

A CENTURY OF CANDY BARS

by DAVID
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AN ANALYSIS OF WRAPPER DESIGN

Abstract

A Century of Candy Bars: An Analysis of Wrapper Design

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The purpose of this analysis was to gain a broad understanding of the design process of packaging in the confections (specifically candy bar) category. The aim was to, first, take an historical look at the development of the product category. Then, through the study of graphic design trends related to the product, understand what sociocultural, technical, and manufacturing events triggered such trends.

The research methods used to reach the final results of the study were both:

- qualitative – based on eight books, eight articles, and 15 websites related to the topic, as well as the observation of random retail candy isles and counter display methods, and;
- quantitative – based on the study of 444, collected, candy bar wrappers,

- 369 American wrappers,
- 75 European wrappers, and
- 47 candy bar sell-sheets.

The findings present a clear picture of an industry that relies heavily upon packaging as the main sales tool for reaching consumers. Because of the impulse-purchase, which the industry accounts for almost all of its sales, the package must communicate on its own merits – often without supporting media. Therefore, the design of such wrappers can be as important, if not more so, than the actual product.

The nature of the product – the fact that it is a sweet and historically given as a reward or act of affection – plays another important factor in regard to brand identity and management, and the necessity to keep brands (packaging) culturally relevant.

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Introduction

During the thirty minutes you spend on an average trip to the supermarket, about thirty thousand different products vie to win your attention and ultimately to make you believe in their promise. When the door opens, automatically, before you, you enter an arena where your emotions and your appetites are in play, and a walk down the aisle is an exercise in self-definition. Are you a good parent, a good provider? Do you have time to do all you think you should, and would you be interested in a shortcut? Are you worried about your health and that of those you love? Do you care about the environment? Do you appreciate the finer things in life? Is your life what you would like it to be? Are you enjoying what you've accomplished? Wouldn't you like something chocolate?⁽¹⁾



Candy bars are like no other product on our shelves. They are all basically shaped the same: small, narrow and long – bar shaped. They are contained, or wrapped, in similar packaging that consists of colorfully-printed paper. The candy itself consists of some variation of a few basic ingredients: chocolate, nuts, nougat, and caramel. They are all priced the same. If a Mars bar is eighty-nine cents, then so is a Butterfinger – regardless of ingredients, size or manufacturing techniques. Each candy bar has a name, distinct look, unique shape, and textural consistency and taste, which combine to define the bar's character. They all live and compete on the same shelf and this combined character is the brand and the brand is their one power and this power is defined in the mind of the consumer in its package.

Consumer products, through their packaging, must be easily recognizable and stand out from the competition on the shelves. If a product cannot be found, there will be another on the shelf

with the same qualities, for the same purpose, to take its place. The last thing a manufacturer wants is for the consumer to try another brand. When this happens there is a likely possibility that the purchaser will find that the new product is better and will change their brand preference.

At the same time a product must be able to keep up its “image” in the changing market place. There is a never-ending advance of new competition on the shelves, each with the latest and greatest of features and promises – a model of fashion. The tried and true products must somehow uphold their image in the face of this competition without damaging their brand and alienating loyal consumers. The consumers must always be able to recognize “their” brand, yet have a good feeling about their purchase. Also, the brand's image must be able to keep up with that of its consumer. We change and our products must change with us – and, change at the same rate. If a brand does not change the consumer may leave it



Twix caramel bar package from its release in the 1980's (above) and the current foiled package (below).

behind and try something new (a product that understands where they are in their life and can live and grow with them).

All successful consumer brands, the ones we have grown up with, the ones we know like the back of our hand, have all succeeded in growing with their users. Brands are living and breathing entities and if they are not treated as such they will die. However beautiful, the girl who wears the same dress to the dance each weekend will eventually quit getting asked to dance. Products are the same way. When consumers feel like the product has “quit trying” there is a feeling of resentment and they are likely to give up on the product, no matter how loyal they may have been. When a brand believes that it is beyond this and that they have taken a place on the shelves that cannot be replaced – they are in trouble.

The fashion world is an extreme example of keeping-up. Clothing changes with each season and as soon as something is “in” – then, it is “out.” However, there are

long standing brands in the fashion world that continue to be on top. They are able to do this because the core of their brand does not change. Some fashion brands are elegant, some are classic, some are smart, some are sexy, and some are rugged. You can probably pick one very good example for each of the characteristics mentioned and these are the names we know best.

As stated, fashion is an extreme example and consumer goods do not have the luxury (or burden) of changing at that pace. When shopping for everyday items, a consumer requires a certain measure of comfort. The current state of life (of living) is chaotic for most people today. We are taxed with too many choices. Technology, in the name of progress, is at a fevered pace and information is introduced and attained on a scale we cannot keep up with. Because of this, people need (more than ever) to believe in and trust the products they consume.

Packages are an inescapable part of modern life. They are omnipresent and

invisible, deplored and ignored. During most of your waking moments, there are one or more packages within your field of vision. Packages are so ubiquitous that they slip beneath conscious notice, though many packages are designed so that people will respond to them even if they're not paying attention.⁽²⁾ We all have at least one candy bar that we have grown-up with, and that candy bar's wrapper has gone through several changes throughout your life – you may have noticed the changes or you may not have. However, that candy bar has held the same place in your heart and mind as it did the first time you ate one. This is the power of the brand.

Supermarket shoppers are a good deal more rational than bugs drawn to a particular kind of blossom. Insects exhibit a level of brand loyalty of which marketers can only dream. But package designers use many of the same devices of color, pattern, and shape to short-circuit consumers' minds and induce engagement with the product through its package. Their goal is not so much the safeguarding of the

particular contents of the package but promoting widespread, repeated use of the product. Their goal is not to make the product jump off the shelf, but to attract the sort of people who are likely to be interested in it and perhaps make it part of their lives.⁽³⁾ When you encounter the candy at the counter it is the package that holds this brand power. It may be your favorite, or a spin-off of your brand, or something entirely new. If you see it, if you pick it up, whether you buy it or not, the package has done its job.

Once you open the package the product is naked and must stand upon its own merits – the package becomes invisible. On the surface the first role of packaging is to protect the product above all else. We know the modern package is a major branding-tool, salesman, and educator. And, in the case of candy bars the packaging holds no usefulness once opened. The package becomes trash. I will refer to candy bar packaging as a “wrapper” often in this study because, above all its other roles, a candy bar is

meant to be unwrapped – like a gift. When you unwrap a birthday gift and toss the wrap, is it worth it? Sure it is. Because what is inside is so good. We are modern consumers and trash is part of our culture. We rarely think of a candy wrapper as trash, but ultimately this is what it is. When an oyster shell is cracked and the animal inside is consumed, the reproduction of the species is not enhanced. But when the orange peel is split and the seeds within are dispersed, the reproductive cycle of the orange continues.⁽⁴⁾ Protection is a role of packaging, but it is not the only one. Packages are made to be opened.

Notes

- ⁽¹⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 1.
- ⁽²⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 2.
- ⁽³⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 44.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 43.

History

Wrap It Up

A gift is something special, even precious.

At one time, before Hershey was a household name, chocolate was something for the wealthy. It was expensive – even rare. It was not for everyone and those who could afford it still regarded it as a treat. “Good things come in small packages,” says the cliché. This statement is actually part of a more general truth, which is that precious things come in packages. Things that are very expensive tend to be purchased and used in very small quantities, and it is necessary to hold such commodities in a way that keeps them from being wasted. Moreover, there seems to have been a desire throughout history and across cultures to express the preciousness of the contents by making the container special as well.⁽¹⁾

This premise still holds true and the modern package in our culture occupies a stronger presence than anytime in history. Furthermore, candy bars are still a treat, and somewhere in our psyche, still precious.

City Life & Country Life

“The air was thick with an all-embracing odor, and aroma composed of dry herbs and wet dogs, of strong tobacco, green hides and raw humanity,” wrote Gerald Carson in his *History of the Country Store*. This statement has very much to do with why packaged goods became such a success in the United States. Culture was divided among that of big city life and the rural lifestyle of farming communities. Although goods were acquired and used in different ways for these communities, the nature and specific needs of each brought about, in parallel, the modern package.

The Industrial Revolution built city life in this country, and brought with it workers – immigrants. At its deepest level, the culture of American packaging deals with the issue of surviving among strangers in a new world. This is an emotion with which anyone who has been touched by modernity can identify. It lives buffeted by change; people seek the safety and reassurance that packaged products offer. American packaging, which has always

sought top appeal to large numbers of diverse people, travels better than that of most other cultures.⁽²⁾

In the city, the corner store was frequented several times a day. The limited space of city living and advent of central heating made “keeping” food more difficult than in the past and the convenience of the corner store became very important. People would often buy only what they needed for a meal – most did not own an electric refrigerator – often children would make the trip. The price of goods differed for customers, depending on the method of payment. Cash, for instance, would likely get you a better price than credit. Also, quality and consistency was a concern. Merchants bought in bulk and from several sellers, so the flour bought one week may not be the same flour bought the next. The goods yielding the best profit margin would be in the barrels.

The rural areas had similar problems. Not frequented as much as the corner store, the general store often used trade

as a means of payment. Customers would barter their surplus eggs for their neighbors' surplus butter. The problem with this system was that the customers often traded less-than-quality products, and a general sense of mistrust became a growing problem.

The intimate relationship that developed between the customers and the owner of the general or corner store was both a strength and weakness of the system. The strength was that of ongoing personal association. The problem was that, like all relationships (especially those that involve money) there were opportunities for abuse.⁽³⁾ When nickel candy bars and other packaged goods appeared on the shelves of these stores, the customer knew that not only were they were getting a quality product, but that it would taste like it did the last time they bought one, and more importantly, that it was going to cost five-cents – just like it said on the package. This consistency put a sense of power and freedom into the minds of consumers. No surprises meant that the

shoppers knew what they could afford and what they were getting – a welcome shift from the previous system.

The Nickel Bar

In the 1890's most of America had never heard of chocolate.⁽⁴⁾ In 1890, Milton Hershey made his first nickel bar, which single-handedly changed the way Americans ate chocolate. It became something that everyone could afford. Hershey turned-out chocolate bars the way Ford turned-out automobiles. Hershey brought milk chocolate to the masses.

