

Fig. 1: Familiar packaging shapes offer orientation at the POS as learned brand assets. (Images: K&A BrandResearch)

## Stimulus for occasion-related purchase

Those who have a better understanding of everyday contexts and define possible brand contexts for themselves can win over new consumers through packaging communication. Dr. Uwe Lebok and Marco Gromer from K&A BrandResearch shed light on what this means for confectionery brands and how suppliers can use occasions to their advantage.

For Fast Moving Consumer Goods, packaging is a mental anchor for consumers and orientation standard for purchase decisions. If packaging is sufficiently unique in its appearance and at the same time easy to distinguish from other offers, then it also acts as a distinctive brand assets.

Packaging can motivate repurchases through codified recognition with well-known brands. But even with less well-known brands, an occasion-based approach can often provide faster access to consumers than any other brand communication.

If a brand is already mentally anchored, packaging that supports the brand positioning promotes routine purchases. When consumers "mutate" into shoppers in the context of shopping, then learned packaging leads to a signal effect, recognition and ideally, in the end, to repeat purchases. Furthermore, confectionery and brands can stimulate additional contexts that trigger further purchase motivations depending on the occasion. Examples

are seasonal concepts such as the „Reber-Herbst-Edition“ with apple or the winter treat from Ritter Sport or occasion-related diversifications such as Knoppers bars ("Half past three at noon in Germany"). Packaging concepts therefore play an outstanding role in targeted context marketing.

**"A few crucial brand assets to shorten the last two feet for the consumers"**

In today's world of constant sensory overload, it is more important that consumers think of a brand at all in certain situations than that they think of it a lot and to know as much as possible about them "in depth". Good image values in the brand status are not wrong, but they are less and less decisive for whether brands are relevant for people in everyday situations and are actually bought. In order to have any chance of relevance at all, awareness of brand signals is indispensable. A simple formula applies: The more brand assets (including packaging) are remembered,

the stronger the branding. But few brands have a distinct branding, in that consumers can assign multiple brand assets to a brand without support. In the view of marketing expert Mark Ritson, this is negligence in branding:

"Every brand needs a code strategy

with a library of codes. Good marketing has been codifying a few crucial brand assets to shorten the last two feet for the consumers".

If brand assets are used consistently, branding is strengthened and mental positioning and (brand) story-telling are easier for consumers. According to Jenni Romaniuk (Ehrenberg-Bass Institute), branding is strengthened when consumers clearly assign four to five brand assets to a brand and distinguish it from competitors. A brand example often cited in the literature is Coca-Cola (Fig. 2), because the Coke bottle in its specific shape (= packaging) together with the logo leads other brand assets with an almost 100 percent distinctiveness.

Besides Coca-Cola, other FMCG brands meet the "5-assets benchmark". Overall, however, these are far fewer branded companies than should be the case in theory for successful brand management. Examples with several learned assets and partly including distinctive packaging include Fisherman's Friend, Ritter Sport, Lindt (Gold Bunny), Red Bull, Nespresso, Almdudler, afri cola, the beer brand Astra, Pringles, Wrigley's or Nutella.

**Additional incentives via packaging communication**

If a brand is not sufficiently positioned mentally with consumers through brand assets, additional incentives for spontaneous purchases can be stimulated through packaging communication. This works well with specific contextual references that act like "stumbling blocks" and stimulate purchase interest in relation to the occasion. Sometimes it is the simplest implementations that are successful and effective in the market. For example, a few years ago the medium-sized mustard and condiment brand Händlmaier experienced an extraordinary peak when a tube mustard was simply dubbed "barbecue mustard" for the barbecue season with a predominantly male shopper domain. A

"stumbling block" that simplifies shopping for barbecue-savvy male shoppers. The action in the context of barbecue event preparation showed a corresponding market success.

Contexts and the prevailing contextual conditions are essential keys to achieving the necessary attention among us consumers, which later triggers behaviour (Fig. 1). The system 1 autopilot of our brain decides in a fraction of a second, what expectations we have of a situation

and also which ones are expected of us. For brands, this means that they have to occur to people in contexts quickly and with a clear distance before relevant alternative options (cf. Ohnemus/Lebok/Klaus: Context Marketing, Springer Gabler 2021).

Contexts are perceptual spaces in which different circumstances have an impact and which, in their constellation, form an overall picture that we evaluate. The context creates the framework for our subsequent behaviour: If the context fits, we engage better with (context-relevant) topics, we perceive context-specific content with improved attention. Contexts are therefore the decisive perception filters in everyday situations. Packaging can

