Top Five Packaging Trends in 2011

Image courtesy of flickr user mjmonty [1].

At the start of each New Year, along with the usual all-too-soon forgotten resolutions, many industry experts make predictions about where their industry is headed during the upcoming year, usually in the format of trends to watch.

In this article, O.Berk Company a full-service packaging distributor, offers their thoughts on what they believe will be five key trends for the packaging industry in 2011.

1. Sustainability

No longer just a "buzz word" or a concept, sustainability has moved from periphery to essential consideration for every packaging project. Consumers are demanding more socially and environmentally responsible production at every link in the supply chain and post-use. Reduced packaging material. Reusable and refillable packaging. Lighter weight and biodegradable plastics. In fact, the "hottest" sustainability talk today is lightening the packaging load because it results in lower transportation costs and reduces the overall carbon footprint.

With glass, ironically we're seeing two different trends. While there is some transition from glass to plastic in industries that have traditionally been "glass-only" (i.e., beer, wine, premium waters used in restaurants, etc.), we're also seeing some retail channel partners advocating a return to glass because it's "natural" and highly recyclable.

The bottom line? It's no longer about paying "lip service" to the notion of sustainability. It's about the ability to prove the use of sustainable practices at every stage of getting a product to market and ensuring its reuse and/or recyclability post-use.

2. Decorating

Given the sheer number of baby boomer consumers, "retro" and "vintage" packaging remains a top decorating trend in 2011. They're especially popular choices for brands celebrating a big anniversary, say 40 – 100 years. Ditto on the popularity of simple, minimalist decorating that's artistic, elegant and chic. Color trends? Fiery, passionate reds. Soft greens. Water-colored blues. Vibrant violets. Intense, alive colors that catch the consumer eye and beg to be noticed.

3. Electronic-Enabled Packaging

Packaging that talks? Smart packaging? Interactive labels? If you truly want to differentiate your package on the shelf, mobile technology is the vehicle and you'll want to jump on this bandwagon – before your competition does! Many of today's consumers are simply too "mobile" to take the time to read labels. Manufacturers now have the ability to communicate additional product information to potential buyers through their smart-phones, using technology such as 2D bar codes on their packaging and in advertisements. Some of the technology available is also able to deliver analytics about consumer behavior and demographics back to the manufacturer. Exciting. Interactive. Fun. We predict that the food, beverage and pharma industries will be embracing this trend with a passion.

4. Packaging is Shrinking

Packaging is getting well…smaller. There are several reasons for this including the fact that the prices of certain resins are continuing to increase as they have over the past several years. In addition, overall manufacturing and packaging content prices are continuing to rise as well.

Rather than raise prices, many brands reduce the size of their packaging to maintain the appearance of price stability for the consumer. Examples? Haagen Dazs ice cream "pints" have shrunk from 16 to 14 oz. and Tropicana OJ packaging downsized from 64 to 59 oz. Consumers seem to notice price increases more readily than they notice package reduction or weight loss when it comes to the products they purchase, so a few ounces reduction in package size here or there is barely noticeable and keeps them "on budget."

5. "Made in the U.S.A."

While many manufacturers have ventured outside of the U.S. for their packaging needs in an effort to reduce costs, interestingly enough, many have returned not having discovered the "holy grail" on foreign soil. Quality issues, missed deadlines and high transportation costs have often proven more costly in the end; earning "Made in the U.S.A." renewed respect, admiration and loyalty. Some of our largest CPGs have even started to ask us, "Where are you sourcing from?" If the answer isn't "North America," the conversation abruptly ends.

So there you have it – O.Berk Company's predictions for the top five packaging trends for 2011. If you'd like to discuss any of these predictions further, please

email us at info@oberk.com [2].

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About O.Berk Company

O.Berk Company with four locations on the east coast provides complete packaging services and solutions to the beauty/personal care, pharmaceutical/healthcare, food/beverage, and household/ industrial markets, with stock and custom plastic and glass containers, caps, pumps, sprayers, along with labeling and decorating services.

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