Hershey was a great marketer as well as manufacturer. He believed in his product wholeheartedly and took every opportunity to publicize it. Early on, he bought a truck (rare at that time) to drive through the countryside selling his chocolate. For many, this was the first time they had the chance to taste chocolate – and probably the first time they saw a truck. Painted black with “Hershey's Cocoa” emblazoned on each side, the car

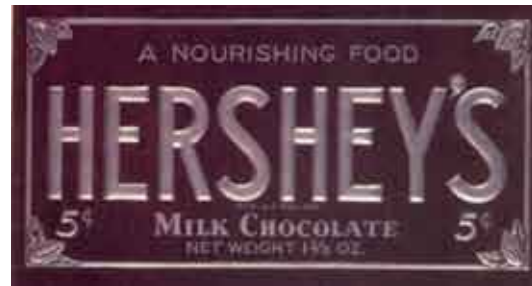
toured the state for the next year, selling chocolate to the crowds that invariably gathered to see it. Hershey also bought up billboards and took out newspaper advertisements, but he insisted that the best publicity of all was making a quality product.⁽⁵⁾

Success

Hershey's vision was to get the bars everywhere – not just in traditional candy stores. Working through the new retail brokers, it was Hershey who brought the candy bar to the groceries, drug stores and gas stations and made it available almost everywhere we look.

Henceforth, solid chocolate would be the province of the common man, available in every five-and-dime from Pennsylvania to Oregon. The Hershey name quickly became synonymous with the product, and today, nearly one hundred years after it was first introduced, “Hershey” means a chocolate bar to almost every American.⁽⁶⁾

By packaging, pricing and distributing chocolate the way M.S. Hershey did, he



The bar that started it all – Hershey's famous, milk chocolate "nickel bar".



A typical sales sheet targeted at retailers during the candy boom. Like this one for SevenUp most showed an illustration of the box in which the candy would be displayed – this “display” was a value benefit for the store owner. Retail candy bars are still shipped and displayed this way.

was able to put himself in total control of how his product was being interpreted. This branding took away the middleman and fostered a direct and controllable relationship with the consumer. If the quality of his product could be relied upon time and time again – the trust of this relationship would be built and the brand would solidify. Other manufacturers saw what Hershey was doing and many soon followed this formula.

Variety is the spice of life, and the more consumers had to choose from the better. The “bar” became a standard, the price became a standard, the ingredients a standard – all that was left for the consumer was to choose. Simon N. Patton says, in his work, *The Consumption of Wealth*, “It is not the increase of goods for consumption that raises the standard of life, but the mental state of a man after the order of his consumption has been changed so as to allow greater variety. The standard of life is determined not so much by what a man has to enjoy, as by the rapidity with which he tires of any

one pleasure. To have a high standard of life means to enjoy a pleasure intensely and to tire of it quickly.”⁽⁷⁾ This statement from 1889, seemingly even more relevant today, was very much about the current state of culture in America. The Industrial Revolution brought with it a sense of hope for the common people and this hope was coaxed along through the simplest of pleasures and conveniences – even a candy bar.

The Candy Boom

Hershey concentrated all of his efforts on mass producing – limiting the number of items and keeping prices affordable. This strategy was radically different from the rest of the industry’s. Until Hershey came along, no one had ever considered national distribution.⁽⁸⁾

Of course, many other factors made this strategy feasible. Railroads provided the quick and inexpensive transport of bulky items. Urbanization broke ties of family and community, making it necessary for people to trust strangers and to be

susceptible to advertising in new, populist communications media. The move from subsistence living to wage-earning jobs allowed little time for people to make things for themselves, and transformed necessities into consumables. The sheer productiveness of new machinery and production systems in turn made it necessary to consume items at a faster pace, merely to keep the machinery going.⁽⁹⁾ And again, with this system the wholesaler was unable to negotiate – a Hershey bar was a Hershey bar. Once the brand was built, customer-demand drove what was stocked by the stores.

So far, Milton Hershey was the only candy maker selling product nationwide. The rest of the industry limited sale to local merchants, largely because their products didn't stay fresh long enough to be shipped any great distance. However, it did not take long for others to follow Hershey's lead. Candy makers were scrambling to find the next success. Most notable was Forrest Mars, whose Milky Way was the next big thing.



A Milky Way bar circa 1949. Mars has typically used a one-layer wrap for their candy bars – unlike Hershey's foil-under-sleeve approach.

The new creation was strikingly different from its competitors. First, its solid milk-chocolate coating kept the candy bar fresh. Secondly, malt-flavored nougat – a whipped filling made of egg whites and corn syrup – was the bar’s main ingredient. Furthermore, the Milky Way was much bigger and tasted just as chocolaty, but cost much less to produce.

“People walked up to the counter and they’d see this little flat Hershey bar for a nickel and right next to it, a giant Milky Way. Guess which one they’d pick?” bragged Forrest.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Mars company was located in Chicago, Illinois and by the 1930’s there were a multitude of candy manufactures in the Windy City. The central location, rail yards, and climate made this the premier American city for candy-making. Chicago is, to this day, the heart of candy-making and home of the annual Candy Manufacturers Association trade fair.

War

So many of the world’s innovations come from the funding of governments in the name of war. Candy bars are no exception. In fact, the candy bar as we know it would not have come about without war. Soldiers needed “cheap, high-calorie, non-perishable foods,” and the United States government went to Milton Hershey for the answer. The candy was also considered a morale booster and was immensely popular among soldiers. We can still conjure up images of soldiers handing out candy bars to the children of war-ravaged cities.

It was Hershey Food Corp. that held the prestigious reputation for serving as the U.S. military’s chief candy-maker. Although Mars worked closely with the U.S. Army in the early 1940’s, placing M&M’s in C rations during World War II, Hershey’s relationship with the Pentagon extended back more than eighty years.⁽¹¹⁾ Hershey had been supplying candy to the U.S. Army as far back as 1914 for use in the field during World War 1.

Many of the difficulties of the manufacturing process and of distribution were overcome while trying to hurdle the demands of battle. Innovations such as cellophane wrappers and wax-coated cardboard were invented to seal Hershey's Field Ration D bar. The entire package could be immersed in water for an hour and remain unspoiled, just as the government required.⁽¹²⁾ Because of Hershey's modern factory, the military, at the onset of World War II, ordered the facility into full-scale production of the new ration bar.

The immediate post-war periods brought about a surge in popularity of candy bars in America. Purchasing a Hershey bar became as patriotic as reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.⁽¹³⁾ Soldiers brought home a sweet tooth for the candy and were often depicted in propaganda illustrations and advertisements with the candy. Children picked up on this, and soon eating a candy bar became a badge of honor.



Candy companies used America's patriotism as an angle in their advertising during World War II.

Refrigeration

Another key innovation that contributed to the success of the candy bar, nationwide, was refrigeration and air conditioning. Manufacturing, shipping and warehousing the number of chocolate bars that companies like Hershey and Mars were producing could not have been accomplished without this technology.

Before the advent of air-conditioning, chocolate manufacturers could not conceive of selling chocolate bars in such hot climates as the southern states. When temperatures climbed above 78 degrees Fahrenheit, the melting point of cocoa butter, Hershey, Mars, Nestle and others simply shut their doors and halted production until the return of cooler weather.⁽¹⁴⁾

Automation

To produce in mass-scale quantities, the big manufacturers needed to automate their processes. The innovation in this segment of their business was a constant concern and struggle. Being on top

was dependent upon the processes of manufacturing – and automating their factories as much as possible would get a more consistent product to the consumer at a lower cost.

The machinery used in these factories was often engineered in-house and was extremely secretive. Having the next big machine meant coming out ahead of the competition. Manufacturers were often in a frenzy over how to keep up with the next innovation. Developing a competitive product often meant engineering the machinery to produce it as well. Because of this highly competitive market, companies were continuously re-inventing key processes. If you could not manufacturer, wrap and ship a new product, you did not have a new product.

“We’d had one small enrober in Minneapolis,” Forrest recalled, referring to the machine that coats the candy in chocolate. “But we had a whole line of them here. And we’ve got wrapping machines that’ll wrap an uneven bar. We

knew how to wrap a standard item, but
how to wrap a bar that's not always quite
the same shape? We learned that.”⁽¹⁵⁾

Notes

- ⁽¹⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 32.
- ⁽²⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 7.
- ⁽³⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 95.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 84.
- ⁽⁵⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 50.
- ⁽⁶⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 110.
- ⁽⁷⁾ Simon N. Patton, *The Consumption of Wealth*, Publications of the University of Pennsylvania, 1889.
- ⁽⁸⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 109.
- ⁽⁹⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 55.
- ⁽¹⁰⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 55.
- ⁽¹¹⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 8.
- ⁽¹²⁾ Details of Hershey's Field ration D provided by Samuel Hinkle in his unpublished manuscript, pp. 141–15, pp. 387–88.
- ⁽¹³⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 10.
- ⁽¹⁴⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 11.
- ⁽¹⁵⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 57.

Commercial Packaging

Packing Perfection

The early 1900's were a time of great change for the industry, as sales exploded and mass-production technology began to replace traditional methods of handcrafting candies. In 1903, the total value of candy shipments nationwide was less than \$100 million. Two decades later that figure had almost tripled, boosted by World War 1 and the first great wave of industrial innovation.⁽¹⁾

The success of this industry, and the general “boom” of packaged consumables, brought about a huge change in America – the expectation by consumers for perfection. A neatly stacked tower of candy bars on the counter of the drugstore looked perfect. They were all the same from store-to-store and state-to-state and customers expected the product inside to have the same standards of consistency as the package. This may seem odd to us now, but until the “packaged-good” became prominent in our culture, people bought homemade candies that were, each

one, truly individual. Each candy was mixed, rolled, and stuffed by hand. Then, when these processes became automated the candy bars were as perfect as Henry Ford's automobiles rolling off the assembly line.

Manufacturers understood this change and were quick to take it to heart as a key element of the success of their business. More importantly, they understood that the brand depended on this sense of perfection more than any other factor. Homemade was out – modern was in. This was not a case of the cold machinery against the little old candy-making grandma. Instead, it was more of a want of being part of the future – a better, more perfect world. “My son is going to rip this open and put it in his mouth so fast he won't even see the end,” said a plant manager on a recent tour. “But that doesn't matter. It's my job to make sure that if he does look, all he sees is smooth chocolate.” ⁽²⁾

Each of the candy bar companies knew who their competitors were and also had a very clear understanding that they were being closely scrutinized by consumers. It was one bar against the other – and quality, in every sense, became paramount to being on-top. Unlike laundry soap, for example, it is impossible to conceal the imperfections of a candy bar. There are no outside factors, that get between the bar and your mouth. The candy is savored as all senses come into play. Do you really know if your bath towels are less clean than the last time they were washed?

