

Packaging Design: 7 Essential Best Practices for 2022

Expert advice to bring form and function together effectively in your package's design



INTRODUCTION

Love-at-first-sight packaging is the kind of first impression brands dream of.

Making this a reality requires a pivot in how brands conceptualize a package. From first sketch to first impression, it requires a packaging strategy to be one that really matches brand identity with the function of a package.

Smartphone packaging is a perfect example of this — the packaging fits in the palm of your hand like the product inside. Crisp, perfect edges convey a look and feel that's both high-end and familiar in the tech space. Smartphone packaging delivers a sensory experience that many consider second to none.

By understanding an audience's preferences and consciously weaving these elements into the package design, brands will drive a stronger connection between the customer and the product.

Remember, packaging is the only form of marketing that connects with every one of your consumers, regardless of the buying channel. And IPSOS reports 72% of American consumers say product packaging influences their buying decisions.¹ To bring brand and function together effectively in a package's design, the experts at RRD Packaging Solutions share seven best practices that will help you do just that.

TEST SMARTER (AND FASTER)

Smaller-run market tests provide companies an efficient, low-risk opportunity to test a variety of packaging combinations — structure, shape, graphics, material, messaging.

Through short runs, brands are able to create prototypes faster and, ultimately, observe how a package might look and perform in the marketplace. This also shortens the initial feedback loop and optimizes production costs by providing targeted clues that help redirect a package's design for better results.

By testing smarter — and faster — a brand is able to put a package on store shelves or door steps that will best appeal to its customers, drive sales, and deepen the brand connection.





PERSONALIZE THE EXPERIENCE THROUGH VARIABILITY

There's no denying, one-to-one personalization can bring a brand closer to its customer. Brands should never underestimate the power of personalization. Did you know 80% of consumers are more likely to buy from brands offering personalized experiences, and 71% of consumers feel frustrated when shopping experiences are impersonal.²

It's clear that individual personalization matters. But personalization in a broader, more mass-produced sense may also strike a chord. Consider an approach that takes a few steps back and tailors a package for larger targets (instead of trying to tailor to each individual consumer).

Take QR codes. Savvy companies have demonstrated they can play an important role in sharing personalized messages to wider audiences. For instance, Hershey uses QR technology to promote its efforts to share ingredient transparency. Huhtamaki UK uses QR codes to combat food waste and promotes recycling of its product packaging.³

The end result is trust and a boost in consumer brand perception. Think of ways you can appeal to your customers. QR codes can be a delivery method for coupons or other special/surprise offers.

2. Business2Community
3. Beaonstac

PUT SUSTAINABILITY FRONT AND CENTER

The popularity and demand for ecommerce continues to grow — and this means using higher volumes of packaging. By the same token, consumers are highly driven by sustainability. This means brands need to focus on deliberate packaging approaches with minimum waste.

According to market research by Trivium Packaging, 67% of consumers want recyclable packaging and are willing to pay more for it.⁴ Furthermore, 70% of consumers in North America consider sustainability and eco-friendly practices as important when selecting brands, according to a study by IBM and the National Retail Federation.⁵

It's clear sustainability matters. As strategy development occurs around the entire consumer-package interaction, brands have a social responsibility to hold discussions that not only consider sustainable packaging, but aim to deliver it. It is what consumers want and expect. And having packaging that puts sustainability front and center may win over a new customer.

For example, Pacha Soap Co. prides itself in its sustainability practices. Sustainability is an important part of its brand image. For years, mailing materials have featured all recyclable packaging. More recently, the company launched a line of soap products featuring highly recyclable aluminum and eliminated its plastic packaging.⁶ The result is a classier look and feel, with a clear message of sustainability.

To resonate with a growing number of consumers, brands today need to aim their designs towards those that eliminate non-Earth-friendly packaging materials and encourage recycling and/or reuse.

4. Trivium

5. IBM and NRF

6. Newswires





AUGMENT REALITY TO SHOW, NOT TELL

AR/VR empowers consumers by providing them the ability to visualize and customize products in 3D during the shopping experience. AR burst into the limelight in 2016 with Pokémon Go. And offered up proof the public was AR-interested.

