

Communication and aesthetic as a part of packaging design

Packaging, the art of communication

Introduction

Need for packaging occurred together with the industrialised society. First of all the package should protect the product and optimize transport. Secondly it should carry information from producer to consumer. The industry society was followed by information society with enormous abundance of information mass media and media noise and especially consumer immune of information. Now there was focus on packaging as a media and its ability to communicate. The package has to bring information from producer to consumer on a market with plenty of products. Products in the same category that have nearly the same quality, products that is easy to get but difficult to distinguish. The role of the package has changed and it is interesting to see how it acts in this new role.

The role of the package

Interest for packaging as a media is not new, but it is not described regular in the literature. An explanation can be that packaging is both promotion and product, and therefore it is not described solitarily in the marketing literatures four P's. We know that attitude and routine are parts of the buying behaviour, and also common sense and feelings are part players. Research shows that consumers are unpredictable and 70% of their decisions are made at the point of purchase. More than 50% of the decisions are made under influence in the supermarket, e.g. the packaging on the shelf. And the ability of the package to communicate is essential in the store where consumers use less than 8 sec. to decide whether a product shall be put in the basket or left behind on the shelf. Research also shows that changes in design can attract new consumers. But not all changes do have positive impact. Large changes can have the consequence that consumer simply can't find the product on the shelf.

The aim of the project

Even though it is not the packaging the consumer wants to buy but the product, it is the packaging the consumer sees. And what you see is what you think you get. People see right through the package and copy the information from the package on the product. The packages ability to communicate influence on the consumer behaviour and the aim of the project is to find out which design elements that stimulate the buy situation best. The project will show what kind of element the consumer sees first and what kind of elements the consumer recognizes. The pro-

ject tries to find a connection between packaging designs and buying behaviour. With a theoretical background in semiotic, consumer behaviour, aesthetics and psycho physics the key questions will be:

- How can design elements on packaging be categorized?
 - Which design elements are recognised first by the consumer?
 - Which design elements keep the consumers attention best?
 - Which design elements can the consumer describe?
 - Which changes in design elements have influence on buying behaviour?
- Answers on these questions will be of great interest for packaging designers and people who work with product differentiations through packaging design.

The research will include ...

The package has to make attention and keep the attention for about 8 sec. And research has shown that buy decisions can be divided into three periods. First the consumer tries to get an overview of the shelf. Second the consumer compares chosen products, and often only three to five products are being chosen in this period. Finally the consumer makes the decision. This behaviour can be tested with eye tracking and tachistoscope.

The package has to work at the point of purchase. Therefore this project will test the package ability to communicate in laboratory as well in supermarket. Two product categories will be chosen and design elements used on these packaging will be examined in eye tracking and tachistoscope. Combined with interviews the results can tell us how design elements can be categorized, which design elements that are being seen first and which design elements that can keep the consumers attention.

But it is not only a question of attention. It is also a question of using design elements that the consumer recognizes. The project will through interview in supermarkets find out what the consumer recognize. The question is if it is the same design elements that make attention or is it their position on the package? Research with eye tracking shows that people who have to retell an illustration or a picture have the same eye movements as the first time when they saw it. So in situations where short time is a key factor, optimal position of design elements is important for recognition.

Aesthetic

What is beautiful for one person doesn't necessarily appear beauty for another. When the Danish brewery Carlsberg changed the green label into red sales decreased. Nobody liked the new label even though it was part of merchandising the Danish football team. Aesthetic is a part of culture, but is it possible to find a command aesthetic. This project will try to measure aesthetic as part of packaging design, and create a tool useful for the design process. The theory will be based on D. E. Berlyne "Studies in the new experimental aesthetics. Steps toward an objective psychology of aesthetic appreciation"

The plan

The project started November 2003 and ends November 2006.