unlike multimedia advertising, packaging engages the majority of its audience and drives the way a consumer experiences a product. Visual package elements, including colour, design, on-pack devices and interactive effects play a massive role in the purchasing process. For customers who are rushed and have little time or inclination for involvement, these factors will act as a complete representation of the product.

The Importance of On-Pack Devices

One should also not disregard the importance of on-pack devices, reminds Beattie. "On-pack remains an important component in the successful marketing of a product by providing a valuable opportunity to communicate with the customer. On-pack devices should reinforce an irrefutable brand perception and add to the customer experience."

On-pack campaigns fuel engagement with the brand by enhancing the overall journey for the customer. Key on-pack drivers such as discounts, competitions, coupons and value-added initiatives such as helpful tips, recipes, usage instructions, cross promotions all act as incentives and effectively initiate a conversation with the buyer. Devices such as Pyrotec's Fix-a-Form™ leaflet labels are a practical way to relay these incentives, as they provide vast amounts of space for additional information, without compromising the aesthetic of packaging.

"Customers are asking, 'What does this Brand X offer me that Brand Y doesn't?'. The competition is fierce and brand owners that do not actively engage a customer through on-pack campaigns and clever packaging will find themselves losing out to a competitor that does," Beattie warns.

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 mediums. With the emergence of social media, brands find themselves torn between two worlds and need to constantly

evolve on all levels in order to remain relevant.

Says Beattie: "With the recent advances in technology, mobile and social media have risen to the top of the marketing mix, and brand owners need to take advantage of these wide-reaching platforms if they wish to further engage their target audience. Packaging and on-pack promotions need to seamlessly integrate with other marketing media employed by the brand owner, to create a multi-dimensional marketing campaign."

Pyrotec's MobileInteractive product demonstrates this theory in action. MobileInteractive is a timesaving, one-stop service that allows for easy integration across on-pack campaigns. This unique solution offers brand owners the tool with which to engage their customers through their mobile phones and social media, thereby enriching an existing on-pack campaign by adding a further dimension and exponentially increasing outreach.

"We have seen packaging develop from a purely informational tool, to one that identifies, and ultimately as a means to positively contribute towards the customer journey. It is essential that we effectively and cleverly utilise the various channels available to us in the field of on-pack, if we wish to build a lasting relationship with our customer. It has been proven that packaging plays a key role; now it is up to us to maximise that opportunity," concludes Beattie.

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