



Press Release

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THE HIDDEN POWER OF PACKAGING

A new study launched today by the British Brands Group uncovers the crucial commercial role of packaging, how branding grabs the attention of shoppers, helping them recognise products quickly and accurately and suggests how Judges may better assess confusion in legal cases.

The significant study sheds new and important light on packaging and how shoppers respond to it.

Alongside the acknowledged functions of protecting, preserving and presenting products, packaging inspires consumers' understanding of and confidence in products and is often integral to a product's performance. It builds trust and reassurance, promoting repeat purchase. More than this, it strengthens competition and contributes to innovation, leading to better, more diverse and more sustainable products.

Professor Paul Dobson, Dean of Norwich Business School, said, "The economic and commercial effects of packaging have received little attention, yet it has important economic effects, supporting consumers, growth and well-functioning markets. It is vital to the fast-moving consumer goods sector, for instance, which generates £200 billion of retail sales in the UK."

The study also recognises that, for many regular purchases, shoppers use mental shortcuts – heuristics – to notice and recognise products as they simply do not have the time to assess rationally all the options available to them. Advances in behavioural science allow these heuristics to be identified and their effect measured.

Original consumer research undertaken as part of the study demonstrates how branding acts as a powerful heuristic, allowing products to be recognised in milliseconds. It finds that these functions are significantly reduced if brand elements are less prominent. It also finds that, if branding on two packs are too similar, shoppers take much longer to recognise products and make more errors. Such research techniques have wide implications, from brand management to legal judgments.

John Noble, Director of the British Brands Group, said, "Packaging plays such an important part in all our lives. It is also subject to considerable regulatory and public policy interest. We believe this study brings a valuable new perspective and introduces new evidence on how packaging serves us as individuals and contributes to a competitive, thriving economy. A deeper understanding will, we hope, lead to better, evidence-based policies and a fairer, vigorously competitive market."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The report published today, “Unwrapped. The hidden power of packaging”, is available at www.britishbrandsgroup.org.uk.

2. The report comprises three distinct studies:

(1) “Packaging in a market economy” – Research by Norwich Business School into the consumer, competition and economic importance of packaging.

Contact: Professor Paul Dobson Tel: 01603 592624 p.dobson@uea.ac.uk

(2) “The effect of branding on consumer choice” – Original consumer research from Mountainview Learning on how branding helps shoppers notice and recognise products, and the disruption caused when brand size is reduced or products are similarly packaged.

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(3) “Confusion, heuristics and the consumer” – a study from law firm Speechly Bircham on how consumers use heuristics in their decision making, how the effect of heuristics may be measured and how Judges may use behavioural science to identify and quantify, predictably and reliably, whether shoppers are confused by products that mimic the packaging of familiar brands.

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3. The British Brands Group was founded in 1994 as a non-profit-making membership organisation. It speaks on behalf of brand manufacturers and seeks to deepen understanding of how brands benefit consumers, society and the economy through the provision of choice, value for money and innovation.

It represents its members collectively when commercial and regulatory issues threaten the ability of brands to deliver value and to be a positive force in society. It also provides the prime forum for its members on brand-related issues.

The British Brands Group is part of a global network of similar brand associations, and is the UK representative of AIM, the European Brands Association, based in Brussels.

More information on the Group can be found at www.britishbrandsgroup.org.uk.

For further information on the report, please contact:

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