GUM DRUM: WRIGLEY, BRITISH COMPANY
CHEW ON CHANGE IN A TIRED CATEGORY

Is a packaging revolution about to stick to chewing gum? Wm. Wrigley Jr. Co. said in April that it planned to substitute paper for aluminum foil on five of its largest chewing gum brands -- Big Red, Doublemint, Juicy Fruit, Winterfresh, and Wrigley’s Spearmint. According to the Chicago Sun-Times, the switch to paper will conserve 850 tons of aluminum annually and keep the foil from blanketing landfills.

But foil -- a signature part of chewing gum for more than a century -- may be unfairly singled out. Some experts note how easily aluminum is to recycle and reuse. If paper wrappers are just as easily thrown into the landfill as is aluminum foil, is there any benefit from swapping materials?

Chewing gum in paper packaging also is taking on new life in England. Carton printer Benson Group has designed a cartonboard “shell & slide” package for the Peppersmith brand that includes a slide-out booklet -- or a “fifth side” to the gum package -- holding small papers that act as dispensers for used gum.

That novel solution to holding gum waste substitutes the less recyclable plastic wrap for cartonboard. On the sustainability front, the paper wrappers also meet a common problem in England, where about $227mn is spent annually to hose down gum litter from streets.

In general, the gum category globally has fallen behind some other food and beverage items; perhaps the novel use of packaging can help revive interest. Witness the recent explosion in sales for Wrigley’s 5 gum, delivered in a sleeker paper envelope with larger billboard space for distinctive graphics.

As Stuart Leslie, president of design firm 4sight inc., said at Packaging Strategies’ recent Package Design and Development Summit, the new gum package designed by 4sight sparks consumers to pay more for the same sticks of gum but in a trendier package.

Packaging Strategies’ Perspective: Like soup and seafood cans before it, chewing gum is now undergoing changes in packaging that offer more diversity in materials and format. PS
Why Packaging Innovation Matters
And Why It Always Has

Though we are often striving to achieve packaging innovation, we do not always take time to really reflect on its value and its impact on brand success. However, packaging innovation has long played an integral role in growing sales and building consumer loyalty and will continue to do so moving forward.

Before companies were linking the concept of innovation to packaging, it was happening. For example, the retractable lipstick tube hit the market and achieved global popularity around the time of World War II. Roughly 70 years later, the lipstick tube is still a convenient, popular package. Another format that transformed packaging industry standards is the use of aerosol cans for shaving cream. Prior to the introduction of the format in 1949, shaving preparations were commonly sold as bars of soap. The aerosol format was touted as a more convenient package for busy men. Today, the vast majority of all shaving lathers sold in the United States is in aerosol packaging.

The good news is that the drive for packaging innovation hasn’t decreased over time. If anything, it has become even more critical as an increasing number of brands jockey for shelf space and consumer dollars. Innovation can take many forms, including processing, formulation, and unexpected packaging formats. For example, we’ve all seen food products such as whipped cream and cooking oils packaged in aerosol containers. But what about other foods? Today’s advanced dispensing systems enable a greater variety of foods to be packaged in aerosols. In fact, some viscous foods and ingredients such as pancake batter have already hit store shelves in aerosol packaging.

Innovation has also led to the development of decorative embellishments that help brands convey a premium look and feel. Shaping enables brands to break the landscape of the retail shelf with highly unique packaging, while inks and finishes lend different textures to container surfaces. Some brands are even taking it a step further by integrating other cutting-edge technologies into their packaging. Recently, Medea Vodka unveiled its new glass bottle that features an embedded, programmable, scrolling LED marquee. The message on the marquee can be customized by the consumer, offering a whole new way of interacting with the package.

Another trend that will continue to evolve as a result of packaging innovation is all-over branding. We already see consumer packaged goods companies using shaping and decoration to morph packages into unique promotional marketing tools. A good example is Diesel’s Only the Brave men’s fragrance in its limited edition Iron Man 2 bottle and packaging. The fragrance bottle is a red fist brandishing a large gold colored ring that reads “Diesel.” The paperboard box is covered with images from Marvel’s classic Iron Man comic books.