Mars was the first candy company to date its products and seize them from distributors if they had not sold in time. Forrest pioneered the use of computers on the production line to measure the consistency of his output. If a 3 Musketeers was a fraction of a gram too light, it was pulled from the line. If a Snickers didn't have exactly 15 peanuts on top, it was rejected.⁽³⁾ The fun family business of candy making is now high-tech in every way – innovation is still king.



Substrates

New products such as DuPont's moisture-proof cellophane, introduced in 1927, gave food manufacturers new options for packaging their goods. Such new choices were not developed and used solely for aesthetic purposes. Cellophane, for example, held many advantages for packaging food: it kept the product fresh; was a barrier for odors; was transparent, which allowed designers to use the film as a window (now we could see the product inside the package), and not to be overlooked, made the product “sparkle.”

Another, even earlier, innovation that brought a sparkle to product was tinfoil. Initially developed in 1840 for a candy maker in France for wrapping candy, the new substrate held many of the same qualities and advantages that cellophane would a century later.

Tinfoil was a mainstay of candy bar packaging. Hershey, Nestlé and Cadbury used it in nearly all of their packages. The practice of layering – wrapping the bar

first in tin foil, and covering that with a paper sleeve – was developed by Cadbury in 1850, before even Hershey.

Until very recently this process, which was extremely effective for protecting the product (as well as looking great), was dominant in the candy bar industry. Now, spurred by consumer demand for tamper-resistant solutions and for lowering packaging costs for manufacturers, new substrates have been developed that have successfully replaced the layering process.

In the design process of packaging, the material is usually the first consideration. The properties of each substrate must be carefully measured. The design team must decide which materials will best suit the current product. Cost is a major factor in the decision-making process.

The following excerpts are from an interview with Sandy Hand, Director of the Package Development Group for Hershey Foods Corp., who spoke extensively with Patrick Henry of

Packaging Design Magazine in January of 2004. Hand, who earned a degree from Michigan State University's School of Packaging, worked for Unilever, a major consumer-products company, for nine years prior to joining Hershey in her present position in March 2002.

Whenever the package development group tackles a new project, its first concern is to make the best call with respect to packaging material. In the past, the group tended to select packaging materials on a project-by-project basis. Now, however, Hershey is moving toward standardizing its choices so that the same kinds of material can be used for as many packages as possible. My group, which does all of the specifying, is always trying to find a more cost-effective [packaging] structure without impacting marketing, manufacturing, or product quality.

When creating a package, the choice is between accommodating the design to the chosen packaging material or basing the selection of the material on the design.

In the past, Hershey often utilized metallized film because it offers “significantly better” barrier-protection qualities than other substrates. Designers like it because it’s attractive and because it enables them to achieve special effects. But metallized film is also more expensive than other materials, so Hershey plans to reduce its use in the future and has not made a wholesale commitment to it.⁽⁴⁾

Manufacturing Secrets

New substrates, such as the film now used to wrap the Hershey bar, often require new equipment or modifications to existing equipment in order to handle the material. In fact, Hershey had to purchase new machinery for mass-production when they switched substrates and changed the design.

New processes are constantly being developed for the candy-making industry and the practice is infamously secretive. For years Hershey and Mars even had “spies” on their payrolls who tried to uncover either the next big product or the

secrets of the competitions’ manufacturing processes.

Both companies design all of their own candy-making equipment in-house and each have their own department of engineers for this purpose. This same team of engineers is on-call to fix any production problems as they arise. The reasoning behind this internal solution is to closely guard and retain possession of these industry secrets.

If Mars needs outside contractors to fix a particular problem, it insists on blindfolding the alien workers and escorting them through the plant to the area in question.⁽⁵⁾

Mars’ M&M’s are perhaps one of the most famous candy breakthroughs, not only for their candy shell, but for the unique and very precise method in which Mars stamped each candy with a perfect “M.” Mars developed this technique solely to prevent counterfeiting of the candies – if the competition figured out how to

reproduce the candies they would surely be stumped by their marking secret.

Forrest Mars was very proud of this process and kept a close watch on quality control. A former employee recalled being awoken in the middle of the night by Forrest who had just bought a packet of M&M's at a convenience store – it seemed that the “legs” on one of the *M*'s were missing. He wanted the manager to go to the plant immediately and order a recall on the whole batch.⁽⁶⁾ Mars understood the importance of each little *M* and that protecting that mark was crucial to protecting the brand he worked so hard to establish. Ironically, the technology and equipment used to manufacture M&M's were given to Mars by Hershey during World War II in a patriotic gesture to help the war effort.



New equipment installed by Mars in 1958 made the factory the world's largest and most “productive.” The time it took to make each bar was reduced from sixteen hours to thirty-five minutes.⁽⁷⁾

It cannot be understated how important the role of packaging is to the success of a product. The package (and whether one could successfully mass-manufacture it) can literally kill a would-be success. The story of Lifesavers candies is a classic case in point.

Lifesavers were originally packed in a glued, cardboard box. The problem was that as they sat on the shelf, the taste of the glue migrated to the candies and made them inedible. Meanwhile, the mint taste migrated to the cardboard, where it did no good. Faced with grocers' refusal to stock the candy, the founders were able to sell the company to a group of partners who were apparently unaware of the problem. In fact, the technical solution was quite easy. The candies were wrapped in metal foil, which retained their flavor and kept foreign flavors out. The package was easily resealed. The cardboard box was discarded, and a paper collar was substituted.⁽⁸⁾ In this case, the wrapper not only saved the product, but it added value and convenience, which has now come to be expected by consumers in a package.

A variety of different packages in the mint category have emerged since the success of Lifesavers (who still use the same wrapping method). TicTac's, Smints, and most recently, Altoids have relied solely on the uniqueness of their package to sell candy.

Wrapping

There are many instances in which the package makes the product. Brach's candies (not a candy bar manufacturer) found overwhelming success with their method of wrapping individual candies such as caramels and mints. Brach's method for producing wrapped candies eventually made it the nation's biggest seller of bagged sweets.⁽⁹⁾ They did not invent a great candy, produce something new or even make the candy better – they just knew how to wrap it. The convenience of the wrapped candies for consumers made all the difference. Now, you could keep a few mints in your pocket, lint-free.

The benefit of protection was the premise for wrapping candy for mass distribution. Soon after, consumers and manufacturers alike realized the added advantage of “convenience” in many of the packages being produced - such as Brach’s had. The next realization of manufacturers (and consumers on a less-conscience level) is the idea of a wrapped item as a gift. It is actually the act of unwrapping something sweet that brings about the feelings of product as “gift” – yet unwrapping a package of soap, for instance, will not conjure up the same feelings.

From the beginning, candy companies used pleasing graphics to present their confections. Some even decorated the package with illustrations of ribbons and bows – typical of traditional gift-wrapping. Boxed chocolates and upscale candies still use this graphic treatment. The ritual of gift giving may be only a thinly disguised excuse for consuming even more intensely. By wrapping gifts, people identify themselves not with products but with families and friends,

and the gift-giving does become a ritual of tribute and cohesion.⁽¹⁰⁾

A substantial portion of the modern candy wrapper is dedicated to educating the consumer. Before government standards for listing ingredients, and later, nutritional information, were put into action, companies used this “extra” space, usually the back of the package, for promotional display. Advertisements for other products and promotional incentives often were the subject. Shoppers rely on information found on the current wrapper as a tool. We are now a health-conscience, label-reading society and this information makes purchasing fast and risk-free. If all of the information you need to know about a product is at hand (ingredients; calories; allergens, and now “carbs”) you don’t need to think about your purchase. Having this information on the wrapper only helps to build trust in the consumer and, in turn, helps build the brand.



Nutrition facts and ingredients now cover almost all of the back of a candy wrapper. Before these government regulations were mandated the space was often used for promotion, sweepstakes offers, magic tricks, puzzles and even collectible trading cards.

Across Cultures

Few experiences in contemporary life offer the visual intensity of a Safeway, a Kroger's, a Pathmark, or a Piggly Wiggly.⁽¹¹⁾ Although the elements of candy bar packaging differ slightly from culture to culture, the main ingredients are similar; bright colors, logo-type name treatments and relative size are constants across the category.

A big difference in the approach of candy wrappers between Europe and the United States is the use of ingredient-illustrations on the front of the packages. Many of the differences in packaging, for the same product, are this illustrative treatment. A candy bar in Europe, which contains nuts for instance, hosts an illustration of the nut integrated into the logo-type. This same package in the United States presents only the logo. The close proximity of countries and languages in Europe make this treatment a visual tool for consumers. Candy bar brands typically have non-descriptive names and shoppers can see what's on the inside without having to

read the ingredients. In America, the real estate of the package is dedicated solely to distinguishing the brand name.

The United States and Japan, the world's two leading industrial powers, have almost opposite approaches to packaging. Japan's approach is far more elaborate than America's, and is shaped by rituals of respect and centuries-old traditions of wrapping and presentation. Packaging is explicitly recognized as an expression of culture in Japan and largely ignored in America. Japanese packaging is designed to be appreciated; American packaging is calculated to be unthinkably accepted.⁽¹²⁾

One example is Japan's Crunky Kids bar by the Lotte candy company. This elaborate package incorporates a box with a slide-out drawer that safely keeps the candy in place. This method elicits a different kind of consumption than American candy. The Crunky Kids package encourages the consumer to appreciate, enjoy, and even save some for later. American packaging elicits



This comparison of American (top) and European wrappers (below) shows the use of "ingredient illustration" as an element of cross-cultural wrapper design. Where different languages flourish in the same geographical area, this treatment serves as a quick visual reference of ingredients.

immediate consumption. Even those American packages which are meant to be resealed, are often engineered to be ineffective and therefore useless. “[The Crunky Kids package] works a lot more effectively than the little ‘fold in flap’ contraptions that are on most boxes of American chocolate.”⁽¹³⁾

Although this culture of consumption is a major cause of America’s environmental problems – the abundance of landfills – the industry is, nevertheless, taking measures to address this concern. Regulations have forced manufacturers to become more environmentally-friendly and the practice has been generally embraced by the industry. The new Hershey bar has one less layer of wrapping – this design, of course, saves the candy company money.

