

PACKVERTISING

In honor of Packvertising

We have called this special column with a neologism that unites the words packaging & advertising, bonding them together to suggest that the first can easily become part of the world of the second. After almost 4 years of treating various topics in the realm of communication and not only (Packvertising was born with PJJ n. 29 - August 2007), we would really like to delve in-depth into this concept and understand if something is changing in the universe of tissue.

Paola Pellegrini

Some weeks ago, in a supermarket, a young couple was assessing their choice to purchase a piece of parmesan cheese: quality of the product, months aged, special offers, cost per kg... Can you believe that none of these fundamental variables won over the others? What did win was an apparently secondary feature that decisively oriented their choice: the packaging! Can you believe that, with respect to a brand on special having an originally higher price (hence a bargain), packed in transparent PVC, the couple preferred a piece of cheese that was not on special -- hence costing more -- packed in a piece of rustic-style paper bearing a label written on a rough piece of carton in very traditional lettering?! Well, that's actually what happened. This is the power of well-made packaging. A traditional product packaged in a more "classical" style using rustic materials can transmit something more with respect to the same product packaged in an anonymous PVC wrap: an image of quality and naturalness that can emotionally bias, and thus facilitate, a person's purchase choice.

ACCORDING TO ITALIAN LEGAL AND STATUTORY NORMS, THE PACKAGING IS BASICALLY A PRODUCT CREATED USING MATERIALS OF ANY NATURE, used to contain and protect certain goods, from raw materials to finished products, to allow their handling and delivery to the consumer or to the user, and to ensure their presentation,... (art. 35, lett. a, former law decree 22/97, now art. 218 of law decree of 3 April 2006, n. 152 featuring norms concerning the environment). And still according to the Italian decree, packaging can be classified in three different functional categories: primary, secondary and tertiary packaging. Primary packaging (packaging for sale) is, for example, in the case of consumer goods, the unit for sale directed at the final consumer: a bottle, a can or a pack of cigarettes. Secondary (also called multiple packaging) puts together several units of the goods to be sold, presenting them on shelves "in a group". It is the packaging directed toward distributors: it can be removed, the products contained inside it can also be sold individually, it is useful for transportation and supply, and does not enter into the final consumer's purchase choice process, who is free to decide how many units of the product he or she needs. The examples are motley: bottles, a 6-pack of soft drink or beer cans, a carton of cigarettes. Tertiary, (packaging used for transport) is conceived to facilitate managing and transporting a certain number of units for sale or of multiple packs in order to avoid handling and damages connected with transport itself... Pallets and boxes containing a given number of packs are an example of this latter category of consumer goods. It is used exclusively by the distributor and never reaches the final consumer.

The term packaging is used in generic fashion, substantially amplifying the concept beyond its material aspects (such as the functional ones), touching immaterial aspects, too (which interest us more in this instance), among which the aesthetic-communicative aspects. This may concern the three categories to a greater or lesser extent, but in particular, it concerns the primary packaging directed toward the most important showcase of all: the sale to the final consumer.

PACKAGING CAN BE DEFINED AS A "BOUNDARY LAND" WHERE THE ACTIVITIES MIX AND EXCHANGE INFORMATION, OFTEN INVADING PARTICULAR AND ARTICULATED FIELDS such as design, ergonomics, logistics, materials technology as well as communication, psychology and semiotics. It is evident then that it has several scopes to ful-

fill. The first and main one is to protect the goods, which certainly represents its intended use. But there are as many other targets that should not be underestimated and other problems to be consistently monitored: the economic factor, the performance factor as well as the ecological one, which has become increasingly important lately. The communicative function melts into the intended use function and invades another world -- the semantic and emotional one. These turn the packaging into an object for the senses that supplies not only information (for example, for foodstuffs, the ingredients or the expiry date) but also meaning thanks to the use of iconic elements, verbal components, colors, shapes and materials. And all this generates a significance that is closely connected with the product: a message, a concept, an image.

AND IT IS FOR THIS REASON THAT A PACKAGING CANNOT BE DESIGNED BY CHANCE but it is often the result of wide-ranging studies that yield the ideal formula discovered by an expert designer working in close contact with a team of people: by pooling their disciplinary competencies, they guarantee that the object "packaging" speaks. And not randomly. Rather, it really says what we want it to! Design needs and necessities and communicational intentions tied to the image converge in a sole project where the technology of materials unite in semiotics, and the structural designer works with a graphic artist to produce a unique device, a support for messages/information that sparks a communication rapport between the user and the object before him -- an object that seems to magically transmit something intrinsic.

THE COMMUNICATION ASPECTS HENCE BECOME FUNDAMENTAL IF THE INTENT IS - AS USUALLY HAPPENS IN RETAILING - TO STAND OUT IN THE CROWD ON THE SHELVES, and translate into a series of practical and descriptive functionalities that turn a simple and banal package into a means for diffusing basic, informative, appellative or persuasive messages. Packaging hence becomes the first "showcase" for a product and for a brand. It presents it and can publicize it.

