Defining Sensory Triggers that Promote Brand Essence & Personality

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Background

In a crowded, competitive market of consumer products, innovation teams are attempting to create a unique emotional connection from their brand that emanates from all product elements – packaging, product, and advertising.

Gaining sensory-focused insight very early on in the development process provides inspiration and focus for the entire cross-functional project team. Understanding those sensory traits that both evoke and deteriorate the emotional need state, brand, or idea provides a framework of product design parameters, fosters creative ideation, and ultimately promotes the cohesion of all aspects of the product offering.

"Sensory Signals Methodology"

Product Dynamics has been experimenting with a qualitative approach that reveals sensory stimuli that elicit a specific emotional need state, brand, or idea through the senses. The working name for the methodology has been "Sensory Signals".

• An array of stimuli are evaluated, that are selected to stimulate the consumers' senses in a wide variety of ways. Providing stimuli helps consumers articulate their ideas and gives product development tangible examples to further explain consumer language.

• Aroma evaluation, rather than tasting is used, to enable consumers to evaluate a larger amount of samples before fatigue.

• Consumers focus on the provided territory and indicate whether each stimulus evokes it using a very simple scale to obtain quick emotional reaction.

• Group discussion follows to provide even more definition around the response.

• Results are maps of sensory characteristics which are strongest and weakest in eliciting the essence of the territory which gives foundation that can enhance the entire product offering.



Example – Sensory Signals Groups

Objective: Provide initial sensory inspiration for product, package, and concept development for several emotional territories.

Group Details: For each emotional platform, two groups of 8 targeted consumers (total n=16) participated in a 3 hr work session in a central location (Chicago, IL).

Consumer Pre-Work: Provided with a statement related to the topic and asked to:
• Describe a personal experience related to the statement
• Create a collage based on the emotions and sensory cues that represent the statement.



Task: Consumers were provided with a statement describing the emotional territory. Consumers evaluated stimuli in eight different sets using a 3-pt scale – represents, sort of represents, does not represent. Red, yellow, green stickers were utilized for a quick response. Group discussion followed individual evaluation.

Stimuli: Eight groupings of stimuli were evaluated by each consumer; two trays each for Appearance, Aroma, Texture, and Sensation totally 95 samples. Selection of samples was completed cross-functional team review of a large variety of products, ingredients, and materials. Subset of stimuli is shown below:

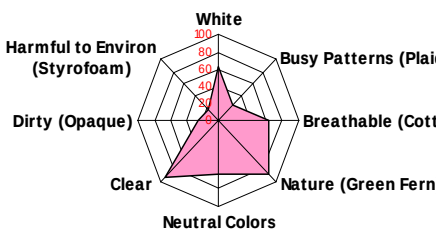
Appearance	Aroma	Texture	Sensation
Cotton	Broth	Pudding	Ice Water
Plaid	Ginger	Grape	Hot Water
Leather	Tropical Fruit	Dark Choc	Ambient Water
Cardboard	Citrus	Gelatin	Soda Water
Fur	Herb	Pita Chip	Horseradish
Mirror	Vegetable	Vaseline	Menthol Drop
Pulp	Vanilla	Sticky Tape	String Cheese
Styrofoam	Brown Spice	Silk	Alum
Clear Water	Chocolate	Sandpaper	Tabasco
Cloudy Water	Mint	Fur	Caffeine
Meta	Black Pepper	Kind Bar	Pop Rocks
Primary Colors	Lavender	Cotton Candy	Salt
Pastel Colors	Chili	Water	Sucrose
Neutral Colors	Butter	Hard Candy	Citric Acid

Data Analysis: Those samples that were rated "Represents" and "Does Not Represent" were used to create profiles. Only those responses for 65%+ Yes for each were included.

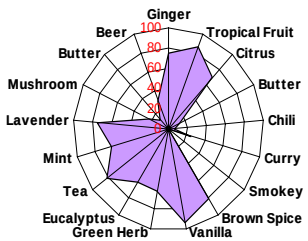
Results: Key sensory characteristics were used as preliminary design parameters for ideation and prototyping. Sensory signals that both represented and did not represent ***Purity*** are displayed below.

Summary of Findings – Sensory Signals for *PURITY*

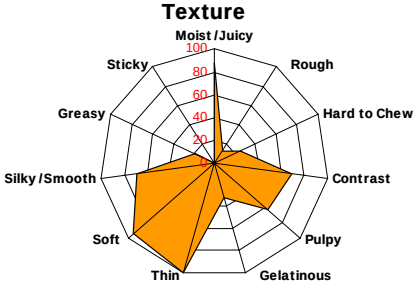
Appearance



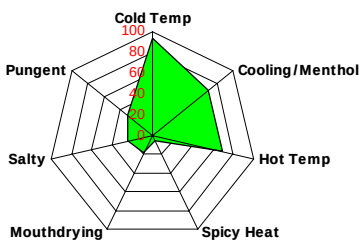
Aroma



Texture



Sensation



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