FIVE THINGS You Need to Know
Before Changing Your Brand to be More Inclusive

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In a world that is calling for social justice and inclusivity, many well-known companies are closely reviewing and changing their brand identities. These highly recognizable brands either have imagery or names that could be considered racially divisive, insensitive, or promoting inequality in some way. These moves are not just knee-jerk reactions. Brands know that consumers are looking for them to take a stand, and "walk the walk" when it comes to social issues. In fact, our research shows that people are watching brands closely right now, so being silent is not an option.

While rebranding and packaging design modifications are a critical step in an effort to eliminate racial bias, there are some challenges that are inherent with any brand refresh. Companies do not want to rebuild decades worth of brand equity and recognition. Here are some tips for successfully rebranding and changing the visual identity of your packaging to help ensure continuity, even while changing an identity to meet current social pressures and challenges.

1 Effective Communication

When making a major change to your brand or packaging design, your consumers want to know why the change is being made. Be transparent and specific. A communication pro-tip: lead with functional and support with emotional. Communicate why the change supports the core values and brand promise of your company, while, at the same time, reassuring consumers that it is the same great product. Leverage effective communication tactics, such as strategic point of sale messaging, social media campaigns, as well as traditional outreach methods. A rebrand or new packaging design can fall flat if not fully supported with a strong marketing and communication plan.

2 Color Consistency

Even with a brand change or packaging design update, our research shows that it is important to keep your logo and packaging colors as consistent as possible. Color is one of your company's strongest brand cues for consumer recognition and association—especially at-shelf. If new colors are to be added, be strategic and do the needed research to understand what those changes communicate to your consumers. The last thing a rebrand or packaging change should do is alienate your core consumers.

3 Careful Simplification

Simplification is usually a good thing, but you must be careful so that key elements, such as flavor variety, serving size and critical claims are not lost or overshadowed. If appropriate, packaging should include realistic depictions of the product inside, not a stylized or artistic representation. Your claims should be clearly visible and resonate with your target audience, while communicating all the applicable information needed. Keep in mind, sometimes superlatives can diminish believability, for example using phrases like "we are the MOST delicious" or "we have the PUREST ingredients."

4 Balanced Modernization

Updating your brand's packaging or visual identity is always a great time to consider modernization, but don't push the envelope too far that your brand becomes unrecognizable. Be mindful of your target consumer and understand what design updates will work for them. It is also important to keep a pulse on your competitors and ensure that your approach to modernization does the trick to breakthrough at shelf without negatively impacting findability.
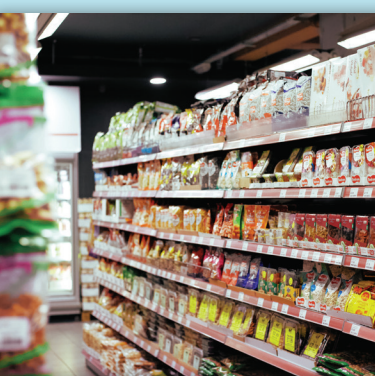
5 Test ➡ Learn ➡ Optimize ➡ Launch

When rebranding and/or updating your visual identity via a packaging redesign, let the consumer, especially your target consumers, be your guiding light. Incorporate them early in the process—during the innovation stages when you're brainstorming and sketching ideas—and continue to capture their feedback throughout the screening and optimization process. Taking a consumer-centric approach will ensure your updated branding and/or packaging delivers on your brand's core values, continues to attract [the right] attention, and avoids any alienation risks—all before your product hits shelves!

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Want to learn more about consumer research supporting a successful rebrand or packaging update? Reach out to us:
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