The relationship between "package" and publicity becomes as strong as the one between the product itself and publicity. In a time of over-crowdedness, this lien represents a veritable dependency that has resulted in borderline-cases where the publicity action features only the packaging as its protagonist: for example, the Vodka Absolut campaign, that has made its bottles so famous (primary packaging), as effective as actual "testimonials", electing them undisputed symbol of the product itself.

IF IT IS TRUE THAT THE PACKAGING IS THE FIRST COMMUNICATION INTERFACE BETWEEN THE USER AND THE PRODUCT, not only can we justify such campaigns, but, what's more, we must actually underscore the importance of the investments dedicated to it: the package becomes a psychological and cognitive trap into which the brain falls due to automatism, parameters and conditions, assessing and deciding also the most banal of purchases, a "catchpenny" with which we try to attain a purpose.

Since today we are all "victims" of visual overcrowding within every sales point, the development of a winning packaging capable of contrasting this situation seems to follow the rules of visual communication which tend to try and remove and transform the lack of iconic elements, or simply their rationalization, into a winning value. Hence, we follow a language style where not necessarily the concept of reduction coincides with the concept of loss, but rather it is close to that of winning!

IN VISUAL COMMUNICATION, THE PIVOTAL POINTS OF GRAPHIC COMPOSITION ARE THE COLORS AND THE SIGNS THAT GENERATE A MESSAGE, SHAPES AND WORDS THAT TELL SOMETHING: the brand and the logo, the composition, the presence of images, the color, the lettering.

A skillful coordination of these elements can characterize the communicative space of the package in a positive way, and the choice of combinations, like for example the use of a particular color or font, assumes strong meanings correlated by an important psychological valance in the person observing them during the purchasing phase. Since we began proposing this section that we reductively define one of "communication" (... almost 4 years ago) also the tissue field has substantially evolved, embarking on this road to "rationalization" applied to products and also to the graphics of their packaging, recognizing it not only a function of containment but also one of communication. Lately, browsing through the pages of the PJJ, it is not rare to be able to pick out a "winning" product, one from which an articulated image and branding study clearly transpires; well-made products, distinguishing packaging that obtain optimal results in terms of communication. No longer just isolated examples but a veritable trend that seems to have involved the world of tissue, too: structured brands that with a decisive line and style, distinguish themselves on the shelves the world over for their modern and intelligent design and for the message they magically succeed in transmitting (example: "Dare to be black", PJJ n. 35).

A functional packaging is also a winner in terms of the market, the point of sale and of branding, when it possesses a communicative style that balances and synthesizes the basic concepts tied to the product and to the compa-

ny also on the surface of the packaging. Easy to say, right? The visual relationship that is established between the potential consumer and the goods on display is one of the determining elements of the purchasing experience, and the packaging must hence possess a strong personality, a strong identity, strong attraction. And these are features not everyone can boast of! •

IN THE WORLD OF TISSUE

Gift-packaging: studying a gift package for toilet tissue is just one of the many innovative solutions created by Renova. The gift pack is a simple cardboard cylinder in strong colours, lightly decorated with silver lettering. The shape of this tube looks like a real tailor-made “dress” for the toilet paper roll!

Packaging-showcase: another good example from Renova that, with its super-coloured products - absolute novelty in the realm of tissue - uses exclusively transparent packages that practically place the rolls inside a showcase. The new Crystal (2-roll pack) is a packaging solution adopted from other markets: an air-tight pack made of rigid transparent plastic from which the rolls can be easily removed and that maintains the pleasure of the visibility of the colours to the eye.

Talking packaging: Traidcraft was established in 1979 as a response to poverty, and are the UK’s leading fair trade organization. The speech bubbles on their tissue range are an excellent way to communicate directly with consumers, letting them know exactly how their purchase is helping a greater cause.

Packaging has a “form” and a “name”: the Kleenex “Slice of Summer” boxes introduced a few years ago by K-C USA also won the Diamond Pentaward in 2009 and the Best of Show award at The Dieline Awards in 2010. K-C is certainly an active protagonist in the tissue market for what concerns the study of its products: nothing is ever left to chance, starting with the choice of names through to that of the packaging. With this box, the classic “formal” code of tissue boxes is completely renewed, succeeding in obtaining a winning, fresh and appetizing item... perfectly in harmony with its name: “Slice of Summer”!

Packaging visibility: designed by Ekta Mody, Indian artist living in the USA, this project is very interesting. The basic information that guides the consumer in the purchase of this type of product - the quality and thickness of the paper - is the idea behind the study of the name, the brand and the packaging. The graphic elements underscore the number of plies, the colour distinguishes the different paper qualities (1 ply, 2 plies, 3 plies), the name (Multiply) perfectly espouses the type of product and the font is studied ad hoc. Thanks to visual language, the product can be easily identified and recognised on the shelves, and all the information translates into a clear message from the very first glance! - © Copyright: designed Ekta Mody, All Rights Reserved.