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Selling to Young India: Doing it right will drive growth in 2021


Packaging is the first thing that matters if you are selling to anyone. And the same to the youth is a critical area for success as this is the first thing the target segment looks before making a decision to even bring the product into a consideration set.

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India is the youngest country in the world and will remain so for some time. Every second person in India is possibly below 25! In the next 5 years the median individual in India will be a youth, very likely a city-dweller, making it remain as



the youngest country in the world. India is set to experience a dynamic transformation as the population burden of the past turns into a demographic dividend. Marketing to the young India is a serious business and countless companies spend sleepless nights devising ways to get their brands into these young minds.

Packaging is the first thing that matters if you are selling to anyone. And the same to the youth is a critical area for success as this is the first thing the target segment looks before making a decision to even bring the product into a consideration set. Studies indicate that most young folks recognise and identify brand logos before they can even read their own names. Bringing in the right design elements that will grab attention to the products in a

crowded shelf itself is a challenge. On top of that you need to make the youngster reach out for your product. More over you need to also get the parent's trust and conviction if the youngster is still very young. And when it comes to food items and other consumables moms are most concerned about safety, nutrition and value.

Experts say there are four important pillars to successful packaging designing for youngsters. By understanding these, you can make a success in targeting the young crowd.

First, you need to understand your market. The youth is a tough audience: They are social media-savvy, sophisticated, intuitive, fun-loving, fickle and impatient, and intolerant. They are also getting mature and smart faster. They know what they like today, but by tomorrow, it could be the opposite. To further complicate matters, young India is in a constant state of flux. They have more choices, more pocket money and opportunities, and are bombarded with more stimuli and information than in past generations. However, they are not yet small adults, and not at all a homogeneous segment. Different things motivate their purchase decisions and the priorities shift at the drop of a coin, literally – Peer pressure, what is in and what is not, and social acceptance.

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Given this complexity, your packaging design should have clarity and focussed messaging to the desired age group. If 10-year-old girls is your target group, you may want to use visuals and graphics that are warm and fuzzy, active and fun. With younger kids, the practical applications and benefits of the product are important. In the case of a food or beverage, the design must communicate how it is fun and yummy. On the other hand, teenagers are image-conscious and will relate to whatever is cool and hip. Impulse purchase is common among this group. So the packaging should be really cool and be placed near cash counters or where teenagers hang around. Peer acceptance is critical and they need to feel they “belong”.



Second pillar is about the use of their language and lingo. It is elementary, Watson! If you want to connect with any group quickly you need to indeed use their language and since it is packaging, this has to be done visually. Essentially you need to combine colour, graphics,

shapes, characters and other techniques of packaging to create aesthetics that stand out from among the ocean of “me-too” products. In our research we have found that youngsters respond to bright and basic colours like red, green, yellow and orange better than to black, brown or purple. The fonts and typeface size should be large and legible. It should also have pictures or art that appeal to them.

Third is the selection of mnemonics to fully utilise its power. Disney characters have been long used with many brands ranging from food to toys. Pokemon, Bunny, etc are also very popular. Harry Potter finds acceptance with another segment. Cricket legends are another. By associating the product with characters kids love and identify with and using a contemporary and prominent package design with impact, brands can connect well with them. The cola

brands using movie and sports icons are good examples. A leading MNC toothpaste brand demonstrated a similar strategy when it launched junior toothpaste in stand-up tubes, which were colourful. Even the flavours were chosen to suit the segment.

Finally, the designer should consider the nature of the packages. For youngsters most of the time packaging is indeed the product. This is particularly true with breakfast cereals, whose boxes can be used for fun. Because kids tend to read a cereal box five or six times before the product is used up, it is a perfect opportunity for cross-promotions, games, puzzles, collectibles such as trading cards and educational opportunities. In India I don't know why the leading brands have not resorted to using cricketers on their packages to find even more coverage.

Remember that only focussing on packaging will not give you the success you are looking for. You need to synergise this with the overall marketing plan and promotions to drive loyalty among the youth. When a particular promotion is planned with say Virat Kohli, if Pepsi does not use special packaging, the impact may not be as powerful as otherwise. What if their stockists still keep the older promotion cans and bottles while the new campaign is blasting in media? It is important that you have a game plan in place for the entire company and your packaging must toe the overall strategy for it to succeed. Youth is mega business and will be growing even bigger. Can you afford to play kid stuff here?

M Muneer is the managing director of CustomerLab Solutions, an innovative consulting firm delivering measureable results to clients.

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