As shaping technologies and decorative techniques become more advanced, this kind of all-over branding is bound to become more abundant, creating shelves of highly individualistic packaging. PS

Packaging in North America is about to take its pose for the camera and enter a new dimension of functionality, as barcode readers move to the next stage of their rollout in retail stores.

Augme Technologies, an interactive media marketing company, and barcode provider ScanBuy are launching scannable, 2D bar codes placed directly on packages, allowing higher customer interactivity with the product. Where previous iterations allowed the texting of codes on phones to download promotional rebates and rewards incentives, newer technology places a prominent bar code on a package. It’s a point-and-shoot method. Consumers just aim their camera phones at the package bar code and, voila, rich media content can be streamed into their phones. Not only does the new system offer instant coupons and promotions, but it will eventually allow consumers to check which stores might carry a product and the price differences between retail stores, said Augme chief business development officer Anthony Iacovone.

“Packaging becomes a vehicle to connect a consumer to the brand,” Iacovone told Packaging Strategies. “This will allow packaging to become a dynamic experience for the consumer.”

It also becomes more dynamic for the brand. Through what is termed consumer loyalty codes, consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies can capture purchase information -- including product and size purchased, store name, and geographic region -- and demographic information on the anonymous buyers, Iacovone said. That date can help with future development of both product and packaging.

Augme already has 120m consumer records, a number growing exponentially. In return, consumers become connected to the brand owner via the package. Consumers will receive a stream of coupons, store rebates, and pertinent information that can enhance their shopping experience.

In the case of Colgate-Palmolive and its Wisk detergent, new barcodes are already connecting consumers and allowing them to sign onto Wisk’s Facebook book.

Flexible packaging and paperboard converter Graphic Packaging Intl. is a partner with Augme, using the technology on its packages and licensing it to others.

The future is now. ScanBuy vp of marketing David Javitch told Packaging Strategies that 2D codes have been placed on the paperboard cartons for Heineken and Heineken Light in the United States. Free apps, including a music challenge, can be downloaded to a phone from the package. “This is the most extensive integration of 2D barcodes on packaging we have seen to date in the U.S.,” Javitch said.

Iacovone said UPC scanning is on the horizon, using the existing UPC label on a package without having to create a new one. And eventually, camera phones will be able to merely point at the package -- without having to aim for the barcode -- to download information, using radio-frequency identification.

“We’re still at the very, very tip of the iceberg,” Iacovone said. “We’ll see a lot more innovation.”

Packaging Strategies’ Perspective: Packaging is about to go places it never has before. While some complain that not enough stores have wireless access today, rising consumer demand for this technology could force that to change in a hurry.

CALLING ALL CELL PHONES: PACKAGING ENTERS A NEW ERA
The glass container industry, led by market leader Owens-Illinois (O-I), is using a lifecycle assessment (LCA) of its packages to fend off misperceptions about the environmental footprint of its bottles.

The Perrysburg, OH-based company also said May 5 it would institute aggressive new sustainability goals, including cutting global energy consumption in half, reducing carbon-dioxide emissions by 65%, and almost doubling the use of recycled glass in its containers, increasing its global average to 60% recycled content.

A new LCA study from O-I makes the case that glass packaging has a more favorable carbon footprint than PET bottles or aluminum cans. But the study also kicks some dirt on other analyses that O-I says only tell part of the story. Jay Scripter, O-I vp of sustainability, likened recent LCA studies to traffic patterns in Mexico City; there’s no uniform path that all cars follow.

“ISO has a guideline but there are no rules to figure out how a proper comparison should be made,” Scripter claimed. “We wanted to establish a process that is rational and could dispel or eliminate confusion in the marketplace.”

Scripter said that ISO 14040 standards provide such a guide but are not enforceable and are sometimes used incorrectly in LCA studies. He said that in many cases -- citing some PET bottle studies -- plastics that is downcycled and used in non-packaging applications, such as carpet backing, is double counted and given credit for footprint reductions unrelated to packaging.

