Tylenol: A Package Deal

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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May 2005
Abstract

Graphic Design plays an important role in our consumer-driven culture. Yet, unless a designer is able to understand their intended audience and tailor their creative solution accordingly, the project will negligently fail. In an effort to further explore the importance of understanding a project's demographic, I challenged myself to develop three age-appropriate packaging solutions for Tylenol brand pain reliever, directing each toward a different demographic group (20, 40, and 60 year olds). My solutions depend on a deeper understanding of each individual group and consider the appropriate use of elements and principles of design to meet the consumer needs while appealing to each demographic group in a visually effective manner. I have included several color variations, as well as text samples and other package compositions that I explored in the creative process, as well as the final visual solutions that I created for each group.

Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to thank Sam Minor for his guidance, critique, and confidence in my abilities through the course of this project. Thank you for your insight and input, and for creatively challenging me to work outside my comfort zone. It was of great benefit to both the project and to me as a designer.

I would like to thank my family for their unconditional support. I know I can always count on your creative input and proofreading magic!

I would like to thank the friends and strangers that I surveyed for their honest opinion. Your input and analysis, although I often second guessed myself because of it, tremendously helped the development of my project.
Our consumer-driven society is based heavily on the daily exposure to product branding and packaging. From clothes to cars to cooking utensils, we are bombarded with promotion after promotion after promotion in an effort to influence our purchasing power when we reach for the retail shelves. But how effective can a specific product pitch be when most are sold to such a vast market? Mustn’t one first understand the target demographic—the age, gender, race, social class, marital status, economic standing, etc. of their ideal consumer—before they effectively understand why a consumer would choose a specific product over its competitor? What is the best way to catch their audience’s eye, and how should they tailor their design to the target demographic? This becomes the imperative role of a graphic designer. Understanding the cultural nuances of each demographic group, translating this analysis in order to tailor a creative solution accordingly is essential to develop an effective package campaign to support the functionality of the product itself.

In today’s fast-paced world, headaches from the stress of society and muscle soreness from the work-a-day runaround are more common than ever. For many, temporary relief is found in caplet form. Tylenol, a giant in the non-prescription pain reliever arena, has become socially fashionable. People seem to take two at whim whenever the slightest pain arises. More specifically, different age demographics turn to this over-the-counter contender for a variety of different symptoms, varying from headache pain to arthritis to menstrual cramping. Due to its wide variety of uses within each different age group, I focused my thesis on a package redesign effort of the popular
red-and-white relief in a bottle. Each packaging solution closely considered size and
color of type, container size and functionality, and overall visual aesthetics in its solution,
and was appropriately aimed at one of three demographic groups—20 year olds, 40 year
olds, or 60 year olds. Exploring how a designer must understand a target audience in
order to truly play an integral role and experimenting with several solutions to create an
appropriately successful package campaign was implemented.

How does product branding and packaging significantly impact this point-of-
purchase issue? When standing in front of a fully-stocked shelf, why does the consumer
choose a certain product over its competitor? Furthermore, what would grab the
greenbacks of a 21 year old, searching for a quick-fix cure for that hangover headache?
Why would a sophisticated mother-of-two, in a hurry to make it home for dinner with her
on-the-go family, reach around two other shoppers for a specific brand of pain reliever
when she could have just as easily grabbed the generic brand that was in front of her?
What would catch the eye of an elderly man, who left his bifocal lenses in the car, when
he needs to be sure that the pain reliever he purchases doesn’t conflict with the other
medications that he already takes on a daily basis? Attention to these specific
considerations all play a role in the retail power of an on-the-shelf product.

Understanding the differences between the demographics of a target audience is the first
step in designing towards these distinctions.

In general, the 20 year old age demographic is in a stage of personal
transition. Culture’s influence pushes the student-age crowd from one thing to the next.
Many young consumers are very brand conscious, concerned with the latest fashions and
styles, and very socially aware. For this reason, the manufacturer would want to establish
a bold brand identity in targeting their product towards this demographic, allowing them to build a sense of brand loyalty in these young consumers that would translate into sales for years to come. A package that can keep up with the active, on-the-go attitude of these young adults would become a comforting companion against the headaches from long nights spent studying in the library and for after-party hangovers. Bold and vibrant, this demographic would desire a product designed to fit their active, stylish lifestyle.

Once a consumer reaches middle age, their focus has likely shifted from four-in-the-morning fun to raising a family. The 40 year old age demographic is very busy with work and many are quite involved with family life. Again, a successful package design must be able to seamlessly fit with this nature. The product itself must be practical on the go, to head off the headaches of work and after-school carpools, as well readily available as a means of relaxing relief at the end of a long day. This demographic would likely have developed a strong sense of brand loyalty by this stage in life, and would thus respond well to a sophisticated product aesthetic that fit in with a cost-conscious budget, a style that was both elegant and economical.

