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## **FMCGe News Article**

**Colour Me Purple: Are You  
Guilty Of Underestimating The  
Power of Colour In Shelf  
Standout?**

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## **Colour Me Purple: Are You Guilty Of Underestimating The Power of Colour In Shelf Standout?**

Brand managers covet the strong associations shoppers have with Cadbury's purple and Heinz's teal. Analysis of shoppers' eye-movements indicates that colour is the first level of pack 'detail' registered.

Companies go to great length and cost to fiercely defend trademarked colours; with every reason says Noreen Kinsey (Associate Director with The Oxford Research Agency's Retail & Shopper Insight team). Recent research amongst brand managers and marketing heads reminds us that *colour is king*.

Cadbury's has trademark-protected the pantone reference of its 'purple' in more than 20 countries, and is fiercely protective of its use. More than 4 in 5 marketers questioned by trademark attorneys Withers & Rogers associated Cadbury's distinctive purple colour with the brand. Easyjet and BP are similarly strongly associated with their respective (trademarked) brand colours. Research by organisers of the Packaging Innovations show at the NEC in February highlighted the importance marketers place on packaging as a tool to create standout and encourage impulse purchase - together with promotions, packaging is the last marketing area where investment would be withdrawn in the event of budget squeeze.

Colour plays a key role in shoppers' navigation and selection at the fixture as our brains process colour before text/ logos. Academic studies have shown that single-colour packaging is located most quickly. Shoppers fixate on colour first, followed by a more measured processing of text/ logo as they evaluate choices more consciously.

A shopper might be faced with 50,000 SKUs in a typical supermarket. Even narrowing down to the items on a shopping list would be exhausting if we had to 'read' each pack to locate products of interest. Shoppers quickly (in a fraction of a second) de-select packs that are deemed of no relevance.

### **Redesign - at your peril**

There are numerous examples of pack re-designs that have stalled or reduced sales, as shoppers fail to spot their usual brand. Last month's US Advertising Age reported PepsiCo's U-turn on its packaging for Tropicana. Following a 20% drop in sales and outraged blogs from customers, PepsiCo has reinstated its 'straw in an orange' imagery. Shoppers complained that the redesign made the brand look more like supermarket own-label juice (and the budget option to boot!).

Consistent pack design is vital, unless or until shoppers can be trained to recognise (and accept) the 'new' version.

Consistency across the brand portfolio is also important. With an exponential proliferation of sub-brands and line extensions, brand identity can be weakened and navigation made more difficult for the shopper.

Brand design and importantly market research of design options, should not take place in isolation from the shelf. A brand's design needs to be understood in the context of the brands that will surround it in-fixture.

One further caveat is to beware hiding your light under a bushel! Shelf ready packaging (SRP), for all its success at improving replenishment can, unless it echoes pack colours closely, *reduce* visibility on shelf.

The Oxford Research Agency works with FMCG manufacturers and retailers to optimise pack design and to evaluate visibility and clarity on shelf. From concept, to performance on shelf and volume estimations, we can guide you every step of the way. We can employ eye-tracking in-store, or create a life-size fixture in a central location (making the evaluation of NPD/ line extensions easy).

If you would like to find out more about how The Oxford Research Agency can help you evaluate the impact and appeal of your brand or better understand your shoppers, please speak to our retail and shopper insight team (contact Steve King, [steve.king@tora.co.uk](mailto:steve.king@tora.co.uk) or Noreen Kinsey, [noreen.kinsey@tora.co.uk](mailto:noreen.kinsey@tora.co.uk) or call 01865 728272).