In other situations, Scripter said that a cradle-to-gate assessment is used, where what occurs after the package leaves the production plant is not counted. And in some situations, only a gate-to-gate assessment is evaluated, ignoring the creation of the raw materials and the energy used.

This can be true with aluminum cans, where only coil manufacturing is looked at and not the production of raw aluminum, or PET that does not include forming the polymer from petroleum in its LCA analysis. “We have a very aggressive invitation to all industry to do a complete assessment,” he said. “The material does not drop from the heavens.”

Scripter further claimed that Walmart is attempting to get its arms around this problem after receiving pilot numbers for its Scorecard program that ranged all over the board. Its product index work is an attempt to provide more focus to a fuzzy issue.

For O-I, the numbers can be used to counter some of the perceptions that the heavy weight of glass bottles makes it a less desirable choice for sustainability. Recent LCA analysis from PET- and aluminum-based groups have used the weight of glass as a negative versus their material of choice.

The O-I study, however, (while not debating the weight disadvantage of a glass containers), stated that transportation of finished glass packaged only accounted for 4 to 5 percent of a complete carbon footprint. Moreover, with the high frequency of recycled glass cullet in containers, reduced emissions in production offset higher emissions from transportation.
A hot spot for glass currently centers on shape for hot sauces and salsas, according to Doug Hesche, vp of marketing development for Saint-Gobain Containers.

“There’s a revolution throughout the hot sauce market for creative brand imagery through both shape and decoration using pressure-sensitive labels and other techniques,” Hesche said. “This is one category where shape can have a significant impact around brand identification with consumers. It’s unusual in that you don’t otherwise see much change in food packaging.”

One example is for Pace brand hot sauces from Campbell Soup Co., which have moved from a stock-like rounded glass container to one with a pinched-in waist.

“We have the ability to create just about any shape customers want,” explained Hesche. “We can put grips on containers, add indents or different angles -- all things that brand owners love.”

Glass has long been considered sustainable in that the same containers can be recycled and remade back into glass containers numerous times. The industry also has the capability to use more cullet. Hesche says their manufacturing plants can, in theory, use an amount of cullet well above levels of 90%. One facility in France has run 95% cullet for an extended period, he noted.

The amount of cullet available hinges on the amount of glass that is recycled; glass currently has a recycling rate around 27% -- coincidentally the same rate for PET containers. However, the Glass Packaging Institute and its members, including Saint-Gobain, have set an aggressive five-year goal of a 50% recycling rate for 2013.

Hesche said the challenge is getting the glass back; when they do, it drives costs down, requires less energy and raw materials to produce glass, and helps manufacturers from an emissions standpoint, too. “It’s a win-win-win situation,” he said.

Glass has two weaknesses that the industry has been working at for some time, including 25-plus years’ effort to reduce weight. Owens-Illinois (O-I)’s Lean+Green initiative in Australia has shown weight reductions for wine bottles in the 20% to 28% range using Narrow Neck Press and Blow technology. O-I will be introducing a number of such bottles this year in North America.

Saint-Gobain has R&D efforts with glass bottle machinery vendor Emhart Glass that it expects to yield dramatic reductions in glass package strength and weight by 2012. “It works in a lab and now the engineers have to get it to run in a production setting,” Hesche said before revealing that the method has the potential to eliminate the breakability issue. “However, we need to get consistent with the process to better understand it,” he cautioned.

Through changing markets and technical innovations like these, glass packaging will remain a timeless choice for packagers.

If nothing else, the study continues to ignite controversy over LCAs, with groups such as the Aluminum Association and the PET Resin Association (PETRA) already disagreeing about assessment results and methodologies used. In attacking LCA studies in general, Aluminum Association president Steve Larkin sniffed “we’d like to see the LCA study continue to be used as a tool for self-improvement, not for PR stunts.”

