

4 Things You Should Know About the Way Your Customer Shops

Connect with your customers in the right place, at the right time.

As any savvy shopper will tell you, products and brands have personality. When a company chooses messaging and packaging, it's making a deliberate decision about the personality the brand and product is portraying, and what kind of customer it's appealing to. That simple choice is an important element of consumer package goods marketing.

There are different kinds of brand positioning. Overall position messaging may be at the macro level for every brand, but inside each store, the most important messaging directly addressing consumer's frame of mind happens at the shelf: what time of day it is, whom they're with, and what the retail environment is like. That's where packaging, promotion, and in-store positioning come into play.

So, what should companies consider when they're trying to gain insight into consumers' mindsets in a retail spaces? Here's a list.

1. Fit into your consumer's lifestyle.

Find the reason your product makes sense for your customer's day-to-day routine. For example, Safeway's marketing strategy is about "ingredients for life." They take the context of the retail space, and apply it to their goods to find the right emotional trigger. And in order to do that successfully, a company must understand the mindset of the consumer while they are in that environment.

2. Get in tune with your consumers.

It's always good to stay on top of your data on a regular basis; but that's only half the battle. You also have to stay in tune with your customers' wants, needs, and desires. Realistically, the political stability of Europe probably isn't going to affect what type of jeans your consumers buy. But when you keep in touch with your consumer's worldview, you'll have a better handle on triggers that affect the buying process and the consumer's mindset in-store.

3. Connect emotionally.

Make sure to observe and listen — virtually and literally. What are people talking about, and why? Fashion, television, pop culture: they all shape a customer's viewpoint of what is and isn't acceptable. Often, people need to find "permission" from someone or something to let something new into their lives. If a brand or store wants to innovate, they need to find how open consumers are to accepting new things.

4. Pinpoint your company's promise.

How are you manufacturing? How do you treat your employees? What's your plan for being a more sustainable company? By the time your product hits the shelf, it's already complete — but your brand positioning can completely change the way that a consumer perceives what you're selling. For example, a shopper at Whole Foods will care that the detergent uses 80 percent recycled water — and the right packaging will highlight that fact. Capitalizing on your company's positive promise, mission, and goals in your packaging and promotion can completely change the way your brand is perceived.

If you're going to target your consumers in the most specific, effective way possible, you'll find the most success when you fully understand and appreciate your customers' mindset. Details are important: How do your customers feel in this retail space? What's on their mind? What's important to them? And how do they feel when they pick up your product – and what would make them choose to take it home?

All these questions – no matter how small – all matter. And, when you find yourself answering them, you'll find new insights that can help you connect to your customers in an even more meaningful way.