

Creating Marketing Support for Specialty Forest Products¹

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ABSTRACT: Customers' first impression of your specialty forest product is often from your packaging, brochures, or advertising. Cheap communication tools says your product is cheap!

Good advertising may require an advertising agency. To keep us focused, we also need to clearly define the purpose of the ads. Effective advertising always focuses on benefits to our customer! Good ads start with headlines that hook readers, have pictures showing the product in use, are written using action verbs in short words and sentences, has lots of white space, and uses color to provide cues. Use quality paper printed with an effective font.

Many customers get their first impression of your product from your packaging and advertising. And that first impression is critical.

Cheap or cheap looking packaging, brochures or advertising tells your customer that you are selling a cheap product! If your specialty forest product (SFPs) is high quality, your advertising needs to reflect that quality.

Quality advertising and packaging attracts attention and generates sales. On-the-other-hand, if your advertising is not attention grabbing or interesting, your customers will not even notice it and your sales will be disappointing.

This paper presents ideas to improve the attention grabbing, and the sales creation potential for your advertising and packaging. Since many marketers of SFPs are small business, most of the attention will be given to print advertising such as newspaper and brochures. However, aspects to improve all types of advertising will be shared.

Use an Advertising Agency

Many marketers of SFPs are tempted to make their own advertising and packaging material, but unless you are exceptionally talented or experienced in this area, you are probably better off hiring a professional. This can be expensive, but it is usually money well spent. And as will be discussed later, professional photographers are also a good investment for SFPs.

In selecting someone to do your advertising, make certain that you select a knowledgeable and professional expert. To illustrate, often, print shops hold themselves out as helping with advertising. But, generally, they do not have professional advertisers on

their staff, and the resulting quality of your brochure is very poor.

But if you cannot afford an advertising agency or if you want better information so you can work more effectively with your agency, the following ideas should prove helpful.

Communication Theory

There are several critical advertising theories that help us understand why we should design our ads in a specific manner.

Purpose

It is essential to identify the purpose of the advertising. And the purpose is much broader than selling your product.

1. What audience do we want to reach? Who have we identified as the target audience for our SFPs? What do they know about us? Is the image favorable or unfavorable?
2. Determine the communication objectives, which means what do we need to achieve. Do we need to get attention for our SFPs on store shelves, create awareness of new SFPs, add to knowledge about our SFPs, eliminate bad images, create impulse sales, increase long-term loyalty, etc.?
3. Of course, creating sales is the ultimate purpose of our advertising. What level of sales do we want to create, and during what season? Do we want to stretch out our season to make it year around?
4. Another author suggests that we need to write down a sentence describing what we want the advertising to achieve or what we want the consumer to do after exposure to our literature.

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Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action

Effective communications generally should get the attention of the potential customer, create an interest in our product, create a desire to actually have our product, and finally, to create actions by having the customer purchase our product. Generally, one advertisement will not do all four AIDA steps, but the process should undergird all marketing effort.

Cues

To make processing information easier, each of us naturally puts our information into categories or boxes within our long-term memory. And every time I encounter something new, I use these classifications to help understand the new thing.

This means that my purchase decisions are based upon my perceptions of a product. Further, my perceptions are influenced substantially by the cues that your brochure, advertising, or packaging sends me. By cues, we are referring to your brandname, packaging, color, use of words, and other keys to your advertising.

Color

In one test, researcher added brown coloring to vanilla pudding to make it look like chocolate. Three shades of brown coloring were used. Based on the cue, the brown coloring, people thought it was chocolate pudding. Further, the darkest brown was perceived as having the best chocolate flavor and being the thickest. The lighter browns were perceived as creamier (probably from the fact that cream is white).

A group of young children became decidedly ill after eating harmless, blue-colored potatoes in another research project. Their cue was wrong!

Pharmacy students had difficulties identifying the flavors of colorless jellies and syrups by taste and even more difficulty identifying those which had been inappropriately colored. Colors are used to give us cues.

Expert wine tasters, knowing that rose wines have more sugar than white wines, rated a white wine colored to look rose, as sweeter than the same white wine with no color added.

In Europe, a new mauve package for coffee won awards, but sales fell off because mauve is not a color for coffee.

Brandnames

Toro Company launched a smaller and lighter snowblower. They created the brandname Snow Pup to launch the product. However, sales were disappointing because of the cue that “pup” sent to potential customers and Toro renamed the machine the Snow Master which significantly increased sales.

Other classic names include Jaguar which cues as sleek, fast, and exotic; Sunkist which cues as natural and pure; Snowboy which cues as crisp and cool; Mustang which cues as youthful, playful, and running wild; Ram Pick-up which cues as tough and strong.

Communicating

Research revealed that in advertisements, the words created 15 percent of the impact, the tone 25 percent and the nonverbal 60 percent. Nonverbal communication, is often defined to include:

1. Facial expression and visual interaction, such as eye contact.
2. Body movement and gestures, such as movement toward or away.
3. Paralanguage such as voice loudness, tremor, and pitch.
4. Proximity behaviors such as insuring appropriate distance between people for certain activities.
5. Multichannel communications such as the people and activities which are involved simultaneously in the commercial.

Designing Advertising

Developing a good package or label for your product, designing an effective brochure, or developing other advertising involves many steps. The following are the steps you will want to use, and also includes some ideas for creating better strategy.

Creating Great Ideas

Coming up with creative advertising ideas is hard. And it is important to remember that most creative advertising comes through very hard work. Consider the following ideas:

1. Collect all information from your files, your mind, your employees, your industry, and any other source that you can find.
2. Review all of the information and think about how each item relates to every other item. Study and examine the material in detail.
3. Now relax and let your mind work. Focus on other items and someday when you are least

thinking about your advertising, your key creative idea will materialize.