Packaging Strategies’ Perspective: While LCA studies have been a cottage industry in the past few years, the controversy seems to be increasing, not dying down. The best position to take is that material choice depends on the application and that no sweeping statements can fit any one material.
Glass’s classic attributes of barrier protection, superb clarity, and premium cachet were qualities appealing to the launch of Very Cherre from Old Orchard Brands LLC, Sparta, MI. Introduced on a limited basis in late 2009 and rolling out nationally in 2010, the four-product line features juice made from a particularly healthful variety of cherry and a distinctive glass container.

“From the beginning, I wanted a glass container because it conveyed premium positioning,” stated Kevin Miller, Old Orchard Brands’ vp of marketing. “Glass is uniquely different from PET, offers heft when held, can be recycled, and evokes quality.”

The rounded 11oz custom bottle is manufactured and supplied by Saint-Gobain Container and decorated with applied ceramic labeling. “Their engineers worked from our prototype concept and helped us design the bottle,” explains Miller. “It grabs consumers’ attention — people gravitate to the product because of the packaging. It’s a nice little bottle that works real well.”

A NEW TWIST ON GLASS

Perhaps the shape-shifting, moldable quality of glass is nowhere more apparent than in the new Vortex bottle for Miller Lite beer from MillerCoors, where the innovation is found inside the bottle.

Conceived, designed and manufactured by Owens-Illinois (O-I), the Vortex bottle features ribs within the neck using a patented new process O-I calls “internal embossing.” The MillerCoors Vortex bottle is molded with four sets of helixes that impart both functional and aesthetic attributes to a traditional longneck bottle. Vortex began arriving in stores in March and will form the centerpiece for MillerCoors’ summer promotional efforts, said Scott Magnus, O-I beer marketing manager for North America.

MillerCoors has an exclusive on the Vortex bottle for “a period of time” in the beer category, but O-I is getting interest in the technology for other product categories. “It lends itself to a variety of patterns and designs,” said Magnus.
FIRM DECISION: ARIZONA USES CONSTAR TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE A RIGID PET BOTTLE FOR NEW PRODUCT LINE

In a refreshing twist from the recent mission in PET packaging to lightweight every container, Constar worked with AriZona Beverage Co. to launch a rigid, glass-like bottle that projects higher quality to the consumer.

Using its proprietary X4 technology, Constar developed a PET container for AriZona's new Rescue Water brand that is robust and offers the look and feel of glass. The X4 technology, first launched by Constar in early 2009 with a major soft drink company, is a panel-less technology specifically developed for hot fill and high heat applications. Containers using Constar's X4 technology provide the high touch, robust, in-hand feel of glass while optimizing performance.

AriZona desired a unique-looking, premium bottle for Rescue Water, a drink expected to compete heavily in the enhanced water category. The goal was to provide a bottle that resembled a vitamin bottle. The 20.5 oz bottles, using extracts from Twinlab Laboratories, are now rolling out across North America.

The work by Philadelphia-based Constar to develop the optimum panel-less design was a bit challenging, noted Donald Deubel, Constar Senior VP of Corporate Technologies. “AriZona demands design excellence from their suppliers and this program was no different. AriZona wanted a hot fill container that mimicked the appearance of a vitamin packer while providing the rigidity and in-hand feeling of glass.”

Constar's X4 technology is currently used in hot-fill beverage applications, where the product, when filled into the PET container, is 185 degrees F. While the filled package is cooled to room temperature, the vacuum created is absorbed by the X4 base, preventing container distortion and buckling, Deubel said. “You do not want any unplanned movement in the package as a result of vacuum,” he stated.

The vacuum absorption by the base keeps the sides cylindrical, rigid, and smooth. The process also allows for only three horizontal panels on the PET bottle -- instead of the more standard six panels -- that frame the upper and lower labels and prevent ribs from interfering with the shrink labels and causing crinkling or tearing.

Constar also used its DiamondClear oxygen scavenging technology on the bottles. The patented barrier technology extends shelf life and preserves flavor and nutrients while offering glass-like clarity.

