

PACKAGE DESIGN[®]

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Magazine

PACKAGING "VALUE"

**Co-Branding with Costco's
Kirkland Seal of Approval**

**Do You Need a
Brand Identity
Manager?**

**Creating
High-End Appeal
at Wegmans**

**Compelling
Brand Loyalty
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A STORE BRAND'S STORE

There's a Lot to Learn from Wegmans Brand Packaging

By Simon Gainey

Package design is probably your best and last chance to make a sale. The package is the “ad” that communicates everything about you (i.e., your brand) to a potential consumer and has to work hard at getting him or her to notice you, understand, and believe you, and purchase you.

If you're a branded product, you hope that the inherent brand equity and years of brand building can carry some weight, but the package still has to work hard. For a store brand with hopes of taking share from the branded competition, you don't have this advantage, and so the packaging has to work just as hard to not only say “you are as good or better than the branded competition” but also “you are true to the value you offer as a store brand.”

At the outset, the product has to deliver on the promise; however, one of the most important elements for any brand is how you use package design (graphics and structure) to sell at the shelf effectively. This single idea is not new, but as one surveys and assesses various store brands across the U.S., it is obvious that packaging is *still completely underutilized* (and often not well understood).

But this disconnect has started to change, and over the last 12 months or so one can now start to find private label products that have evolved into well developed store brands. These store brands have packaging that is working hard to get noticed, be believable, and take share from the traditional brands. Anyone can witness good examples of this evolution phenomenon at Safeway, Wegmans, Costco, Whole Foods, Trader Joe's, or Target.

Defining spaces

There are perhaps few grocery stores better adept than Wegmans at using the opportunities of package design to compete effectively across the board. Visit any one of their East Coast stores and you will be transported to a shopping and food experience that rivals the very best. For many consumers, the Wegmans name is a promise of high quality, outstanding freshness, culinary expertise, great service, phenomenal experience, and—maybe most importantly—trust.



Research: Private Label

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With these expectations as a foundation, the Wegmans brands are starting to use package design as one of the key elements to support their business growth. Here are just a few examples that highlight this approach.

Frozen Hors d'Oeuvres – A new line of Wegmans branded Frozen Hors d'Oeuvres use package design to break some of the category rules to get noticed, be believable, transform the shelf experience, and fully reflect the culinary expertise that Wegmans have become known for. The package design helps transport a potential consumer to the entertaining experience; the clean and simple graphics are devoid of the usual sales clutter; the package screams quality; and on the shelf brand blocking gets you noticed.

Premium Ice Cream and Sorbets – Wegmans has elegantly used a premium branded ice cream package structure, well understood by consumers, with terrific flavor color-coded, clean, and modern graphics to really provide effective competition to Ben & Jerry's and Häagen-Dazs.

Premium Tea – A new line of Wegmans premium teas uses package design to stand out in the crowd, be noticed, and carry believable premium tea credentials. The design feels “cared for,” with a handmade quality using simple graphics, and effective brand blocking on shelf.

Italian Classics – Wegmans has created a line of foods across the store called Italian Classics that help their consumers to put together Italian inspired meals for their family using a range of ingredients, from components to fully prepared meals. Easily recognizable by their package design, the products establish a unique store branding approach that Wegmans promotes strongly in their popular store magazine, in their Marketplace Deli, through multiple product placements in the store, and in regular in-store demonstrations with recipe cards. This is a strategy few branded products can compete with.

Drawing conclusions

By looking at just these few examples, it is easy to see that Wegmans has started to use package design effectively to achieve many objectives, such as:

1. Communicate the positioning of their brand and its promise through design from the artwork, finish on the packaging, structure, and layout on shelf.
2. Differentiate in the category and get noticed.
3. Carry “branded” credentials, to help create a “reason to believe” in consumer minds that the product isn’t a trade-down—but is comparable or better.
4. Leverage the quality of their fresh produce and deli area over to shelf-stable products.

5. Utilize package styling and structures that denotes the category positioning, using recognizable category package triggers.
6. Deliver on the experience visually and structurally.
7. Connect products across a menu to enable consumers to be smart dinner planners.
8. Create phenomenal shelving, merchandizing, and brand blocking.
9. Differentiate through modern, fresh, authentic, clean, and distinctive artwork.

The strategic challenge in the development of a successful grocery store brand is about making the right choices concerning the brand positioning relative to the broad competitive set, determining how this positioning is communicated to consumers, and maximizing the inherent advantages in the store so that the brand gets noticed, looks appealing and relevant, and gets purchased by consumers. This challenge is really not very different than if you were a branded product—getting consumers to notice you, believe you, and repeatedly buy you, in today's crowded shelves, is the goal. The future requires that to meet this challenge, stores brands need to use package design more to help do some of the “heavy lifting” and support the brand and store growth. ■



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