Business & Science

Market researchers have conducted surveys of consumer wants and needs, and consultants have studied photographs of families’ kitchen cupboards and medicine

chests to get a sense of how products are used. Test subjects have been connected to pieces of heavy apparatus that measure their eye movement, their blood pressure or body temperature, when subjected to different packages.

Psychologists get people to talk about the packages in order to get a sense of their inner-most feelings about what they want. Government regulations and private health and safety advocates worry over package design and try to make it truthful. Stock-market analysts worry about how companies are managing their “brand equity,” that combination of perceived value and consumer loyalty that is expressed in advertising but embodied in packaging. The retailer is paying attention to the packages in order to eliminate those that don’t sell or aren’t sufficiently profitable. The use of supermarket scanners generate information on the profitability of every cubic inch of the store. Space on the supermarket shelf is some of the most valuable real estate in the world, and there are always plenty

of new packaged products vying for display.⁽¹⁴⁾ Candy bars are big business and there are many people who spend their time protecting and projecting the continued growth of the trade. These myriad efforts have been, and continue to be, instrumental to the industry's success.

Notes

- ⁽¹⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 167.
- ⁽²⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 187.
- ⁽³⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 188.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Patrick Henry, “Designing to the Requirements of A Consumer Giant: An Interview with Hershey Foods Corp.’s Sandy Hand, Director, Package Development Group,” *Packaging Design Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2004.
- ⁽⁵⁾ The description of how Mars deals with outside contractors was provided by several ex-employees and confirmed by one contractor who was assigned to fix machinery in the Hackettstown facility.
- ⁽⁶⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 187.
- ⁽⁷⁾ Myron Banks, “Mars to Expand Factory,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 6, 1958.
- ⁽⁸⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 110.
- ⁽⁹⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 168.
- ⁽¹⁰⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 31.
- ⁽¹¹⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 1.
- ⁽¹²⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 7.
- ⁽¹³⁾ Jack Szwegold, Japanese Candy and Gum GO!, <http://www.cardhouse.com/x13/candy.htm>
- ⁽¹⁴⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 6.

The Hershey Bar: A Case Study

In 2003 Hershey's changed it's Milk Chocolate bar packaging. The first time I saw it I thought it was a different product – a new candy bar from Hershey's. It looked like it might be a new Hershey Dark Chocolate or some new "rich" blend of exotic chocolate. I thought this mostly because of the color difference. It looked "richer" and "darker"; the package was glossy and a deeper brown than the regular Hershey Bar. I picked it up to confirm my suspicions.



"Hershey's Milk Chocolate. NET WT. 1.55 OZ. (43g)."
That's all it read. I flipped it over: nutrition facts; web address; toll-free phone number; ingredients (which I quickly scanned for anything out of the ordinary), and UPC code. Nothing was different. Hershey had changed the long-unchanged wrapper.

I had observed how several of Hershey's other brands (Mr. Goodbar, Kit Kat, even Reese's Cups), changed to the shiny, sealed bags. Yet, the flagship, Hershey's Milk Chocolate, had until now, remained unchanged.

Now, this may not seem like such a big deal. After all, it is the same candy, same size and probably fresher and safer (tamper-resistant) in its new sealed bag. It was for our own benefit. When you think of a chocolate bar — you think of a Hershey bar. The package is truly an icon and people attach emotions to such tangible things as candy bar packages. This is especially true of a package that we have known all of our lives, and one that will generally have good memories attached to it. After all, this is a candy bar! When researching the new package, I tried to acquire several of the old bars, which at the time were still being phased-out. I found this harder than I had imagined. People were apparently hoarding the old bars. Suddenly, a candy bar was a collector's item. One candy store worker said that someone had bought all they had — eight cases.

I want to illustrate, using this particular package, what subtle changes can mean to the consumer and how our senses play into how we experience a package and to a larger extent, how we experience the brand.

SIGHT

First, you see it. It's on the counter at the gas station.

While waiting in line, you glance down then quickly look away. You were only getting a fill-up. You had just finished lunch, and you don't need a candy bar.

You can still see it out of the corner of your eye. It really is harmless. You decide to pick it up and put it on the counter. "Just the gas and... this."

That is how it is done. The selling of candy bars to the extent that Hershey sells candy bars relies solely on putting the product somewhere (anywhere) where it will be hard not to see. Candy bars are an impulse buy. The top candy-makers figured this out ages ago, and when they did, the packaging became essential.

The package is everything. Before anyone defined what "brand" was, Hershey had it. Forget chocolate syrup, Reese's Cups, and the amusement park — they don't mean a thing. As big and diverse as the chocolate company now is (they have their own zip code), the Hershey brand is, to this day, wrapped up in a neat little brown rectangle.

In the old package, the foil peaked out of the sides almost teasing you — it was accessible. All it said was "HERSHEY'S" in block silver type and "Milk Chocolate"

— because that is what it was. It claimed no more; it did not need to. It is one of the most recognizable products in the world and embodies the very essence of what quality means. The Hershey Bar is also a symbol of manufacturing and business excellence in America. It is the sweetest American dream to come true. The bar **is** the brand and they could not change that if they tried.

At first glance, the new wrapper is not all that different. It has the same colors and same typeface. It contains the same information and says the same thing. If you were looking for it you would certainly find one; if you were not looking for it you would still probably find one. However, the new wrapper is not all it's wrapped up to be.

Although it has gone through endless minor design changes over the years, the previous wrapper had retained all of essentials. The brown color remained unchanged and the fundamentals of the package (the foil wrapper and paper sleeve) had not been altered. For more than a century, Hershey's did not change those two major design elements.

Enter the new package. Here is what is different: First, it is no longer paper but some kind of cellophane. It is glossy and, therefore, promotes the reflection of light, which in turn alters the look of the graphics in different

circumstances. I noticed, in one instance when the temperature was hot, how the chocolate bar sort-of rose to the surface of the package and stuck. When this happens, you can see the ridges of the bar reflected off of the surface. It does not look fresh and new this way, but sort of melty and crinkled. The package changes for the worse. This never happened with the old package. In heat, it may have stuck to the foil, but the consumer would never have known because the paper sleeve concealed it. The old package would retain all of its puffy newness in most conditions.

In another more extreme condition (an unusually hot day), I noticed how the chocolate bar actually started to cave in on itself. It curled up on the edges to the degree a rocking chair's rungs would be shaped. This was at a time of transition, when the new package was still being introduced and the store still had the old package on the shelf — in the adjacent rack. In the very same environmental conditions, however, the old bar retained its shape. Which do you think looked more appealing?

I foresee this affliction ultimately as a major problem to control. The candy rack is usually slanted to such a degree that the bars slowly inch their way to the front of the box, replacing what's been removed. The old

paper package was slippery, and unaffected by heat and humidity, whereas the new cellophane tends to (besides curling up) stick to the other bars, making this move to the front of the box somewhat of a battle. What happens is that the box in which the new candy wrappers are displayed becomes jumbled-looking.

Another element of the bag, which comes into play here, is the “flap” which has replaced the neatly-tucked foil sides. This is where the bag is sealed with glue. There is no way to control these flaps. Some were bent up and some were bent down, and this adds to the awkwardness of the new package.

Color. *Although I’m sure the designers made every effort to keep the Hershey brown (which Hershey actually refers to as “burgundy”), the change of substrate has made it impossible. Because of the glossy cellophane the color looks darker. It is not unpleasant, but it’s different. For the Hershey bar, something as different as color is a big leap. The designers could argue all they want to, but the color is different. Perception is everything.*

Typography. *The Hershey font has not changed. It is even the exact same size. However, the letterforms have been visually extruded into three-dimensional*

space — our space. Is HERSHEY’S trying to reach out to us from the shelf? Does it need to? This is a very typical type-treatment in today’s packages where everything, it seems, is trying to jump off of the shelf. It is a trick. The other change in type is “Milk Chocolate” - formerly, MILK CHOCOLATE. Hershey went from an all san serif, uppercase design to an upper and lowercase serif font. The original treatment was brown lettering, which was outlined in white, on a silver box. This element was slightly off-center on the package to make room for the “NET WT.” — it was quirky, the way asymmetry can be. The new font is dead center and stark white. “Milk Chocolate” is now the strongest element on the package, making it very clear that, given the new design, it is in fact, still milk chocolate inside and not that elusive exotic blend.

The last visual difference is the perception of size. The Hershey Bar has always been the skinny, meek bar with the big bold taste. But, it never looked skinny. Now it does. Without the outer paper sleeve the package has lost a very important element.

TOUCH

Buying yourself a candy bar is an event, albeit a little event; it is, nevertheless, an event. When you pick up a candy bar at the checkout you are rewarding yourself

for a long day's work, for getting all the laundry done, or for "just being you." It's a small token of your appreciation for the sweetness of life — a gift.

We all know what a gift is. It is something good wrapped in paper, simple. And if you want what is inside, you must unwrap it. There is, unquestionably, a phenomenon to unwrapping a gift. There is anticipation, excitement and the warm feeling of appreciation for the gift giver. Someone who cares has lovingly taken the time to wrap this for you, so that you can enjoy ripping it apart to get the goods. We can compare this to a birthday gift that is wrapped in paper vs. a birthday gift given in a "gift bag." Actually, there is no comparison. I've had both and the gift bag is no fun. It's thoughtless, hurried and not as nice. Often, the gift bag is reused which goes against the premise that the expression of wrapping is special to one single person. A gift that is not wrapped is something less than a gift and, therefore, less special. The Hershey Bar had always been wrapped, and therefore needed to be unwrapped. That is what made it seem like a gift. Now, the Hershey Bar is bagged.

There is only one method for opening the new package, and there are instructions, printed on the back, to do so (the old wrapper did not require instructions). You

must "hold here" and "lift and pull here". It is awkward and does not work very well. Once open, the candy is sort of still tucked into part of the wrapper and must be removed, which can be messy (chocolate, as we know, is messy when handled too much). It is nearly impossible to tear the package where the manufacturer would like it to; and therefore it rips through the printing on the back. If you want to count calories halfway through the bar you must reconstruct the wrapper, like a jigsaw puzzle, in order to read it. Furthermore, once you open the new bar, the package is useless — I'll explain shortly.

