



SHOPPING PSYCHOLOGY

Texture plays its part, too, as consumers are more likely to buy something they want to touch. For example, Nurofen has two tones of silver in different textures on its box. 'That suggests a quality product to the buyer,' said Rob Barker, of Shopper Insights, a firm that looks at consumer psychology.

Looks are everything

An enticing look to a product works wonders. The swing-top lid on Grolsch bottles is often cited by buyers as evidence of a premium brand. But packaging is important at the other end of the scale, too. As Rob Barker says: 'A no-frills product won't come across as value for money if it's lavishly packaged. You don't buy Bold washing powder because of its aesthetic packaging.'

Small details make a big difference. In the 1990s, Gordon's Gin test marketed a new look for their bottles which was quickly dropped. Apparently, people didn't like the disappearance of the black band from the bottom of the label.

We may think we're not fooled by such tricks, but experiments have shown that changing the shape or colour of food packaging is so powerful that it can change people's perceptions of the taste of a product. Little wonder then that a company like Mars has chosen to change the design of its Mars Bar wrapper in very gradual steps.

The smell of success

Already some companies are working on what is called 'olfactory packaging' where scents are embedded into capsules and activated on touch. For example, in America, Crest sells toothpaste with scratch and sniff labels that emit their different flavours. These could soon be on our shelves.

The tricks they have in store

We reveal the colours, names and even smells that are used to tempt us into buying particular brands when out shopping

You're about to dash in to a supermarket to pick up a few essentials. You know roughly what you need, so surely no marketing whizz kid or fiendish psychologist is going to influence what you buy? Well, that's where you are wrong. If, like more than eight in ten people, you don't take a shopping list with you, your buying decisions are more likely to be influenced by marketing. For example, names that appeal to you, colours on the packaging or even scents can encourage you to buy a product.

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essentially the same drink. She explains: 'For some, diet drinks have become associated with "fat loser".' Similarly, Coca Cola aimed Coke Zero at young men because Diet Coke was apparently mostly bought by women.

Colour and feel

Colours can be very suggestive. For example, green says environmentally friendly, while silver suggests something high-tech. White is associated with medicines, and red is popular with painkillers as it suggests action and therefore fast-acting pain relief.

What's in a name?

Shakespeare famously wrote 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet'. A great poet indeed but he'd have been lousy at advertising. In this world, the name is vital.

'A name can put people off – for instance, if they can't pronounce it. But it can also set up the right feelings about a product,' says Neil Taylor, Creative Director of ad agency, The Writer. 'A name like "Häagen-Dazs" was invented to sound sophisticated, while "Caffrey's beer" was used to sound like it is an old and established drink.'

Dr Belinda Winder, a psychologist at Nottingham Trent University, gives the example of Pepsi Max, which has become more popular than Diet Pepsi, though it is

What to look out for

Here are some common tricks to look out for

Colour

Have you noticed that cereals Clusters and Cheerios have a green stripe at the top and bottom? This is to reinforce the wholegrain claim that manufacturer Nestlé makes for them and steers shoppers towards the health claims on the box.



Name

To many, Häagen-Dazs sounds Scandinavian and sophisticated but the ice cream was invented in the States in the 1920s and the name was coined in 1961.

Texture

Why does Nurofen have two textures of silver paper in its packaging? Because we're more likely to buy a product we want to touch.