Benefits

The message we send has to focus on benefits to our targeted customer. Sell the sizzle, not the steak! Too often, agricultural businesses focus on benefits to the seller, not the buyer. Or we focus on characteristics of the product, rather than the benefits that the characteristics create. It is critical to evaluate the advertising to insure that we establish audience identity so readers can easily identify themselves in and be involved by the advertising.

However, minimize the number of ideas you use. In creating your core message, you probably can only focus on one to three key benefits!

Headlines

It has often been stated that your headline is so important that advertising's Who's Who have all seemingly pontificated on them.

1. Your headline should attract attention.
2. It should appeal to the reader's self interest or announce news.
3. It should communicate your company's unique advantage, and why your customer should pick your firm's product over a competitor's.
4. Consider your advantages, testimonials, or statistics.
5. It should motivate reader to take action.
6. And most importantly, your headline should contain a benefit to your customer.

Pictures

A picture is worth a thousand words, and in advertising it is worth several thousand words. The best pictures show products in use and needs being satisfied. Be creative in your picture taking!

How many pictures should you consider? Usually, too few, not too many are used. There is no right number, but you can create a mood easier with pictures than words.

Again, using a professional is very expensive, but it also saves a lot of money. You should be careful to have the right depth of field, the right shadows and light, the right background, and many other considerations. A professional can save many retakes.

If you are using one-color printing, photographs become more difficult, but sketches or black-and-white photos can enrich your brochure.

Copy

The words you chose have very specific meanings to your customers. And the ways you use the words have significant meanings.

1. Review your first line of copy to see if it supports your headline or your picture.
2. Is your company clearly identified as the advertiser in numerous places throughout your ad?
3. Is it easy to order product or find your business from your brochure?
4. Most of us write long sentences. But good advertising uses a newspaper style of writing. Short sentences. Never use 20- to 30-word sentences. Instead, use 5 to 12 words.
5. Use action verbs to create exciting and interesting reading. Passive verbs produce long copy and boring reading. To illustrate:
 - a) Passive: The color of the grass was green.
John was hit by Bob.
 - b) Active: The green grass! Bob hit John.
6. A quick test for good advertising is to look at the personal pronouns. Good advertising uses a lot of "you" and "yours." Bad advertising has a lot of "we," "our," and the name of the company. Focus on the need of the customer and how you fill it.
7. Throughout your advertising, keep your heading length short. Five to eight words should be your average.
8. Use common words that your customers will know. Avoid SFP buzz words and technical words. Use simple words that everyone knows.
9. Word frequency is important and you should avoid repeating the same word over and over. The thesaurus on your computer is an easy solution.
10. Ensure that your message communicates clearly and explicitly.

Layout and Printing

1. Good advertising and packaging has lots of white space.
2. Ideally, four-color printing with color separation should be used; however, this process can be very expensive. As an alternative, one or two-color printing on a high quality paper can also look great if properly designed.
3. Frequently, marketers try to save money by using brightly colored paper, but this usually comes across as "cheap."
4. Paper in light shades of gray, tan, and blue can create a rich look.
5. You can also use a heavier or slightly more expensive paper to enrich the look of one-color printing.

Fonts and Line Layout

1. If you market directly from your home, you will need a road sign identifying your location and the product you sell. When designing a sign, remember that fancy typefaces cannot be read at 60 miles per hour. Drive around and see which typefaces are easiest to read and stand out from the greatest distance.
2. Font size is less important than readability. Newspapers use a relatively small, but very readable, font.
3. Twelve words on a line are the maximum for your brochure and fewer are more effective. The eye stops reading after 12 words.

Message Type

There are two general types of messages: rational and emotion. Rational messages are factual and logical. Emotional messages are directed toward the individual's feelings and are intended to create a certain mood. For SFPs, both have potential. To illustrate, food items are marketed using either. Holiday and gift type products are best marketed with emotion.

In addition,	
Humor	Children
Celebrities	Real life situations
Brand Comparisons	Product demonstrations
Company presidents	Expert endorsements
Sex appeal	Pleasant
Music	Slice of life
Lifestyle	Fantasy
Mood or image	Scientific evidence
Technical expert	Testimonial evidence

Color

Colors are very important in providing cues to our customers. Following are some factors to consider.

1. Colors have to fit your product. For example, in the early 1990's, many products were made clear including Pepsi and a whiskey. However, each failed because we have expectations about the "right" color for our products.
2. Light colored objects appear to weigh less. Therefore, light colored appliances appear to weigh less and darker colors appear to weigh more.
3. Colors send messages about temperature. To illustrate, reds, oranges, and yellows send a feeling of warmth, while whites, blues, and greens send a feeling of coolness.
4. Shiny labels on wines send a message that they are less expensive and white dull labels say the wine is more expensive.
5. If you market directly from your home, you will need a road sign identifying your location and the product you sell. When designing a sign, choose your colors carefully. Don't use green if the sign is surrounded by foliage, even if green is your favorite color. Drive around and look at other signs to see colors stand out from the greatest distance? Always consider the setting. Signs that stand out in a highly wooded area may not work on the prairie.
6. Each color has its own personality. Black can mean death or sorrow on the one hand and mystery and passion on the other. Red is another color conveying passion and it also conveys excitement and danger. Browns, yellows and oranges send a natural or nature message.
7. Some colors cannot be used in specific situations. Cool crisp dark greens work well with food, but be careful with light green because it can look moldy. Care must also be taken with reds. Foods surrounded with reds can look undercooked. Generally, deeper red and even translucent reds tend to work best around foods.