This brings us to the act of unwrapping the "old" Hershey Bar, and because of this truly unique package, there are choices. America loves choices. There are two different layers of paper. The first layer is a foiled-paper that is neatly folded around the chocolate. The second layer is a paper sleeve that serves as the label. The most common way to get inside is to slide the foil-wrapped bar from the outer sleeve. Or in the less popular method, which is much like opening a letter, you can slit the outer sleeve open by inserting your finger between the sleeve and the foil, tearing across the bar lengthwise. With either method you still end up with the foil inside, which must, also, now be unwrapped.

The popularity of the first method is easily explained. First, there is the sensation of sliding the bar from the

sleeve. It's a two-handed job, one to loosely hold the sleeve and one to catch the foiled bar as you let it ease its way out. If you change your mind ("Maybe I should wait until after dinner"), just slide it back – no harm done, good as new, no big deal. This of course cannot be done once the sleeve is ripped, as in the second method. Another major benefit of this technique is that you are able to save some of the chocolate for later. You can eat half of the bar (it's possible) and then decide you've had enough. No problem, just fold the foil back around the uneaten portion and slide it back into the sleeve.

Let's say you finish the candy in one sitting, which, let's be fair, is usually the case. What then is the benefit to the first method? The answer is games – fun and games. You now have two unspoiled sheets of really cool paper. One is foil and the other has fancy graphics.

The following are some gaming ideas that I have witnessed and/or participated in for as long as I can remember:

Paper Airplane Races. Although the silver-foiled flying machine is much faster looking, the lighter weight, brown Hershey contraption inevitably overtakes it. Both are winners in their own right!

Paper Football. This game usually takes place in a school cafeteria and is played on the lunch table when

the food has been cleared. The boy or girl who has packed a Hershey Bar for desert will surely come out ahead in this game, due to the advantage of a much heavier paper stock than that of traditional notebook paper, which in this contest, is a sure advantage.

The Gag Bar. If you are careful to not accidentally damage the two wrappers, you can neatly refold the foil and insert it back into the sleeve. You now have a "Gag Bar." It looks just like a regular Hershey Bar, except that there is no chocolate inside. All that's left to do is find an unsuspecting target. If you are married, try your spouse. If not, a buddy or your father will do. Offer them the candy bar, "They were buy-one, get-one-free." When the target accepts the treat – Bamm, no candy! You win.

You could classify this gaming as a type of recycling. There are endless possibilities, and given the right state of mind you may be able to invent a game of your own.

The problem with the second method is that you are left with only one unmarred sheet of foil, the sleeve will have been torn and so there are fewer possibilities. Yet, it must be said that the sound of the sleeve ripping is a big part of the pleasure of method number-two and should not be dismissed.

SOUND

Besides the above-mentioned sound of ripping the candy wrapper, there is the sound of crinkling the paper when you are finished. Again, this is a very satisfying sensation. It's the finale of your candy-bar-eating experience. "You did it, kid!" Liken it to flattening a beer can on your forehead after the big chug. The new wrapper, try all you like, will, after being crumbled (which has half the aural resonance of the paper), spitefully unwrap itself.

SMELL

You cannot smell Hershey chocolate through the new package. I find it hard to believe, if smell were considered in the design (which it must have been) that Hershey would just dismiss it as superfluous. It is said that you can smell the town of Hershey from miles away. Now you can't even smell the chocolate if you try. The sensation of smell is elemental to how something will taste and is crucial to the anticipation of that first bite. The candy aisle of a grocery store or gas station has always smelled like a Hershey Bar and that part of the brand experience is gone with the new package.

TASTE

It tastes exactly the same. Who cares? I never even liked the taste of a Hershey Bar. What I always have liked is the idea of the Hershey Bar, and somehow this ideal will never be the same for me.

Whenever Mr. Hershey saw one of his chocolate wrappers, wet, discarded, and sticking to the street, he would bend down and turn it over, label up, and stick it back down. He knew the power of that little brown wrapper. I'm afraid that the new, water-resistant wrapper will just blow away in the wind and end up stuck in a storm fence, with weeds growing up around it. I'm afraid the new wrapper won't stick.

Your Favorite Brand

Brand New

“If you sell a hat for one dollar, you can sell it for two dollars if you stamp it with your name and make the public feel that your name stands for something.” Andrew Carnegie.

Brands did not exist: Candies were sold generically, as horehound drops or peppermint sticks or jellies, with no indication of who manufactured them. This began to change as purveyors developed unique, individual offerings—often sparked by innovations in manufacturing techniques.⁽¹⁾ Packaging is probably the most important aspect of brand identity for chocolate bars.

The Hershey bar became, arguably, the most recognizable brand in the world — all this without advertising. Hershey ran its first ads for the Hershey bar in 1970. Because of the fact that candy bars are everywhere in our world, we encounter them several times a day. If we stop for gas, pick up a prescription at the drug

store, or buy milk for the weekend, we wait in line and, inevitably, gaze at the candy rack. It is easy to understand how these packages are ingrained in our minds.

However, it is not as easy as it sounds for manufacturers. Brands' identities take years to build and the distribution channels and promotions must constantly be nurtured to retain this close relationship with the consumer. A select few make it and there are hundreds of retired products that do not make the cut.

Protecting & Nurturing

In 1930 Proctor & Gamble created a new kind of executive, the brand manager, whose role was to coordinate all of the decisions involved in producing and marketing a specific product.⁽²⁾ Today, each and every candy bar has a brand manager who integrates their brand into the culture, keeps the brand relevant, runs promotions and, most importantly, protects the brand's identity.

The role of the chocolate-bar brand manager is becoming increasingly complicated as the world gets smaller. The globalization of cultures is bringing these products to all ends of the world; and as media becomes more and more condensed, through the internet and satellite television, brands often reach the entire world with one single message, whether they would like to or not. The cultural differences often do not keep up with the speed of technology, and this is the phenomenon that brand managers now face. How do we speak to 50 cultures, in 50 languages and with 50 different sets of beliefs with one single message that still reflects our brand?

Mars realized this early-on when they won a sponsorship for the 1984 Olympics. They found that they could not advertise their products at the games because each country had a different package and often a different name (many were translations of the English name). The worldwide Olympic-audience would not recognize the product – the package.

“Twenty-five years ago I could have advertised in Holland that the Mars bar was giving you energy, and in Belgium I could have advertised the Mars bar was a sleeping pill, and nobody would have known because people couldn’t see each other’s television or read each other’s newspapers,” said Theo Leenders, Mars executive who oversaw the company’s Olympic sponsorship. “But with the advent of CNN and satellites and... the Olympics, we realized we had to harmonize our brands.”

Candy wrappers also differed from country to country, but Mars has changed that as well. Additionally, the company has spent millions of dollars teaching consumers how to pronounce the names of its candies. The name M&M’s, for example, caused a lot of confusion overseas. “In Italy we showed them the pack of M&M’s and asked customers to pronounce it, and they’d say, ‘mmm, mmm.’ Or ‘umee, ur, umee.’ They never said ‘M&M.’”

The name and wrapper-changes often lead to a drop in sales, at least initially. “It’s difficult overnight to convince consumers that the same brand they’ve been buying for 25 years will still be the same candy they want but with a different name,” said Leenders. “But we felt it was critical to create truly global brands to get the synergies from advertising and promotions.”⁽³⁾

Graphic Flavor

Success breeds imitation. Although hundreds of varieties of candy bars exist, there are a limited number of ingredients, and therefore, only a few distinct flavor combinations. The most successful brand in each flavor category has been copied, in some form or another, by almost all direct-competitive products.

This imitation is most noticeable in the use of color to denote a flavor of ingredient. Consumers are deeply affected by color on a subconscious level. Once the relationship between product and color becomes part of our culture, it is almost impossible to combat.

Because of Reese's Peanut Butter Cups, for instance, peanut-butter candy bar wrappers are often colored in the spectrum of orange. Even Reese's itself has tried to launch products that were not "Reese orange" and these packages were, each time, relaunched with the signature color. "I was in CVS the other day and they had both the orange and blue wrappers (of Reese's FastBreak) on the shelf in different places. Just for giggles, I asked the clerk the difference and she examined them closely for some time and couldn't tell me anything."⁽⁴⁾ The copycat packages are often copycat products and are launched to compete directly with the product they are copying – they rarely outsell the original brand.

In the late 1990's Hershey accused Mars of infringement and filed a lawsuit over the matter. Mars' peanut-butter flavored M&M's copied many of the elements of Hershey's Reese's Pieces – most blatantly Reese's orange.



Reese's decided to change it's Fast Break wrapper, soon after it the candy bar was launched, from a complimentary blue to orange – the brand's signature color.



Mars' M&M's packaging copies category leaders when defining color pallets for new product. Because of Reese's and Nestlé Crunch, consumers now identify peanut butter with orange and crisped rice with blue.

Hershey lawyers [pointed out] in their court filings that every version of Mars' new packaging for Peanut Butter M&M's had copied some element of Reese's. The package Mars used in its test marketing, for example, displayed the M&M logo in yellow outlined in brown (just like Reese's). The package used for the product's introduction had the yellow background (just like Reese's). And the newest version of the package utilizes the same exact color scheme as a Reese's label – a vibrant orange background with brown writing and yellow highlights. Both products also tout their peanut-butter flavor in similarly sized and similarly placed ovals.

In fact, since the copycat packaging has been so successful, Mars is now using it on its latest version of M&M's, which have crisped rice inside the chocolate, and taste a lot like tiny candy-coated Nestlé's Crunch bars. And in keeping with the new strategy, the packaging neatly imitates the red, white and blue color scheme of a Crunch wrapper.⁽⁵⁾

Color

"I wanted to answer a comment by a girl who was looking for a candy bar from the 70's that had a yellow and brown wrapper."⁽⁶⁾ This statement from a "blog" entry on a candy-fan website proves a major point about the strata of graphic elements on packages and how we retain and recall this information. This woman remembers her favorite bar from childhood, not by the name, but by the color of the wrapper.

Studies about the psychological impact of color began in the 1920's. The familiar insights – dark colors look heavy, bright colors look light, yellow looks cheap, and small packages are expensive – were emerging from such studies. Such an aura of science meant even the decoration of the box was too important to be left to the boss' wife.⁽⁷⁾

Marketing research indicates that over 80 percent of visual information is related to color. In other words, color conveys information and may provide the user with some other operational benefit.





