Consumer Trends: Shoppers Unsatisfied with Packaging

RICHMOND, Va. (Business Wire) — MeadWestvaco Corporation, a global leader in packaging and packaging solutions [1] launched its inaugural consumer satisfaction study, “Packaging Matters.” The study explores the role of packaging in product satisfaction as consumers purchase, transport, use and dispose of products across 10 different categories. The results suggest that packaging satisfaction can have a significant impact on purchase intent and repeat purchase, and that there is a low level of satisfaction overall, especially once consumers leave the store and rely on the structural or functional features of the package at home or on-the-go.

The study clearly shows that when it comes to purchase intent and product satisfaction, packaging does matter. A majority of consumers will sometimes buy a product off the shelf without prior knowledge of it (64 percent) and rarely use mobile devices to research a product while shopping (72 percent). While quality (85 percent) and price (67 percent) are the most important factors contributing to overall product satisfaction, consumers report little variance in importance between a product’s brand (12 percent) and packaging (10 percent).

Despite the importance of packaging, there is a clear opportunity for improvement: Fewer than 20 percent of U.S. consumers report they are “very satisfied” with product packaging, with the least amount of satisfaction from carry-out food containers and beauty care product packaging.

“The research further proves that packaging is one of the most powerful tools in the marketing communications mix, but as it stands now, packaging does not delight consumers,” said Brian Richard, director, Consumer & Customer Insights, MWV. “Brands should view the current gap in satisfaction as an opportunity to make improvements to their packaging by focusing on what matters most to consumers.”

Packaging satisfaction ends on the shelf

The study identified “satisfaction gaps:” the importance of different packaging attributes compared to their perceived performance. Of the 15 packaging attributes studied, only a small percentage of consumers ranked shelf appeal, or the product’s “attractiveness” and “distinctiveness,” as ”very important” features to their satisfaction (6 percent and 10 percent, respectively). However, this is where brands were performing best, with performance exceeding importance. While brands are generally pleasing consumers during the shopping experience, satisfaction drops dramatically when product packaging is relied upon for transport and storage and then when the product is used and reused.

The largest satisfaction gaps across categories all relate to the structural features or functionality of the packaging. In terms of importance, consumers want

packaging that protects from breaking or spilling (74 percent), maintains product integrity (72 percent) and gets the entire product out of the package (66 percent).

“Packaging satisfaction decreases significantly after consumers leave the store, at all touch points along the product lifecycle, such as transporting, storing and using the product. This is a huge missed opportunity for brands,” said Steve Kazanjian, vice president, Global Creative, MWV. “Structural features of the packaging should be viewed as the most critical area for brands to make improvements to drive consumer satisfaction.”

“Packaging that lives up to the brand promise of its marketing communications holds the most potential for repeat purchase,” Kazanjian added. “As more retail migrates online, consumers are interacting less with brick-and-mortar channels. A disappointed consumer can switch brands with one click, so the role of packaging is increasingly an important vehicle for brand owners to connect with their consumers at touch points throughout the product’s lifecycle.”

Packaging satisfaction varies across demographics

Results of “Packaging Matters” reveal a significant variance across a variety of demographics and categories. For example:

- Consumers ages 18-24 are most satisfied with packaging (22 percent)
- Middle-class consumers are the least satisfied with packaging (17 percent)
- Consumers are most satisfied with carbonated soft drink packaging (24 percent) and least satisfied with carry-out packaging (11 percent)

“Packaging Matters: Packaging Satisfaction Study” was commissioned by MWV and studied the shopping habits and consumers satisfaction with packaging from store shelf to transport, storage, use and disposal of 3,000 U.S. consumers. For full study results, visit mwv.com/packagingmatters [2].

For more information on MWV’s packaging solutions, please visit http://www.mwv.com/Packaging/index.htm [3].

About MWV

MeadWestvaco Corporation (NYSE:MWV) is a global packaging company providing innovative solutions to the world’s most admired brands in the healthcare, beauty and personal care, food , beverage, home and garden, tobacco, and agricultural industries. The company also produces specialty chemicals for the automotive, energy, and infrastructure industries and maximizes the value of its land holdings through forestry operations, property development and land sales. MWV’s network of 125 facilities and 16,000 employees spans North America, South America, Europe and Asia. The company has been recognized for financial performance and environmental stewardship with a place on the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index every year since 2005. Learn more at www.mwv.com [4].

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