

# Path to Purchase

It's astonishing that so much money is spent building brand identities outside the store that are not carried through inside the store. All of that great and wonderful brand-identity advertising is all but forgotten by the time the consumer gets to the store, where the experience too often is neither great nor wonderful.

There could be any number of reasons for this, but a few key issues deserve special attention.

First, we need to stop thinking in terms of brand identity in the traditional sense because when consumers are shopping they are not thinking about brands in the traditional sense anymore.

## Forget about brand identity. It's all about the shopper's identity.

Maybe 20 years ago, shoppers might have gone into a store thinking about how Tide made their clothes whiter because that's what they saw in television commercials. But today, as we all know, shoppers aren't watching commercials as much, and consequently, are not thinking as much about brands and their benefits.

To the contrary, they are thinking only about *themselves*—their problems, and how well the shopping experience is addressing their needs. They are driven by the pressures of time, price and lifestyle. And they are motivated by wants and needs that include health/wellness, quality and convenience, for example.

Time pressures, in particular, are driving shoppers to make conscious trade-offs that can be contrary to—or at least independent of—conventional brand loyalties. The whole trend toward prepared foods is a great example of this. Most families certainly would prefer a home-cooked meal, but time pressures make it impossible to make that happen as often as it once did.

Retailers are responding to this dynamic in a big way by offering more in the way of prepared foods and meal solutions. But as I wrote in the March/April issue of THE HUB (*Get Fresh At Retail*), that trend presents new challenges for those in the consumer packaged-goods business.

The question I raised then concerned the relevance of consumer packaged goods companies in supermarkets where the emphasis is increasingly weighted toward “un-packaged” goods.

Part of the answer is that our orientation as marketers needs to shift from *brand* identity to the *shoppers'* identity and what the shopping experience means to them. As marketers, we need to be thinking about how to engage those shoppers and address their needs within the context of the shopping experience.

### EXPERIENTIAL PACKAGING

Granted, it's a little hard to see how brands, whose identities are confined to boxes, cans and bags, can have a meaningful effect on the shopping experience.

Much of the conversation around the shopping experience tends to focus on creating special events, or creating theatrics that can engage and motivate the shopper to purchase. For most brands, that sounds like a tall order. It certainly is a far more complicated process than offering the usual coupons, displays and promotions.

The good news is, shoppers aren't necessarily looking for high drama. More often, they are looking for relevant solutions to their immediate needs.

Those solutions can be a lot simpler than you'd think. It can be as simple as changing a product's formula and packaging. One packaged goods brand in particular—ALL Small & Mighty detergent—is a perfect example of how an innovative approach to product packaging can improve the shopping experience.

If you're not familiar with it, ALL Small & Mighty is a concentrated laundry detergent that comes in a much smaller package than conventional detergents. While visiting supermarkets and talking to shoppers in several supermarkets near my home in suburban Dallas, I was a little surprised by shopper enthusiasm for this product.

That enthusiasm is partly (and simply) because the package is not as heavy as conventional jugs of detergent. It requires less storage, and you don't have to buy it as often. Because you use less and the package is smaller, it is more environmentally friendly, too.

For the aging baby-boomer population, for example, it's a perfect fit. As one boomer shopper told me: “It

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**Aware → Attract → Engage → Motivate → Activate**

Distance	Out-of-store	Across the store	Near the shelf	At-shelf	In hand, cart, register
Intention	<b>Introduction</b> "I want to know more."	<b>Enticement</b> "What is that? There it is."	<b>Involvement</b> "I want more."	<b>Commitment</b> "This is for me."	<b>Consummation</b> "I want to buy this."
Scope	Media-specific	Category	Section or consideration set	Product/SKU	Accessory, enactment, payment

SOURCE: Advantage Retail

used to be that when we had a family, bigger was better. Now smaller is better."

But the most important thing about Small & Mighty is that it aligns with the way people shop the store. Twenty years ago, people shopped the aisles first and the perishables on the perimeter of the store last. It's just the opposite today. Now, supermarkets almost force you to shop the outside first, followed by the center of the store.

What this means is, you get to the detergent aisle after you've bought your eggs, your produce and your freshly baked goods. You pick up this big jug of laundry detergent and you have to stop and figure out how to get it into the cart without crushing the bananas and the muffins. That may sound like a small matter, but it's not to anyone who likes their bananas without bruises!

One other point: I asked shoppers how they heard about ALL Small & Mighty and a good number of them said they had heard about it from a friend. Obviously, those friends weren't talking about the brand because of a television commercial; they were talking about the brand because of the shopping experience.

In short, marketers who translate a brand's identity to make it salient to shoppers, to make it satisfy one of their pressures or need states while they're shopping, will have a big advantage over those who do not.

You can't leave this to chance. You've really got to design the experience, in-store.

### ENGAGE AND MOTIVATE

The key is to develop a clear understanding of how shoppers shop the store. My colleagues at Advantage Retail, John Meyer and Matt Chambers, came up with the idea that the shopping experience is a progression of five steps, which they call "the path to purchase" (see chart).

The five steps are simply to make shoppers aware, and then attract, engage, motivate and activate them to purchase. During the process (from engagement to

conversion), shoppers experience a series of decision points that either draw them closer to the point of action or turn them away.

These "forks in the road" are where we, as marketers, have the opportunity to influence changes in behavior. We can do so by a) understanding and anticipating the behaviors; and b) enacting shopper marketing strategies against this knowledge and converting the shopper to purchases.

The best way to understand shoppers at these critical intersections is to conduct in-store research that reveals the shoppers' pressures and need states. There's nothing quite like going into the stores, talking to shoppers and watching what they do.

Most of the focus should be on the "engage" and "motivate" steps, because they really are the catalysts—the two steps that cause everything to happen. Those are the intersections where the magic happens.

To succeed at retail today, a brand's identity must be designed to both engage and motivate the shopper. It's not as much about awareness (that usually happens outside the store) or attraction (that's the job of your in-store media plan).

It's about centering your brand identity on attributes that are aligned with improving the shopping experience. If you do that, then the most important step of all—activation to purchase—will take care of itself.

When that happens, your brand's identity will be positioned exactly where it needs to be—in a shopping bag and on its way home. ■



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