This comparison of the Reese's brand of products (previous page) to other peanut butter flavored candy bar brands (this page) shows how the color pallet of the Reese's brand has been, and continues to be, consistently duplicated in other peanut-butter candy bar brands.

Until recently, the importance of color as a brand identity was not a big legal issue and the courts were lenient. It was an open question whether trademark law protected distinctive colors that had become strongly associated with a particular product or manufacturer. Today, a color war is exploding and the use of color is generating unprecedented lawsuits.

Due to the impact of color on sales, many businesses have taken steps to protect their color identity. The principle that a single color may receive trademark protection is now the law of the land. This development manifests itself not only in national statutes, but also in the international Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, including Trade in Counterfeit Goods of the TRIPS Agreement.

On the other hand, the courts recognize that colors are in limited supply and that allowing companies to appropriate colors will soon lead to the “depletion” of all the attractive colors in each product line.

Although the courts tend to view that preventing the use of a color would put a competitor at a significant disadvantage, the color must pass the functionality test.

Functionality can be defined by multiple criteria:

Psychological Effects

When color’s associations relate to the product in a literal or abstract way, this is considered to be functional. For example, green is frequently used in packaging of organic, healthy and natural products because of the association with trees, grass and nature.

Aesthetic Effects

Many color combinations can be considered to be harmonious and “pleasing to the eye.” For example, green and yellow are harmonious since they are closely related to each other (analogous). Functional design effects may also include perception of size and weight. For example, a black outboard-motor appears smaller than motors in other colors.



In America the color green is widely associated with nature and therefore has been used in packaging to represent either organic or healthy products.

The Snickers wrapper, shown here rendered in green, is from Japan. If this wrapper were used in America, consumers would assume it was a "healthy" Snickers bar – understanding what colors represent to different cultures is a critical part of the design process.



Visual Effects

The human eye reacts to color in many different ways. Some colors are advancing (and grab attention), others receding. Some color combinations render text legible; others are problematic.⁽⁸⁾

The fact that there are “only so many colors” may be partly responsible for the trend of merging candy companies – the smaller brands are finding it harder and harder to stay independent. Many brands are being retired while the larger brands extend their product lines and use their own brand power to reach consumers with new product. Reese’s can use their “orange” on as many of their products as they want and this is a huge benefit that other companies do not have.

Whatchamacallit!

Hershey’s Whatchamacallit! makes a great case for the importance of naming candy bars – people simply do not care what they are called. The most important aspect of naming is creating something that is easy to say and memorable.

The days of using family names to brand products are over and Hershey and Mars would have a tough time today branding their namesake bars.



The Charleston Chew was introduced to America in the 1920's during the Charleston dance craze – this candy bar has far outlasted its namesake.

There have been several trends in naming which have become popular over the years:

Fun & Memorable

Baby Ruth, “Oh Henry!”,

Whatchamacallit!, Butterfinger, Snickers, 3 Musketeers, 100 Grand, Bar None, Fast Break, Kit Kat, Mr. Goodbar, and Payday.



Candy bars, like Owyhee's Idaho Spud, of the 1930's Great Depression era were often named after food to give the consumer the feeling that they were buying something nutritious. Hershey even started to advertise that their milk chocolate bar was “More Sustaining Than Meat.”

Descriptive

Crunch, Krackle, Almond Joy, Smore,

Caramello, Bit-O-Honey, Chunky,

Marathon, Cherry Mash, and Nutrageous.

Popular Characters & Fads

Amos ‘n’ Andy Bar, Davy Crockett,

Reggie, and Charleston Chew.



In 2003, Mars retired its established Mars bar and replaced it with the “New” Snickers Almond bar (the same ingredients) in an attempt to capitalise on the Snickers name. Snickers is the best selling brand in America.

In some cases, like the Charleston Chew, which was named during the 1920's dance craze, the candy far outlasts the fad. Another naming convention, which was widely popular in the 1930's Great

Depression era, was to name the candy after food. A good meal was hard to come by in these hard times and making the candy sound either nutritious or filling was a big trend. The Denver Sandwich, Chicken Dinner, Graham Lunch, Chicken Bone, Big Eats and Idaho Spud (as ridiculous and unappetising as they sound for a candy bar) were all popular chocolate bars in the 1930's. It was during this time that Hershey advertised, on the front of the milk chocolate bar wrapper, "More sustaining than meat."

These often ambiguous names eventually become part of our culture and vocabulary. The names are taken for granted and we do not even think about what they might mean – we just love them. Mars recently made a decision to retire the Mars branded bar and repackage the same recipe as the Snickers Almond in an attempt to capitalize on the Snickers brand (the largest selling brand in the United States). A Mars'-bar fan recently had this to say about the change: "I was a big fan of the Mars bar before it was

renamed the 'Snickers with Almonds.' It just doesn't taste as good to me with the new name."⁽⁹⁾ This may mean that eventually the name and package become synonymous with the actual taste of the candy in our psyche. If Mars changed M&M's to A&A's they would taste the same, but would our culture accept that change?

Logos

The logotype of a candy bar's name is the most prominent graphic element of the candy wrapper. In the United States it is often the *only* graphic element other than much smaller features such as weight, main ingredients, and sometimes the parent brand's logo.

This trend is slowly changing to follow the approach used in Europe in which the logo is accented by an illustrative graphic of the flavor's main ingredient. For instance, the logo for an almond-flavored bar may show almonds "sprinkled" around the main logo graphic. This is done to quickly show the consumer what is inside

of the candy without having to know the brand or read the package. It is a graphic solution to make these brands work across a global culture.

In the 1980's a red dye, used to color food products, was found to be cancerous and M&M's had to retire the red candy immediately to ease consumer concern. A decade later red was reintroduced. M&M's promoted this fact on their package by adding the candy graphic to the logo. A few years ago when blue was added, that package changed again to show the new color.

M&M's has just undergone a worldwide promotion in which consumers were able to vote on a new M&M candy color that would be added to the traditional color line-up. During this promotion, the color of the wrappers – and of the candy itself – was removed and rendered in shades of grey. This playfulness was intended to give the latest release (the new colors) a greater impact.



This contemporary progression of M&M's packaging shows the manufacturer's need to keep their brands "fresh" and to communicate product changes.



A historical progression of the Nestlé's Crunch bar wrapper shows several significant aspects of change used by designers to keep brands fresh without damaging the key design elements of a package. (1) The overall color scheme of the blue field does not change. (2) The white background for the red "CRUNCH" does not change. (3) The red color and rounded type treatment of the logo does not change. (4) The parent brand logo (Nestlé) gets smaller as the Crunch brand becomes established. (5) Illustrative effects to the package (the crackling of the background in the last package) do not mar the original logo.

The traditional colors of the new candies have been brightened with an updated palette – now the yellow M&M is even “more yellow.” A graphic “window” has been integrated into the logo on the front of the new package, which lets the consumer figuratively “see” the brighter colors found inside.

In the case of M&M's we can see how product changes must be reflected in the logotype and wrapper. Manufacturers do not want to surprise loyal consumers by changing their favorite bar “behind their backs.” A less reactive approach to logo changes is the need to keep logos fresh and relevant in the minds of consumers over long periods of time.

Brands that have staying power and that have lasted through several decades, and the fashions associated with them, must consistently change their logos to mirror the current state of culture. These changes are minor and are designed to be so – the trick is to change without changing.

Manufacturers are careful to not damage their established brand-identity and the history associated with it, but must, at the same time, continually reach new audiences. This catch-22 process of design is prevalent in most consumer categories with respect to logos and packaging, and its success is proven by the long-lasting brands that have followed the process.

Often the design changes are based solely on the logo as the other elements (mainly color) are left untouched. Letter forms may get rounder, the logo might be placed on a slant, or maybe the letters get outlined with a color from the brand's palette. Whatever the change may be, the idea is to make it slight – just a freshening-up. Consumers often do not even notice the change, and that is the point.

Because the logos are based on names, they are all type-treatments as opposed to abstract logos. Through the use of rounded letterforms, these type-treatments generally evoke a “smoothness,” reflective of the sensation of eating chocolate.



Example of wrapper change from one incarnation to the very next.



Example of wrapper change over the life of the product.



Nestlé adds the competition's (Krackel) long-used graphic effect of “crackling” to it's newest package design.

Many logos are designed with script-based letters in which one letter “flows” into the next. This treatment also gives the logo a sense of smoothness.

Other logo treatments are reflective of the ingredients, as in the Krackle bar, in which the logo’s type “cracks” apart (a reflection of the crunch of the candy). The Nestlé Crunch-bar logo, in its latest incarnation, has added this effect as well. Being careful not to mar the traditional rounded letterforms of the Crunch name, the effect was added, not to the actual logo, but behind it.

Generally, candy bar logos are colorful and fun. Furthermore, as time progresses our favorite candy bar logos seems to move through life with us – staying as fresh as the candy inside the package.

Brand New Product

The industry averages about 150 new products each year, yet only a handful of those become popular enough to stay on the shelf. Moreover, most of the so-called

new candies are merely variations on age-old themes.⁽¹⁰⁾

Releasing a new product in the candy bar category is tougher than ever, as manufacturers need to find new ways to market and sell the same old ingredients. One trend is to use established brands that are unknown in the candy market to help sell “new” product. For instance, using Sun-Maid, the leader in raisins, to sell chocolate-covered raisins.

Another product appearing on the candy bar shelf recently is the “cookie-bar,” branded by leaders such as Oero. Through placement on the shelf and the supporting advertising, consumers are reminded: – “It’s not a cookie, it’s a candy bar.” It is too early to tell whether this trend will take-hold and open-up this category for others to follow.

“There’s only so much you can do with chocolate, peanuts and caramel – if you get my drift. Besides, Americans are so nostalgic about their candy bars, it’s

almost impossible to get them to try something new.”⁽¹¹⁾ This dilemma (stated by a Mars executive) is being combated by attempting to use other non-category brand names whose relationship with the consumer is already strong.

The most popular movement in the industry today is the “line extension” – taking an already popular brand name and using the equity to launch another product. Reese’s launched five new products last year alone, many of which were touted as “Limited Edition.” This is a way for candy companies to, on a trial basis, test consumer preference for new product on a very large scale.

