

Evolution, Not Revolution!

An Investigation Into How To Effectively Redesign Consumer Packaged Products

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Declaration

I declare that:

This thesis presents work conducted by myself and does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; to the best of my knowledge, it does not contain any materials previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text; and all substantive contributions by others to the work presented, including jointly authored publications, is clearly acknowledged.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William Caruso". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

William Caruso

Abstract

It is widely accepted that branding and consumer packaging design is important to meet marketing objectives. However, 9 out of 10 redesigns fail to deliver a meaningful sales lift (Nielsen 2020). This thesis investigates the factors that influence success, key drivers of redesign similarity, and consumer responses to redesigns. In total, this research includes 1336 old and new images of redesigns from 744 brands in 25 categories across the globe. This thesis has three studies. The first aims to establish the extent to which newly redesigned packaging is similar to previous designs. The second explores the factors (such as; advertising, research, redesign, brand and managerial) which could contribute to a successful redesign. The final study investigates the relationships between modernity, likeability, familiarity, and purchase intent of packaging redesigns.

Study One

In this study, a measure is developed to understand how packs are changed, and by how much, when redesigns occur. Redesigns are only 47% (± 27) similar to the previous packaging. Closure is the most consistent element across redesigns, and taglines are the most inconsistent. Packaging formats (e.g. bottle, box or can), global implementation, and time in market (e.g. long-term vs short-term) significantly relate to higher levels of similarity. Whereas, the reasons for a redesign did not affect similarity.

Study Two

Study Two uses an online survey with 240 marketing managers who had been involved with a packaging redesign in the past two years. Managers were asked a range of questions about inputs into the redesign process, measures of success, and if they met their objectives.

Advertising support (particularly in-store displays and digital media) and distinctive asset testing were linked to positive sales uplift. Having, a budget for redesigns and using focus group research were linked to negative sales uplift.

Higher general success was linked to distinctive asset testing, when more elements were changed on pack, when the redesign had more objectives and when the reasons for change were to update the design or a change in the brand's strategy. On the other hand, general success was lower when using TV advertising, performing focus groups, using brand attitudinal measures to inform decisions and when the main reason for the redesign was to increase sales or fix a sales/pricing issue.

Study Three

Study Three uses an online consumer survey to evaluate modernity, likability, familiarity, and purchase intentions across 40 redesigns of packaging in the United States and the United Kingdom.

When asked to compare old and redesigned packaging consumers cannot identify new “modern” packaging, which is the number one justification for a redesign. However, based on individual consumer classifications of what is modern, consumers liked modern packaging. Consistent with past research, packaging familiarity was found to increase likeability.

Modernity has no significant relationship with purchase intentions. Although consistent with past research higher familiarity is correlated with higher purchase intentions.

Contributions to Marketing Theory and Practice

The research includes the most comprehensive study conducted with marketers in the packaging redesign space, building on Bloch’s (1995) Conceptual Model of Consumer Responses to Product Form. Particularly, this research provides an understanding of the reasons for pack redesigns, and how extensive these redesigns are. It also helps to understand the factors that influence packaging redesign success, which provides avenues for future research.

From a managerial standpoint, the findings shed light on factors that can influence success and provides benchmarks on what to expect when redesigns occur. A key learning from this research is that redesigns which compromise the brand's visual identity (decrease familiarity) to increase perceptions of modernity or likeability are positioned to be unsuccessful without considerable advertising investment.

This thesis gives managers directly useful results. Focus groups are not recommended for packaging redesigns as they are linked to negative results. On the other hand, Distinctive Asset testing (understanding what elements represent the brand) are linked to positive outcomes. These results strengthen the idea that redesigns are more likely to be successful if they can bridge the gap between what is in consumers' minds and what is found on the shelf (higher familiarity). This thesis indicates that packaging redesigns are more likely to succeed if they are an evolution rather than a revolution.