

# I see what I want

**When many people think of packaging these days, they think of sustainability. But packaging protects goods, helps us understand the in-store experience and to recognise brands. They are therefore an important means of communication. In order to be easily and efficiently integrated into everyday life, the context must be considered above all, know Dr. Uwe H. Lebok and Marco Gromer from K&A BrandResearch.**

Life without advertising? Hard to imagine for marketing (and market research). But for alcohol

This is definitely under discussion in Brussels with regard to beverages and confectionery, as they are the cause of "widespread diseases" such as diabetes and the like. An advertising ban on tobacco products is already a fact. If advertising is only possible to a limited extent, packaging will gain in importance.

It is becoming the central means of communication for brands, helping to address new customers, but also to achieve recognition. The confounding thing is that packaging is only decoded, i.e. becomes effective, if a System 1 approach according to Daniel Kahneman is successful. If, as a result, the consumer's autopilot is activated by the package recognition alone and a purchase decision is made.

If this does not succeed, the "Matryoshka effect": Only for those who enjoy playing with and disassembling and assembling the matryoshka dolls or perhaps have positive memories of the object or the region of origin.

Those who are interested in the matryoshka have the desire to "get to grips" with it (in terms of content or purchasing relevance). For everyone else, the Matryoshka remains like the "Envelope of an envelope": Like a "packaging" of something,

but with zero relevance. What is in this context once again underlines the behaviourally relevant importance of situational contexts: Context matters. The central and original function of the pack is to protect the goods. Then there are other more factual-technical functions such as stackability, resealability, and the and similarity.

Brand codifying via distinct pack codes



But almost 100 years ago, in his classic book "Markentechnik" (Brand Technology), the brand researcher Hans Domizlaff used the example of gift packaging for chocolate to highlight the outstanding role of packaging for branding - i.e. recognition - and additional motivation to buy. But this cannot be generalised. The packaging of a TV set has more of a protective function than, for example, the packaging of a child's chocolate or a box of chocolates: with confectionery, branding and the communication of enjoyment through packaging play a greater role. There is also a distinction to be made between the two.

### A packaging can communicate

Consumers have learned that boxes of chocolates are usually rectangular and flat. The packaging shape alone leads to behavioural-economical contextual references, which code in the focus on giving, gifting and special consumption occasions. The

The Mars brand *Celebrations* was able to break with the familiar context of chocolates, in that the packaging and contents appear "praline-like", but attract attention through the packaging shape, which is not rectangular but octagonal. This may also encourage frequent snack consumption or ensure that these products are less likely to be forgotten in drawers.

The example of the box of chocolates illustrates the signalling effect of packaging for later behaviour. The shape of a package alone can have a behavioural effect. *Celebrations* is just one example. In the whey products segment alone, consumers can decode numerous categories and brands through the packaging alone: The baking stone format stands for Limburger (and the *St. Mang* brand), *Philadelphia*, as a cheese player, characterises the creaminess of the cream cheese segment with its curves, *Almette* symbolises authentic enjoyment with its Alpine Fresh Barrel and *Alpenhain*, with its Hexagon, is the most popular Obazda brand alternative to homemade (Bavarian) home cooking.

In such cases, packaging is synonymous with distinctive, recognisable brand codes. According to marketing expert Mark Ritson, these are an invitation to a continuous process.

With the communication of the brand assets on the packaging, the

Consumers are constantly reminded of their product experiences, the memory of the branding cements the branding and is actualised via newly mediated consumption occasions.

### The pack contextualised

When shopping, we can observe ourselves in terms of behavioural economics: In the supermarket, we change from the role of the consumer to the role of the shopper. However, we don't just shop to somehow fill up the fridge, but we contextualise our reasons for buying. We buy for certain occasions that we already have in mind. Habits control our autopilot and we react strongly salience-driven: If we know something and have had a good experience with it, we are more likely to buy it again. Most of the time, we buy much more than we actually wanted to. Special placements, signal-strong codes, offer signs and also unusual packaging make us react spontaneously. At the point of purchase, we are guided by packaging codes. The more efficiently a package "emotionally packages" its relevance to everyday consumption via signal codes, the more successful this becomes. And/or how well a pack succeeds in stimulating new contexts that trigger relevance for consumers in the course of their shopping.

We almost always react contextually related. Let's take the regular beer drinker who replaces empty beer crates with "fresh beer". Today, when making a routine beer purchase, people do not necessarily always buy the same brand, but sometimes exchange it for a comparably good brand that may be on offer. If, on the other hand, a habitual beer drinker has a visit from friends in mind who like to go on a beer show-off in the company of others, then he is likely to change his shopping behaviour and look for unusual regional or craft beers.

Advertising and packaging communication are necessary for successful brand management in the long term. In addition to physical availability through distribution, mental availability is necessary that goes beyond simple awareness. A few assets that are distinct from other brands and options, that can be distinguished from alternatives on the consumer side and that ideally have a range of uses.



The packaging codes, which can be assigned to specific situations, are the key to the consumer. While pack codes primarily fulfil long-term functions, text messages about special editions and specific pack designs can also encourage additional consumption.

## The pack works in context

Today, brands have to master three challenges in particular in order to remain relevant to consumers' everyday lives through contextual references:

1. In what context does my brand come to the target group's mind?
2. Which brand signals or key stimuli succeed in creating a mental link with certain contexts?
3. How can additional contexts be "conquered" for my brand and credibly communicated so that they become behaviourally relevant?

Packages are effective and strong on the market when they stand out via signal codes, remain memorable and stimulate concrete contextual references in everyday life. A routine purchase needs recognition in order to repeat a familiar and already experienced reason for use, in order to (repeatedly) simplify or even "beautify" everyday life in the imagined contextual environment.

Our eyes seek to see what we want to see (and buy). When it comes to new consumption occasions to be anchored for brands, the packaging (or the combination of packaging and communication) must focus or expand the context assignment after stimulus confrontation. We can use an experimental approach to measure context implicitly. This test approach is far less concerned with whether a package reinforces an intended brand image, which only leads to regional System 2 answers via long-breathed item queries and is only conditionally effective in terms of behaviour. Rather, the "emotional" effect and the wow-effects of a pack should be determined, so that respondents can intuitively decipher the intended context assignment in a way that is as suitable as possible for everyday use.

Compared to the values of previous studies (or a pre-measurement), it is relatively easy and uncomplicated to record how the perception of the context has changed. Or whether a context efficiency in perception with low dispersion is achieved. In addition to a measurable context shift, the package must be as concrete as possible (branding) and as exciting as necessary (wow effect). Without an attention-grabbing effect that is memorable and consumer-recognisable, the pack is

If it is not possible to pitulate, it is more difficult to change behaviour in actual consumption contexts.

In the future, packaging - whether 100 per cent sustainable or not - will play a clearer role in consumer communication. This will not only be about recognising products and brands, but much more about how brands can be integrated more easily and efficiently into people's everyday lives through packaging. Especially in the case of food, packaging is often the means of communication that occupies our field of vision and our attention for the longest time. Even greater attention to the role of a brand in everyday situations and the interdependencies due to packaging communication deserve much greater attention in market research and brand management than has been the case to date. ■

## The authors



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