Some brand owners -- including Gatorade and Glaceau VitaminWater -- are taking light-weighting to its extreme. Others, such as AriZona, target a more rigid in-hand feel for the consumer.

Packaging Strategies’ Perspective:
Panel-less technologies, while not new to the marketplace, are finding applications that offer the rigidity and in-hand feel of glass containers instead of the airiness of lighter weight. PS

A BIG, SUSTAINABLE STEP FOR TINY FOOTPRINT: THE FIRST CARBON-NEGATIVE COFFEE

Product, marketing, packaging and sustainability combine with the launch of Tiny Footprint Coffee.

With every purchase of Tiny Footprint Coffee, the company of the same name makes a contribution toward the Mindo Cloudforest Foundation in Ecuador to plant trees that each remove up to 54 pounds of carbon from the environment. On average, it takes 4 pounds of carbon to make 1 pound of coffee, so Tiny Footprint calculates that each purchase tips the eco-balance 50 pounds toward the positive side of the carbon scale.

The brand is leveraging that aspect prominently on-package. The graphics design from Pocket Hercules clearly communicates the Tiny Footprint story and its connection to the coffee drinker -- how each purchase and each cup of Tiny Footprint allows the coffee drinker to help the environment and the Mindo Cloud Forest.

The bag’s three-ply, 5.6-mil, structure comprises kraft paper/foil/linear low-density polyethylene. The package structure provides an oxygen barrier, while a one-way valve protects the freshness and flavor.

The packaging materials, from Pack Plus Converting came about after the company had considered, tested, and subsequently ruled out structures using polylactic acid (PLA) and glassine as Coffee continued on the bottom of Page 8
SPRING BRINGS BIOFILM BAGS TO MARKET

Biopolymers are springing up throughout the packaging landscape like wildflowers, adding fresh touches of “green” to markets sensitized to sustainability.

Among the applications for foods, biofilm bags seem to be a highly popular variety this year.

Packaging Strategies last issue reported on Snyder’s pretzels, which made the move into snacks packed in bags made of Ingeo polylactic acid (PLA) from NatureWorks LLC.

Snyder’s is following along the lines of Frito-Lay’s SunChips conversion from a 33% PLA structure last year to a 100% compostable PLA structure in 2010.

But not all bio-film bag structures rely on PLA. Consider Boulder Canyon, which claims to be using the first compostable packaging for natural snack food. Instead of PLA, the 7.5-ounce bags are made from wood pulp sourced from plantations that have Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) or similar certification.

The packaging uses materials certified to meet the “Specification for Compostable Plastics” standards set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). The bags can be composted in home or industrial composters, recycled through approved organic recycling programs, or incinerated at modern incineration plants.

The company says the wood pulp sourcing avoids the potential negative impact on existing food supplies of biopolymers made from corn or other starches such as PLA.

A fresh new segment for this kind of sustainable bag structure springs up with Stahlbush Island Farms, Corvallis, OR, which launched a first-of-its-kind biodegradable bag -- the BioBag -- for the company’s frozen fruit and vegetable lines. Supplied in rolls by Cadillac Products Packaging Co. for form-fill-seal applications, the bags rely on brown kraft paper and water-based inks. The material’s 3- to 3 ½-mil structure comprises seven-color flexo-printed kraft paper laminated to a polymeric sealant with a special additive that makes it also degrade, according to Chris Mitchell, Cadillac’s business manager.

Cadillac reports that the key challenge was to create a biodegradable bag that maintains a normal shelf life across products. Mitchell says the company is experiencing 20% growth in sustainable-related packaging materials compared to 5% to 10% growth for that of conventional materials.

Packaging Strategies’ Perspective: The ongoing sustainable materials’ “race” in flexible films and other formats will continue to flourish while benefitting brand owners and, hopefully, the environment. Within this market, tree-based materials are emerging as a viable alternative to corn-based packaging. PS

Coffee continued from the bottom of Page 7

not meeting the company’s requirements to maintain product quality.

The company looks ahead to further package development. “Our long-term goal is to use the most enviro-friendly packaging, as it is developed, that meets our criteria,” said company spokesperson Stephen Dupont.