An area ripe for development is health and nutrition. “We’re looking at health and nutrition with great interest, but we want to be sure we can provide the level of quality we’re known for.” said a Hershey executive.⁽¹²⁾ The current craze in dieting (Atkins and South Beach) sparked Hershey to release three “low-carb” candy bars in 2004.



Oreo Cookie Barz, sold in the candy aisle, are trying to break into the candy bar category.



Two examples of several of Hershey's "Limited Edition" line extensions launched in 2004. Manufacturers now use this technique to test market new product – if sales are good the product can be adopted into the permanent line.



Quick to jump on the bandwagon, Hershey released three “low-carb” candy bars in 2004. One of the bars, for Low Carb Lifestyles, contains “soy crisps.”

Packaging & Marketing

For manufacturers, packaging is the crucial final payoff to a marketing campaign. Sophisticated packaging is one of the chief ways people find the confidence to buy.

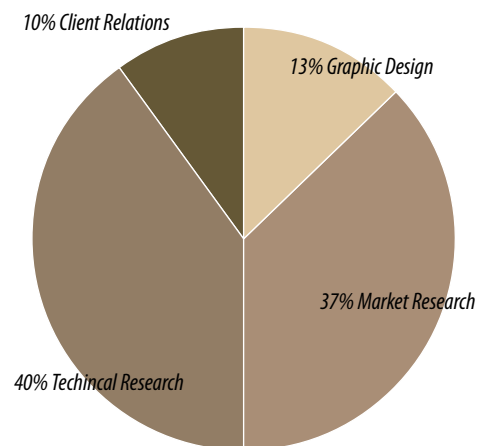
Advertising leads consumers into temptation. Packaging *is* the temptation. In many cases, it is what makes the product possible.⁽¹³⁾

Package design has become as much of a science as marketing; and for selling candy bars, it plays a critical role in the marketing plan. Since the package does most, if not all, of the selling, the design cannot be left to risk – in this case the package is the product.

Over the years package designers had to become more than just “graphic” designers as their role in the process of launching new product became more encompassing. Now, designers must understand many of the key disciplines of bringing a product to market – from chemistry to psychology.

[An expert] once told the members of a trade association that visual treatment constituted only 13 percent of the task of designing a new package. He said 37 percent of the work consisted of gathering market information; 40 percent doing technical research on materials, suppliers, production, and costs; and 10 percent convincing the client. Even the pseudoprecision of these numbers was intended to argue that the work is more engineering than art.⁽¹⁴⁾

Breakdown of time dedicated to the different processes of designing a new package.



In 1950, [Forrest Mars] hired Chicago advertising giant Ted Bates & Co. to produce a detailed study of M&M's sales. Forrest wanted to know who was buying

his product, who wasn't and why. Studies like these had long been prepared by sophisticated marketers like Kraft Foods and Proctor & Gamble, but no one in the candy industry had approached marketing in such a scientific manner.

Forrest Mars believed in managing his enterprises by clearly-defined, objective criteria.⁽¹⁵⁾ All large consumer-brands now take this approach to marketing. Before a new candy bar hits consumers, there is little chance of surprise for the candy companies.

Shelf Life

Together, Mars and Hershey control 75 percent of the candy rack.⁽¹⁶⁾ Today these figures contain many successful, formerly independent brands that were acquired by the two companies. Reese's brand, now Hershey's most successful, used to be a neighbor of Hershey in Pennsylvania before it was obtained by the larger Hershey company.



This typical candy isle (in a 711 convenience store) is rich with color. The variety of product can often make choosing just one bar a long process.

Companies opt not to alienate loyal consumers by changing the identity of these acquired brands. Often the only change is the identification of the parent-company's logo on the package.

These acquisitions are made, not to kill competition, but to compliment the companies' other products. This is what accounts for the large percentage of shelf space by the market leaders – the most important element of sales. After all, most candy bar purchases are not planned. The category has defined the meaning of “impulse buy” in our society.

Recognizing that some 70 percent of all candy is bought on impulse, Mars' salesmen persuaded merchants to put candy displays near the cash registers. There was nothing a Mars guy wouldn't do to get his products on those racks, whether that meant sending free candy bars to the store manager's children or “accidentally” knocking Hershey bars off the shelves. Whatever it took, they were going to make sure that when you reached

for a piece of chocolate, your hand would find a Mars product rather than a Hershey bar.⁽¹⁷⁾

Notes

- ⁽¹⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 166.
- ⁽²⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 117.
- ⁽³⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 291.
- ⁽⁴⁾ Candy Comment (2003), <http://snickers99.tripod.com/candycomment.html>, BLOG, entry on 8/27/03.
- ⁽⁵⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 312.
- ⁽⁶⁾ Candy Comment (2003), <http://snickers99.tripod.com/candycomment.html>, BLOG, entry on 11/09/03.
- ⁽⁷⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 111.
- ⁽⁸⁾ “Who owns hues?,” Color Matters, http://www.colormatters.com/color_trademark.html.
- ⁽⁹⁾ Candy Comment (2003), <http://snickers99.tripod.com/candycomment.html>, BLOG, entry on 10/24/03.
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- ⁽¹²⁾ “Growth Sweetener,” *The Delaney Report*, Vol. 15 No. 3, January 26, 2004
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- ⁽¹⁴⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 155.
- ⁽¹⁵⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 172.
- ⁽¹⁶⁾ Based on statistics compiled by A. C. Nielsen, Information Resources, Inc., and DEBS/Candi Snacs Vending data. This 75 percent figure is what the industry refers to as the “front end”, the share that Hershey and Mars have of the typical candy rack at the grocery or drugstore checkout or vending machine.
- ⁽¹⁷⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 248.

Emotional Attachment

Hello... I'm a chocoholic.

[The] psychological associations – the fact that chocolate has been given as a reward since childhood and that it continues to signify love, appreciation and gratitude – and our experience of chocolate has an undeniable emotional component.⁽¹⁾ This fact has a huge impact on how brands handle the job of package design – and redesign.

People become attached to brands they love, and changing the way a package looks can be uncomfortable for a loyal customer. There are many reasons for this attachment and loyalty – from the emotional to the chemical.

In every country where it is eaten, chocolate is the food craved most often.⁽²⁾

“That unique mixture of fat and sugar is pure heaven to our brains,” according to nutrition researcher Michael Levine.

“Chemically speaking, chocolate is the world’s perfect food.”⁽³⁾ This euphoria is often described by many, self-labeled,

“chocoholics” – the word is defined in *Webster’s, New World, College Dictionary (Fourth Edition)* as:

choco-holic (chôk’e hól’ik) *n.*
[Informal] a person who has an obsessive need to eat chocolate

One has to wonder whether the term was positioned in the culture as a marketing scheme by the chocolate companies – it is now used as an excuse for consuming the high-calorie treat. And, with the mass-availability of the chocolate bar, it is hard to resist a daily fix.

The Ritual

There is something to be said about the aesthetic experience of buying, unwrapping and eating your favorite candy bar. It is undeniably ritualistic.

Part of this feeling is because, most often, it is a personal event. Candy bars are sized to be one-serving, to be enjoyed in one sitting, and to be eaten by one person. The fact that there are so many choices of brands supports a culture in which everyone has a favorite – the one bar that they go to most often.

Everyone has a certain, special way in which they unwrap and eat a particular candy. Reese’s used a long-running, very successful, ad campaign that spoke to this topic of individuality.

The ads used the slogan “There’s no wrong way to eat a Reese’s.” They featured such quirky habits as eating all the chocolate first and saving the peanut butter for last, to a vampire character who sucked the peanut butter out of the bar (the candy was pictured with two, round bite marks). This brilliant campaign perfectly captured the personal experience and joy of “being yourself” and eating *your* candy bar.

Many of these rituals are adopted by a whole culture, as was the case with Hershey’s Almond bar. Inside each [wrapper] was stamped the name Hershey, which left its imprint on the chocolate bar so that when you threw away the wrapper, the name was still visible. In elementary school, it was thought customary to eat a Hershey Almond bar by biting the letter



H first, and then the letter Y, and then the E and the R, leaving behind SHE. No one knew why children nibbled the chocolate this way; they just did.⁽⁴⁾ Some of these rituals remain, while new ones (often spurred by product changes or new candy) are constantly being invented by the next generation of children. Candy is the exception to “Don’t play with your food.” Candy is still fun!

Little girls often use the foil of gum wrappers or Hershey’s Kisses to make paper-chain necklaces for themselves or friends. It is no coincidence that the Kiss was named to have connotations of friendship and love. Today the brand embodies these virtues. “All those feelings and associations you get from looking at a Kiss you just can’t get with some neat shape you make up and decide to call a Hug,” said [one Hershey executive].⁽⁵⁾ The little foil treats are now an icon of celebration and good will – offered in candy dishes at reception desks, office cubicles, and in many homes during holidays (always in festive-colored foil).

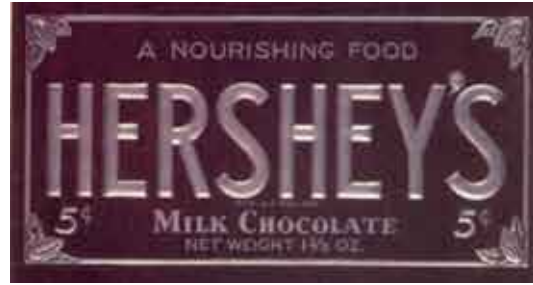
Don't change my candy bar!

The following are excerpts from *Speak Up*, an online design forum, regarding the recent redesign of the Hershey's Milk Chocolate bar wrapper.

"The new wrap is veneer; it encourages you to consume rather than enjoy, it feels hollow and unnatural and mass-produced. There has been a recent spate of authenticity killing "re-brands" perpetrated by "branding" firms that have chosen not to show the "courage" to do what's right and leave well-enough alone." ⁽⁶⁾

"...the soul has been taken from a beloved brand." ⁽⁷⁾

"The font change does not bother me at all, but the lack of paper does. There is something about food wrapped in paper... be it deli meat, coffee in a nice paper bag or the Hershey bar. It also reminds me of buying fresh stuff at the corner market—nostalgic and tangible." ⁽⁸⁾



Three variations of Hershey's Milk Chocolate bar — from the nickel bar to the new fresh-seal package.