Truthfully, since 2016, AR's impact on modern product packaging has been a bit muted. According to Mobile Marketer, a mere 1% of retailers use AR or VR to augment their customer buying experience. Yet 40% of consumers say they'd pay more to experience products before buying them.⁷

Some companies are succeeding. Adidas used AR to debut its new Deerupt sneaker model. Customers received an empty box with a QR code that led to an AR unboxing experience for the new sneaker.⁸ Consumers were able to experience the product in an interactive fashion before it was officially on the market. This strategy was unprecedented. Another great initiative was by L'Oreal which launched its virtual in-store makeup try-on. Using a QR code, buyers link into an VR experience that allows them to "try" different products to see how makeup looks before they buy.

The key to making AR/VR work? Avoid using it as a gimmick. This technology is approachable and has endless possibilities. Leverage it to enhance product visualization, remove language barriers, and facilitate the purchase. According to a Snap global consumer report, brands offering AR experiences are 41% likely to be considered and enjoy 94% conversion rates.⁹

7. Mobile Marketer

8. Glossy

9. Snap

DRIVE THE MULTI-SENSORY EXPERIENCE

Across a number of industries, we're seeing soft-touch applications rise in popularity as brands swap out high-gloss finishes for a completely different aesthetic. As more consumers associate the touch and feel of a package with the quality of the product inside, soft-touch finishes initiate a multi-sensory experience that's high-end, velvety, durable and resistant to fingerprints.

Companies can use other sensory-based approaches. For instance, a perfume, laundry detergent, or essentially any product featuring a scent can be injected into packaging. Alternatively, scratch and sniff experiences can be integrated.

Remember, packaging is not meant to exist in 2D. When a consumer is drawn in by the visual elements of a package, a natural next step is to then pick it up off the shelf. This tactile interaction is where the love-at-first-sight — or even love-at-first-touch — experience gains steam.





EMPHASIZE MINIMALISM TO ENHANCE BRAND IDENTITY

Minimalism isn't new by any means, but we've recognized its perennial appeal. Businesses continue to use elements of minimalistic design to enhance their brand identities. And this starts with packaging.

Consumers are instinctively drawn to packaging that's visually appealing — a cluttered look is often distracting and draws attention away from the product itself. Minimalism, on the other hand, can help brands heighten their unique qualities and lets products speak for themselves.

Minimalism tends to offer an upscale presentation. Fast food giant McDonald's has achieved longevity for many reasons, but in 2021 they overhauled their packaging and now use simple illustrations. The result? Modernization that generates “emotionally joyful” feelings toward the brand, according to Pearlfisher, the brand's designers.¹⁰

Plus, if used strategically, minimalism ticks the sustainability requirement since minimalist designs are clean and sleek by nature — offering a presentation of fewer materials and, in many cases, less actual waste.

10. Eslogan

NEVER LOSE SIGHT OF THE WHERE FIRST INTERACTIONS HAPPEN

Front door or in store, your customer's first experience with a product and its packaging can vary greatly depending on the setting. Design accordingly.

According to statistics compiled by Fortunly, an estimated 95% of purchases will be made online by 2040.¹¹ With the ecommerce experience, the buying decision has already been made and the transaction is complete, but brands shouldn't dismiss the importance of the delivery experience. Use packaging as an opportunity to add elements associated with brick and mortar shopping experiences.

To accomplish this, brands should place additional emphasis around the opening experience. Consider saving the sensory experience for the inside of the box. Or enhance your credit on sustainability by shipping a product in its own container.

While security and protection for parcel transportation should always be top priority, packaging still provides brands with enough opportunities to produce an unexpected opening experience that deepens brand connection.

11. Fortunly





BEFORE YOU GO...

As brands think about what will make consumers fall in love with their products this year, they must first think about how to get a consumer to fall in love with their packaging.

Appealing to consumer interests like sustainability are a great starting point, while integrating technology or new finishing techniques to create sensory experiences can make a match at that first moment of truth.

Expertise, execution, and scale – RRD’s in-house design, print, and converter capabilities ensure our clients make their first impression count, every time.

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