

Product Claims

The importance of credibility and personal beliefs

Catherine Elms, Research Director



SPA
Future
Thinking



Making claims, factual or intangible, about your product can be a beneficial strategic route forward, for grabbing attention, providing that key USP, influencing purchase, or re-enforcing loyalty, through on-pack communication or advertising.

Claims can be found on many products, from the commonly purveyed 'no artificial preservatives' to bolder performance claims; for example, "an isotonic performance fuel to take you faster, stronger, for longer" for Lucozade Sport (though publicly rebuffed on BBC's Panorama).

However, we don't necessarily want to get involved in specification shouting matches, which not only have the likelihood of being 'outspecced', but also risk losing credibility and becoming meaningless from a consumer viewpoint.

Personal beliefs relating to the claim

Published research regarding consumer reaction to claims has shown that acceptance of claims is largely determined by personal beliefs relating to the claim as well as by the perceived fit between the product and the benefit.

Indeed, within the latter, the importance of the perceived fit indicates that unfamiliar or unnatural combinations stand a low chance for marketplace success.





Evaluability principle

Similarly worthy of consideration is the effect of the evaluability principle, particularly relevant for numerical-based claims leading to the impact of 'proportion dominance'.

This asserts that when there is ambiguity about the quantity, then providing the figure as a percentage becomes evaluable and therefore more attractive.

As an example, a respondent may find it hard to evaluate '3g of fat per serving' but when cited as 2% fat (or 98% fat-free), the provision of context enables evaluation and in all probability, a more attractive offering.



These findings also ring true with our own experience of motivational claims research:

Those providing a credible, clear, and direct benefit are likely to rate highest (we need to ensure the claim itself is appealing rather than shouting about something with little impact or appeal):

- Be sure to provide the benefit of the feature, rather than just the feature itself (unless this is very obvious or familiar, e.g. no artificials, low fat, etc)
- Positively address any concerns consumers may have with these types of products

Providing the context aids appeal of the claim:

- For example, calcium references that align to 'glass of milk' help to position the benefit in the consumer's mind

Claims that don't tend to work as well as others:

- More 'wishy-washy', non-specific claims
- Those that lead to a 'so what?' conclusion
- Similarly, those with no obvious benefit to the consumer
- And if the claim is simply not understandable, relevant, or credible, it is unlikely to perform well.





Understanding the role of the claim

In addition to determining which claims are most motivating, understanding the role of the claim is also important.

For example, claims of 'no artificial' often rank highly as being appealing, though they also lack differentiation. Nowadays these are likely to be seen as 'hygiene' claims, being required for purchase rather than driving it.



Selling a category

Similarly, claims may be seen to be doing a category job rather than being specific for the product in question. If you notice a jar of pasta sauce claiming to contain 1 of your 5-a-day, it is likely you could easily assume that all other brands and own label pasta sauces also contain the same health benefits.

In this case we need to be aware of the category role that some claims will play.

Understanding buyers and non-buyers

Examining performance among buyers and non-buyers further aids understanding of the role of the claims; determining which drive purchase versus those which are universally appealing.

Credibility of the claims and fit with product

The credibility of the claims and the fit with the products are other important factors to consider.

While a claim may be appealing, if it fails to drive acceptance when aligned with the product profile, the chances of success in the marketplace, as cited previously, are likely to be lower.

Here at SPA Future Thinking, as well as understanding these issues within claims research, we use our 'Taste Setters' segmentation to determine those claims with a greater likelihood of future success.

Taste Setters have been identified as those people who drive innovation success within food and drink and therefore enable us to understand those claims referencing new ingredients which may hold future mainstream appeal, while not currently widely understood or heard of.



About the Company



Catherine Elms, Research Director at SPA Future Thinking

Catherine is a Research Director within the FMCG business at SPA Future Thinking, and has 12 years' experience focussing on consumer research.

She is a quantitative specialist who takes a hands on approach to research, managing large client accounts alongside continued project involvement, ensuring high-quality outputs and provision of thorough and clear debriefs and recommendations.

Catherine's main focus is on new product development research, including concept and communication development, product performance and optimisation, and packaging evaluation. She is a full member of the MRS.



catherine.elms@spafuturethinking.com

+44 (0) 1865 336 400



SPA Future Thinking is dedicated to providing innovation, intelligence and inspiration through research that identifies new opportunities, evaluates your markets and drives business growth.

With combined industry experience of over 40 years and offices in the UK and Europe, SPA Future Thinking provide genuine research expertise and understanding across a wide range of industry sectors. Our staff have a mix of agency and client side experience, providing you with a better understanding of your business needs; we have the confidence to deliver not just findings but business recommendations that deliver success.

Our knowledge of fmcg, retail and shopper research extends from new product development, pack design and testing, and volumetric forecasting for product launches and category extensions, to understanding all aspects of the shopper journey.

For more information about the company please contact John Whittaker on +44 (0) 1865 336 400 or at john.whittaker@spafuturethinking.com

www.spafuturethinking.com