“I believe that true icon brands have grace, elegance and familiarity that make any type of redesign a complicated and treacherous endeavor... I think that really good package design is a delicate balance of design, marketing, cultural anthropology and psychology.” – Debbie Millman ⁽⁹⁾

The above quote is from Debbie Millman, president of Sterling Group New York, who handled the redesign. [Hershey’s] “brand zealots” objected to proposals to remove the apostrophe and final S and to turn the type’s silver hue white or gold. But losing the foil “to make the bar tamper-free and more hygienic” didn’t upset them, she says. They also approved of the shiny type that looks like it would be equally at home on souped-up 18-wheelers or a Metallica T-shirt. “The beveled type was created to reflect the personality of each individual ‘pip’ of chocolate in the actual bar,” Millman says. Yes, the Hershey’s bar has to compete in the crowded, colorful kids’ market. But is shiny lettering really a deal breaker? “In this fast-changing world.” Millman

says, “brands with enormous heritage and loyalty are trying to stay fresh, trying to adapt to the language of the day – louder, prouder, more confident, and with a bit more ‘zing.’” Clearly it takes a lot of shine to do the job right.⁽¹⁰⁾

Hershey had to establish the degree to which consumers were open to change. Focus groups and internal perspectives on consumer preferences led to the decision that changing the packaging material and the package configuration was as much as consumers were prepared to accept. Therefore, the graphic design was left basically as-is, retaining the evocative colors and distinctive logotype that consumers know so well.⁽¹¹⁾ It’s clear that the decision to change the package was not taken lightly by either Hershey or the design team at Sterling Group – consumer acceptance was a large factor in the process.

Hershey’s Milk Chocolate bar is not the first major brand to go through this change, in fact the Milk Chocolate and

Milk Chocolate Almond bar were the last of Hershey's brands to get the fresh-seal package.

The Reese's Peanut Butter Cup has just gone through its first major graphic design change in over three decades. The core of the remake, according to officials at identity firm Libby Perszyk Kathman, is a new swirling textural element that "more effectively speaks to its pre-teen audience." Other elements of change: casual placement of the product within the orange swirls, and a more animated, dimensional typographic treatment of the product name. "The beauty of this packaging system," contends John Recker, vice president/director of brand strategy at LPK, "is that the brand wins at ten feet and also wins at two feet. At a distance, the consumer immediately recognizes the telegraphic orange color... and the in-hand experience delivers the additional detail and emotion of the product benefit."⁽¹²⁾

A fascinating example of handling the redesign of an iconic brand is that of Coca-Cola – a brand perhaps more iconic than Hershey. During the 1970's, Coca-Cola managed to virtually abandon, throughout most of the country, one of the greatest, most beloved packages ever invented, with hardly anyone noticing. [The key to this successful launch is that] Coca-Cola never admitted it. The Coke bottle remained part of the company's imagery, and it was never wholly unavailable, merely uncommon.⁽¹³⁾

The Taste of Nostalgia

This element of nostalgia that Coca-Cola took careful steps to preserve has much to do with consumers' perception of how the product tastes.

To compete with Hershey's (Mounds and Almond Joy) Mars introduced the Bounty bar in 1989, a chocolate-covered coconut bar reminiscent of Mounds. But Bounty failed after just two years, even though every blind taste test Mars conducted showed consumers preferred it

two-to-one over the competition.⁽¹⁴⁾ This case illustrates the importance of the role of packaging in the candy bar category – more important than even the taste of the candy.

There is no constituency of curators or preservationists to protect the endangered package. If a gum wrapper manages to survive nearly unchanged for 90 years, it's not because any expert has determined that it is an important cultural expression. Rather, it's because it still helps to sell a lot of gum.

There is probably no other field in which designs that are almost a century old – Wrigley's gum, Campbell's' soup, Hershey's chocolate bar – remain in production only subtly changed, and yet are understood to be extremely valuable corporate assets. The culture of packaging, defined by what people are buying and selling everyday, keeps evolving, and the role nostalgia plays is very small.⁽¹⁵⁾ An undisputable fact of Hershey's new package is that the candy is fresher when

opened, and is more tamper-free – it is a better product in the new wrapper. How this design change will effect sales over the long-term is yet to be seen.

Notes

- ⁽¹⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 97.
- ⁽²⁾ Suzanne Hamlin, "It's Hard to Ignore Cravings: Researchers Can't Resist," *The New York Times*, February 22, 1995.
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- ⁽⁴⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 20.
- ⁽⁵⁾ Joel Glen Brenner, *The Emperors of Chocolate: Inside The Secret World Of Hershey & Mars* (Random House, Inc, 1999), p. 309.
- ⁽⁶⁾ Speak Up (2003), <http://www.underconsideration.com>, BLOG, entry on 11/18/03
- ⁽⁷⁾ Speak Up (2003), 0, BLOG, entry on 11/06/03
- ⁽⁸⁾ Speak Up (2003), <http://www.underconsideration.com>, BLOG, entry on 10/27/03
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- ⁽¹³⁾ Thomas Hine, *The Total Package*, (Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p. 162.
- ⁽¹⁴⁾ Interview with Mars research and development executive Allan Gibbons, July 1991.
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Conclusion

A century ago, candy was a homemade treat based on family recipes. Either you waited for the special occasions when the family would spend the extra money to make it, or when you could afford it, you could go to the candy shop and buy the local specialty. Candy bars, as we know them today, did not exist.

Today, without even trying, we encounter candy bars several times a day. They are everywhere we shop, and because they are placed where we cannot miss them (the counter), we are always interacting with the product – whether we buy it or not.

Candy wrappers are designed to communicate with consumers, – even though the communication may often be one-way. The bright colors, shiny paper and animated logos speak to our culture in the most friendly and trusting tones. We know that each wrapper holds the promise of something good – at least as good as Grandma used to make.

Evolution of an Industry

The candy bar industry has evolved in parallel with many other products, of which we now take for granted. With the turn of the century and the Industrial Revolution, the United States had experienced a progression from a self-sustaining lifestyle to a consumer-based culture.

The products, processes and cultural climate that brought us to this current state are many. However, the “packaged good,” particularly that of the candy bar, tells a story of package design in the twentieth-century as a true reflection of our culture – our wants, our needs, our fears and insecurities, and our sense of self.

The artifacts of antiquity, the ones that most reveal the nature of a culture, are often not the precious items themselves, but the vessels that were used to contain and protect these commodities. The ways in which things were carried, stored and used; the amount of product contained in a particular vessel, and the markings

engraved into a vessel to describe, or even brand its contents are the details that let anthropologists begin to see the ways in which people perceived themselves and how they defined, by their possessions, the hierarchy of what was most important to them. This information is the first step into the psychology of understanding the people themselves – it is the key indicator of how people of a specific society existed.

Our existence today will be judged in much the same way. Our daily activities, habits and tendencies will delineate, in retrospect, our way of life to the historians of tomorrow.

The simple sheet of paper used to protect our favorite candy bar, an item we rarely think about or consciously notice, one that we immediately throw into the trash, may tell us more about ourselves than we realize.

The Industrial Revolution brought about, not only the manufacturing and automation processes that made

the industry possible, but income for the people (not to mention the people themselves), which fostered this consumer culture. Sales and economy go hand-in-hand.

The two World Wars are to be credited for two very important factors of the success of this industry as well. First, the wars enabled (and boosted) mass-scale production of candy bars. The government of the United States, in search of non-perishable, high-calorie food items for troops, enlisted manufacturers like Hershey and Mars to produce the candy on a scale to which the industry had not yet seen. This innovative stage brought about many successful manufacturing and packaging processes.

Secondly, candy companies used America's patriotism to their benefit by advertising their role in the war effort. Soldiers, who incidentally loved the chocolate bars, were depicted in promotions enjoying the product. Additionally, the serviceman's candy habits, brought home from battle,

sparked huge increases in candy bar consumption as well as the rise in the introduction of new products to the category.

Hershey's "nickel bar" was the first major success and the blueprint for those that followed. The uniqueness of this candy bar was its consistency in quality, price and availability – a first. The nickel bar was a product that put all of America, regardless of class, on the same parity – the candy bar as the Great Equalizer.

The Wrapper

Wrapping candy bars in a way that protected the product in shipment made the candy accessible to a larger portion of the population, on a greater geographical scale, than previously thought possible.

This new-found consumer base quickly gave the industry a new view on marketing. Those manufacturers who were capable of pursuing this large market found themselves charged with speaking in a new language – that of the brand.

Brands began to emerge in the landscape and, unlike today where companies anticipate, plan and steer this phenomenon, the manufacturers' realization and consumer-bond were attained simultaneously. The protection and proliferation of these new brands were soon the most important order of business for candy companies.

Competition of, both, complimentary product and directly-competitive product (milk chocolate bar vs. milk chocolate bar) is what drove the industry to continually reach new levels of technological, manufacturing and marketing excellence. With this goal, the wrapper (the single most important sales tool of the industry) became paramount to the identity of the product – now, product and package are one in the same.

The graphic design of candy packaging is now a carefully planned and managed discipline that can make or break an already-established brand, or the introduction of a new one. The design

trends of the candy wrapper, which we can now study over this century-long period, show us an across-the-board approach to successful packaging.

The brands that have stood the test of time have all used similar methods of wrapping, similar substrates, similar logotype treatments, and similar color treatment over the same periods of development. This proves the case for a successful “formula” of marketing candy bars through packaging.

The need to keep the brands relevant, yet genuine, over the life of the brand (through packaging) becomes a circumstance of psychology – that of the consumer.

The Consumer

Due to candy's “occupation” in our society (that of gift or reward), the candy bar consumer often feels a personal connection with particular brands. The relationship between person and product, purposely cultivated by marketing,

becomes a strong bond with which manufacturers must consider when packaging changes are deemed necessary.

Consumer perception of these changes will continue to guide marketing initiatives and packaging directives for this category. Candy companies have been successful in building strong personalities for their brands, and consumers are fast to latch-on – the most telling trait of a true brand is trust.

The trust the consumer feels for a particular brand is based on quality, consistency and availability (the same traits we look for in any friendly relationship). This formula was established by companies like Hershey, Mars and Nestlé.

In order to protect the candy bar industry, as well as secure its future, manufacturers must continue to consider this brand loyalty, and the other emotive characteristics, in every aspect of wrapper-design – the candy bar's true persona.

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