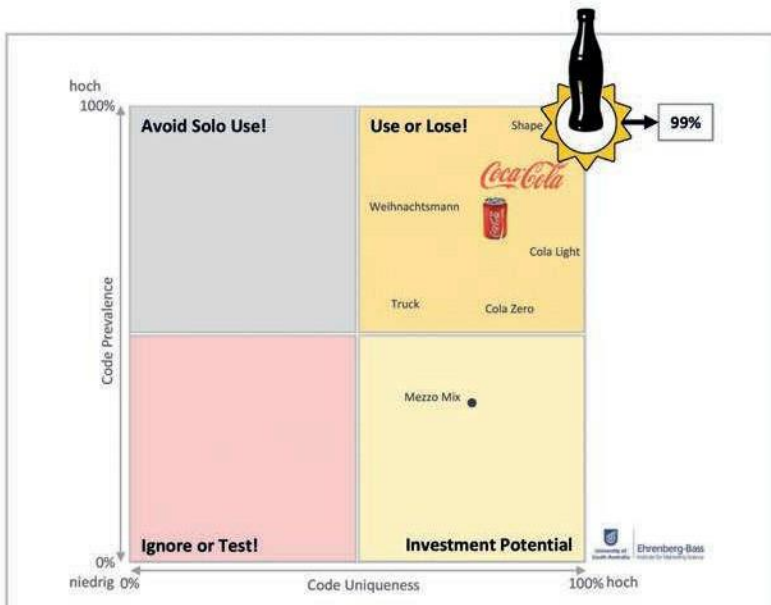


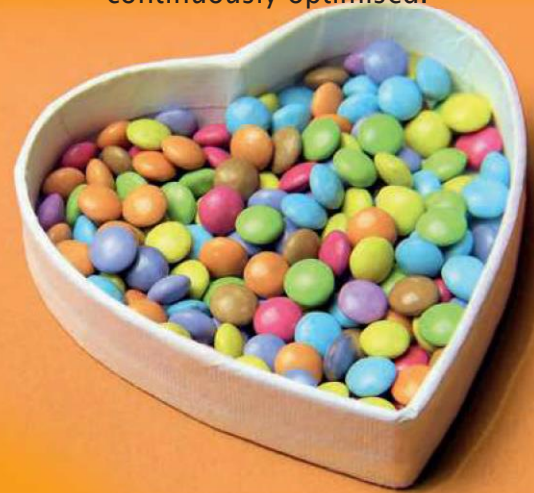
Fig. 2: Distinctive Asset Grid of the Coca-Cola brand: the shape of the bottle is almost unmistakable; thus the packaging clearly pays off on the branding.

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Fig. 3: Successful examples of how to use lockdowns with Netflix and home office as an appeal to enjoy ice cream and sweets.

therefore take on a purchase-motivating control function for everyday matters. Packaging is therefore a decisive aid for brands to (re)earn the attention of consumers.

As familiar brand assets, familiar packaging provides orientation at the point of purchase. Since awareness is already ensured through recognition, the brand only needs to be kept salient via special placements and other targeted „reminder measures“.

At the same time, packaging can also provide additional awareness and situation-specific salience via special and new occasions, which can also have a purchase-stimulating effect (Fig. 1).

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**Context efficiency through concise packaging**

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Typical context packaging is provided by seasonal occasions such as Christmas, Easter and Halloween, but also by other contexts such as celebrations, dating, gift giving, snacking and much more. Lindt chocolates, for example, have for decades proto-typically embodied for consumers the context of "giving sweet attentions" via the flat chocolate packaging. One of the first manufacturers to specifically use context packaging alongside their classic branding was Mars with Celebrations. The box for sharing was a good reason for consumers to also offer Mars, Snickers & Co. at joint celebrations or chilling movie nights and not just to enjoy them as sweet power bars.

Ferrero can also be considered a thought leader for context marketing.

Many of the brand products focus on central everyday contexts: Raffaello as the only mentally permissible summer chocolate, Mon Chéri as a cognac substitute dipped in dark red for older gentlemen later in the evening, kinder Milchschnitte as a sweet addition to the break (or its alternative), Giotto as a cappuccino garnish and authentic alternative to Italian cantuccini, „Schoko Bons“ as a chocolatey candy substitute for on the go, and so on.

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**Corona context and confectionery enjoyment in the home office**

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In order to organise our daily lives in the best possible way, different contexts naturally lead us into super-market or, more and more frequently, Internet. For example, in preparation for the barbecue, other products find their way into our shopping trolleys in addition to barbecue products (meat and vegetarian): barbecue mustard, barbecue cheese, herb butter for the steaks, barbecue charcoal, etc. In times of lock-downs and the disappearance of gastronomy, fritz-kola, for example, was able to compensate for the negative effects, at least to some extent, in the trade through seasonal six-packs and special placements with "grill-kola". Lockdowns and home offices also represent a concrete context that could be sweetened accordingly, as shown by Confiserie Heidel. In the USA, Ben & Jerry's was very popular at lockdown times with the variety "Netflix & Chill'd". Unilever contextualised consumption situations through the pack design (Fig. 3). So far, contextualisation in the packaging of confectionery has yet been

the exception rather than the rule. The Super Dickmann's brand was certainly a pioneer in the confectionery sector, communicating only through packaging for seasonal occasions (Oktoberfest, Halloween, New Year's Eve, Carnival, Easter). All in all, the confectionery industry benefited from seasonal concepts. In the meantime, Halloween has overtaken Easter in terms of sales, without individual confectionery brands being able to exploit specific contexts on their own.

The beverage industry is far more versatile in this regard. Many breweries are stuck in a rut due to the continuous decline in per capita beer consumption and the devastating gastronomic effects resulting from the lockdowns in a distressed situation. Besides classics like winter and summer beers, there are now many more context beers with specific and context-stimulating pack designs: after-work-beer, cattle-drive-beer, „Path-seidla“, Opa's favorite beer, beach-beer, „Hüttengaudi“, „Hopfensau“, Free-swimmer, beer of the month etc.

Context packaging also offers great opportunities for "small" brands to win over new consumers. The decisive factor here is that, in the sense of consistent context thinking, we always think and develop from the consumer's point of view, their behaviour and everyday habits. Those who better understand everyday texts can motivate new consumers through packaging communication. And those who want to attract attention in online retail in the future will know which products simply fit best in certain contexts.

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