



Brains and beauty

The **L’Oreal group** has shown that sophisticated brand differentiation, reassurance of first-user guarantees and hygienic production processes, and the ability to predict upcoming trends, are the only path to long-term success.

The line between pharmaceutical and ‘beauty’ products has blurred, not only in the appearance and function of the packaging used, but also in the production process for high-quality branded lotions, creams and gels. At the top end of the market there is all to play for when people will pay ‘top-dollar’ prices for excellence.

Machinery lines are also blurring. Those aimed at the pharmaceutical industry have increasingly been used for beauty products in the last decade. Safe filling systems have entered the toiletries and cosmetics market with some Galénic, La Roche Posay, Danone and L’Oréal brands.

‘These markets are growing quite rapidly for the company,’ Christophe Benoit, regional sales manager of Rommelag, told Packaging Today at the Emballage packaging exhibition in Paris.

Dairy lines are also being crossed, hygienic aseptic manufacturing was already a specialty of French company Serac, mainly in dairy foods, when in 1996 it began to apply its knowledge to the cosmetics and pharmaceutical markets at a newly acquired Spanish operation.

Other developments and cross-industry packaging can also be seen in emerging processes in textured sleeves; a machine for enamel screen printing for shaped bottles in up to eight colours on glass from France’s Saga Décor, PVC shrinksleeves that give 69% shrink for economy and speed, heavy-duty and highly flexible neckbands and shrinksleeve labels, and a filling technique that colour-separates pastes and creams to create patterns in clear tubes and jars for visual impact.

Customers are still loyal and packaging innovation with branding and application is key to keeping the image of the product fresh.

ADDRESSING THE BRAND

According to the latest Emballage Pack Vision study, modern packaging is acting as a communicator and an advertising-like medium in its own right; it can ‘aspire to convey product superiority, to instantaneously seduce or convince the consumer to buy. The pack that tells a credible story wins over its audience.’

Quite a story lies behind the caps that RPC beauté produced for bottles and jars in the Estée Lauder Cyber White skincare range. Through various twists and turns their development led to a new overplating process for plated parts, which the company says has the potential to enable cost-effective design and production of

very high-quality packaging for cosmetic and beauty applications such as high-end fragrance caps or colour cosmetics items.

The story begins when updating the Estée Lauder look with a brushstroke and a special new electroplated shade of champagne gold. This was combined with a blue tint for the overmould, via a transparent layer, to suggest a pharmaceutical link, and the clinical technical skill that went into developing the products.

The decision to use a three-material construction – ABS, Surlyn® and PP – to overmould a plated part and thereby achieve special visual effects and the necessary level of robustness required significant technical innovation.

A special new ABS resin compound replaced traditional ABS for greater resistance to heat and pressure in the overmoulding process, which would normally have damaged the plated part. During cooling, the plated section takes on insulating properties that slow the process, so RPC introduced a means to increase cooling efficiency and reduce cycle time. Due to the Surlyn material's high mass, the cap is still soft when taken from the moulds, but a handling process RPC removes each part without damaging or deforming the surface.

The end product has a finished closure with a higher overall visual quality thanks to the intimate contact between the plated surface and the Surlyn, which creates first-surface reflection. And the closure works better too as there is no risk of 'misorientation', for example, any movement or separation of the two parts of the cap, even after repeated use.

Things are capped off nicely, in niche and quality applications and with mass volume containers, with plastic caps designed 'as part and parcel' of the toiletry pack to give a visually satisfying appearance.

The low profile of the caps, their colour, shape and one-hand, easy-open function has attracted the notice, and the business, of niche brands and volume customers.

Packaging of high-end products must appeal to consumers in times of economic slowdown.



MARKET SHARED

L'Oreal aren't alone in the high-end market. Givenchy needed a change and came up with a clever and stylish packaging solution for Prisme Libre, which combines four different-coloured loose powders in the same container. What they have proved with this development is that attention to detail is as important as the development of the product and packaging itself. They not only look at the material used, but the application and final touches, which mean that although consumers are feeling the pinch with their disposable income, they can still be convinced to buy high-end products.

The base of the case is in untreated crystal PMMA (polymethyl methacrylate), thin walls divide it into four cavities and registered black hot stamping features on one side of the powder case. The case's ABS bottom is ultrasound-welded to the base and four untreated PP caps close off the cavities in the base. The four openings are used for filling in the factory. A bottom label masks the caps.

On the underside of the base, in the centre of the cylindrical applicator housing, fine perforations forming the Givenchy



Beauty and pharmaceutical products are increasingly seeing a crossover.

brand logo release the powders gently from their cavities to fill the puff. Up until first use, a transparent label covering the perforations keeps the puff and case clean. The upper part of the case displays a transparent brand logo against a pink mirror-effect background. The black moulded, bi-injected PP screwcap has a black SAN edge and a central pink SAN window bearing a black hot-stamped Givenchy logo. A square mirror between the black and pink bi-injected part and the black screw section give the logo more depth. Finally, a transparent gloss varnish applied to the top of the cap completes the 'haute couture' design.

BEAUTY ON A BUDGET

Throughout these innovations there has of course been a dip in sales. There have been worse than expected results with sales falling 0.6% in the lead up to Christmas. The feeling is, however, that although the group will have to cut costs, they will maintain spending on innovation products as well as packaging and advertising.

Developments have shown that even though times are tough for brand owners, packagers and consumers alike, the long-term issues must remain in focus. Consolidation and cooperation are the buzzwords for any industry at the moment, not only when concerning packaging. While costs must be cut there is still room for innovation and development. Although the economic climate is not what it was this time last year, customers are still loyal and packaging innovation with branding and application is key to keeping the image of the product fresh. Whether high-end brands like Lancôme creams, or mass market brands such as Garnier or Maybelline, there is always room to progress. This ensures that although the sales split between the two is likely to increase, they will remain relevant and strong markets.

With new fragrance products for the Calvin Klein range on the horizon, they have already committed to packaging being the focal point for future sales. The point of purchase is more important now than ever to entice the consumer into sales. Advertising campaigns and packaging are the face of any product, and have always been especially important in the beauty industry. In this economic climate, it will make the difference between a successful or failing brand, new or old. **pci**