



The strategic tools behind an FMCG launch

Lisa Killbourn discusses the key concepts for launching a new product onto the ever-crowded FMCG market

You could write a book on the strategic subtleties of a new FMCG brand launch. Many have been written in fact, but the tricky art of delivering a new brand to market is constantly evolving.

Let's assume the company hasn't fallen into any of the early traps. You've created a product as a result of identifying a market need, rather than just because you can. And you've secured the essential lifeblood of the launch, distribution.

What are the options now in terms of integrating the other components of a brand launch to create a strong, sustainable heartbeat, feeding healthy awareness, trial and rate of sale?

New tools like Behavioural Economics have become increasingly valuable in designing our approach, helping us to identify and break down the barriers to a

successful launch at the outset by anticipating the obstacles to consumer purchase.

For instance, untried new products are less likely to gain a foothold in a recession without addressing consumers' increased aversion to risk. These days, we might therefore try seeding a new product with key opinion-formers ahead of launch, and heavily promoting peer reviews, ensuring consumers feel confident the product comes 'pre-approved' by people they can relate to.

Today's marketing landscape means the customer journey, from awareness to consideration, all the way through to in-store activation, no longer always follows a traditional, linear route. In this communications environment, each channel has a specific role, a precise objective based on the insights you've already gathered on your target

audience. More than ever we are required to understand our audience's wants and needs, where and how they consume information, when they're most likely to be receptive and what manner of message is most likely to stick or produce the desired reaction.

For instance, having successfully launched Freedom gel, the number one selling spot treatment, we thought carefully about the role of channels in launching further skincare products in the range. Our understanding of how and where teens engage with brands led us to supplement TV with a significant online campaign, encompassing a competition that was hosted online in partnership with MTV and a highly responsive Facebook page.

Even today, the most effective way to reach a mass audience quickly is still through



Pictured: P&G senior marketer Marc Pritchard

TV and the other broadcast channels. However, because social and PR offer a unique depth of engagement for brands, we always look at the balance of awareness, engagement and response drivers we want to have working for us on any project.

A growing pool of industry professionals are wondering if a successful FMCG launch can be conducted through social and online alone. Some see this as a lower cost launch option, but this approach, which often involves creating pre-launch consumer pull, by building and harnessing an initially small group of advocates, isn't always fast or scalable enough to meet targets.

P&G senior marketer Marc Pritchard talked recently about using digital not as a component of a campaign, but his team as an entirely successful launch campaign channel in itself. Citing a German digital campaign for a Braun electric shaver, he reported that the activity exceeded sales targets eight times over. Interestingly, he confirmed that despite this success P&G still followed the launch with TV advertising, suggesting they'd identified a key role for broadcast nonetheless.

Whatever channels fit your objectives and budget, the most critical grappling point remains in-store: the real or virtual environment where the consumer journey becomes the shopper experience. Any awareness

generated prior to this point has to continue seamlessly into those last, crucial few yards.

Behavioural Economics has a part to play here too. Differences between shoppers and consumers can be significant. Once in a store environment, even online, and being forced to deal with over 10,000 messages battling for their attention, shoppers assume a hunter-gatherer mentality where quick search, not research, is the objective.

Therefore the number of facings we can negotiate for a launch and general on and off shelf presence are vital success factors here. Few potential trialists will spend more than a few seconds looking for your brand, so visibility is obviously vital, but a large number of

facings at, or soon after launch will also leverage the principle of 'Social Proof'.

Shoppers associate this visibility with popular, in demand products, allowing the brand to benefit from the subliminal "all those other buyers can't be wrong", assumption. In what they call 'the law of many facings', Tesco say that in some categories, double-facing SKUs can increase sales on average by 25%.

It's easy to see the benefit of lots of facings, of course, but fiendishly difficult to negotiate with customers. To get retailer buy-in to the likelihood of your launch achieving significant rate of sale, it is hugely useful to be armed with great consumer insight and an inspiring plan that shows how you'll bring excitement and value to the category.

This is where a mixture of brand partnerships (borrowing

drive consumers to an online redemption page or encourage social media advocacy; and should pull the integrated campaign messaging right through from the first touch-point, all the way to the on-pack design in-store. This brand messaging tie-up is crucial across all channels and platforms; if your new brand seems to have a split personality from Day One, trade customers and consumers alike may doubt it has a clear role in the market.

Many of the brands we currently work with are ones we helped launch, several of which have become number one in their category. Our experience has taught us that, despite the complexity, a successful integrated launch will have two fundamental elements.

First, strong insight and strategic planning that creates the consistent platform on which our launch

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equity from existing brands that share the same values, associations or usage occasion), experiential & sampling, innovative pack formats and practical incentives like couponing through mobile or social can all amplify the likely impact you can promise the retailer.

Activation activity like this can incorporate PR, print and broadcast to drive awareness;

brand will carve out its place in the category. Second, active consideration of all the marketing tools and channels available (considered on a level playing field), followed by selection of the right ones for our brand's specific objectives and audience.

Which may be as close as you'll get in the FMCG launch world to a tried and tested formula for success. ■