The products officially debuted in April after the company secured a distribution agreement with Amazon.com. It is now seeking to market the product in upscale grocery store retailers, organic food retailers, food co-ops, and through food/beverage services serving businesses, Dupont added.

Packaging Strategies’ Perspective: Look for sustainability to step from discreet flagging through graphics as a product component to further prominence to THE main driver for more and more products, as was done with Tiny Footprint Coffee. Cause marketing, in all its forms, is a high-powered, momentum-gaining force for packaged goods companies. PS

While tree planting is a well-traveled path to reducing carbon footprints, the prominent on-package messaging of Tiny Footprint Coffee steps up the marketing for this aspect of carbon offsets.
PUMA Pitches the Shoe Box

Will a reusable shoe bag announced by PUMA really have the desired effect on sustainability that the company is touting?

The global shoe company announced the next phase of a long-term sustainability project in April at the Design Museum in London by unveiling Clever Little Bag, a reusable plastic bag that PUMA will use to package its shoes. The bag offers a dual purpose: it's a combination of an apparel bag and a corrugated shoe box, with a pull-out corrugated sleeve to hold the shoes.

PUMA is figuring that consumers will reuse the carrier bag instead of traditional shopping bags. And for the company, the bags mean the displacement of the traditional shoe box; instead, shoes will be packaged at the factory in the bags and remain there until the consumer takes them home.

Overall, PUMA figured the new approach would mean a 65% reduction in paper packaging and considerable savings in energy and transport costs to move to the lighter, built-in bag.

The concept, developed by renowned industrial designer Yves Behar, is receiving attention on the world stage for its novel functionality. However, questions also are being asked about its actual sustainability. While reusable bags are gaining steam, the polyethylene plastic also could be thrown out by consumers. And while corrugated material is being replaced, much of that material in shoe boxes is already recycled.

The world will have to wait a while longer before the end of the conventional shoe box. PUMA does not plan to release the new packaging and distribution system until the second half of 2011. PS

New Taste in Wine

ACH Foam Technologies has become the first U.S.-based molder to offer expanded polystyrene (EPS) packaging with at least 60% recycled content.

The Denver-based company has banded with Rapac and its recycled molding bead, called EcoSix, to produce WineLoc wine shipping containers using historically high levels of recycled EPS.

Rapac vp of marketing Ken Adams said traditional EPS packaging contains no more than 30% recycled content, mainly coming from post-industrial scrap. The WineLoc containers take materials from post-consumer collection, using a takeback system and corporate recycling programs organized by ACH.

The new packaging continues ACH’s quest to fend off criticism (and potential legislative efforts to ban the material) that EPS cannot be recycled. The company has set up internal processing operations to recycle EPS and seek better collection.

ACH technicians worked for months to perfect the molding process to meet quality standard and pass drop tests, said Erich Brandt, ACH vp of sales and marketing. Initially, the recycled EPS did not bond together as well as virgin beads, requiring more trial and error to bring the material to market.

One Carton, Two Products

Transparent Packaging is continuing its exploration into combining a carton and PET materials, this time by creating a dual product and promotional package.

The Burlington, ON-based company has developed the One-Box-Multi-ShapeSize series, an L-shaped plastic folding carton that also offers a bonus package of promotional product. The use of two sizes and differing shapes in one clear container became the major challenge for the company, which prepared the package for cosmetics firm Lise Watier of Montreal.

The use of dual functionality packaging seems to be growing (see the PUMA story), saving on both material and transport costs while offering consumers more convenience. For Transparent Packaging, the work continues its exploration of opportunities in plastic folding cartons. The company also has used recycled PET and polylactic acid (PLA) for some of its packaging. PS
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Priority Metrics Group, Inc. (PMG) is a professional marketing consulting firm providing customized research, analysis and consultation services. With particular experience and expertise in packaging, distribution and textiles, PMG’s fundamental goal is to help client organizations create profitable top-line growth by aligning strategic direction with customer and market needs.

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