As people age, clarity of product information and legibility of packaging increasingly becomes of concern. Arthritic joints make getting to the caplet that cures the pain a pain in itself! Quality is still important to these aging adults, but not as important as a product that is economical and easy to use. By the time a person reaches 60 years of age, a sense of brand loyalty has long been established, so generics often give the desired product quality without the emphasis placed on brand recognition by younger generations. Rather, the package must emphasize a solution that is easy to read and easy
to open, in a quantity that is large enough to handle all the aches and pains that come with aging.

In talking with my faculty mentor during the development process, we decided that it would be necessary to find a way to push my ability as a designer by placing limitations on the development process. Realistically, designers are put under short deadline limitations, forcing them to establish and create a strong visual solution in a limited period of time. To replicate this restriction, my mentor placed similar time constraints on my process in an effort to make me trust my judgment and create a solution accordingly, rather than reverting to my usual tendency to overthink elements of a design. After I had analyzed each age demographic and established an approach for each solution, he advised me to spend one hour brainstorming the direction each solution would go, and then limited me to a three-hour frame of time to spend designing each solution.

Before I approached a package solution for each demographic, the issue of brand identity was addressed. A product of Johnson & Johnson, Tylenol's brand, like most over-the-counter pharmaceuticals, is a text logo— that is, the name of the brand is set in a basic font, italicized in this case. In analyzing the three different age demographics, I established that a bolder brand identity would help distinguish this product from its competitors, especially with the 20 year old demographic, who would more favorably respond to a bolder brand and its logo. Developed from a lowercase letter "t", this new brand confidently combines a symbolic letter form with the shape of a caplet or pill, giving direct reference to the medicinal qualities of the product. This element became the base from which each package solution derived. The logo becoming decreasingly
essential to the visual hierarchy as the age demographic became older, from big, bright, and bold in the package geared towards 20 year olds, to nonexistent in the easy-to-read solution generically designed for the 60 year old demographic.

In coordination with the new brand identity, I created an illustration of a pill from which the visual patterns for each solution were created, again giving symbolic reference to the product’s function as a pharmaceutical. These patterns were created to reflect the nature of each demographic group. Actively arranged, the sunburst pattern placed behind the bold brand identity of the solution for 20 year olds radiates from the center of the package, drawing the consumer’s eye into the already-dominant logo. Informational text becomes secondary in importance. The pills create a sophisticated geometric pattern in the packaging for the 40 year old demographic. Tinted to recede in the visual field, this visual element is then balanced with the brand logo and informational text. A splash of yellow elegantly emphasizes the larger pill illustration. Two pills are combined side-to-side to illustrate the generic function found in the 60 year old solution. The product name and text visually dominate the composition, allowing for maximum readability.

Most over-the-counter medications stick to a very clean color combination of red, white, blue, or some combination thereof. One of the primary components of my product redesign was the use of attention-getting color combinations, tuned to the personality of each different demographic. Tylenol’s trademark red and white is bold, but doesn’t quite distinguish itself in the sea of similarly-colored packaging. For the 20 year old demographic, I turned to popular colors in fashion and technological trends. Available in pink/green, orange/blue, and yellow/pink color combinations, the consumer can now choose a Tylenol package that stylishly matches their iPod or cell phone or fits in with
their personal tastes in fashion and accessories. Printed in two colors on a coated white stock, these labels would be inexpensive, which would translate into lower product costs for the consumer. I chose these three combinations as a result of positive feedback I received from students that I surveyed, who responded particularly well to the pink/green combination.

The label designed for the 40 year old demographic offers a very sophisticated contrast of navy blue and a deep yellow. Yellow text emphasizes the brand name and important product information. Whereas most comparable brands print their packaging on a white label stock, the label I designed is instead printed on clear vellum, packaged in such a way that the consumer can quickly assess when it is time to purchase a new bottle. The printing costs would be more expensive printing on a Xerox vellum than if the label were to be printed on white stock, but it further contributes to the sophisticated aesthetic that the 40 year old demographic would respond to. Again, the label would be printed in two colors, which would be more cost effective than four color printing.

Focusing on generic readability for the 60 year old demographic, my solution uses red to emphasize important product information, with a dark grey font for secondary information. Many generic solutions print black text on a white background. I chose to use a dark grey instead because, although it reads just as well as black text, it visually recedes more than black text would. This allows the red text to further emphasize the most important information because it doesn’t have to compete for visual emphasis that it would if the secondary information were printed in black. Because red and white are often associated with the Tylenol brand, this bold combination gives the feel of Tylenol quality, while the more generic composition gives the feel of a cost-effective brand. The
association of high quality and low cost gives the consumer a best-of-both-worlds
product. Two-color printing on a white coated label stock again lends the product to
purchase-friendly pricing.

Font selection was critical in establishing a strong sense of identity towards each
demographic. Determined largely by visual/textual hierarchy and color, two fonts were
chosen for each solution. A dominant font was used for brand identity and product
information on the front label, while a secondary font was used for the “fine print” factual
information on the back. For the 20 year old demographic, I selected white 14 pt. Impact
as the identity font. This heavy sans serif font boldly reflects the strong visual identity
created by the vivid color schemes. Both the size and color of the font are strong enough
to identify the product, but visually recede against the background colors so as not to
compete with the vibrancy of the label. Product information on the front is 8 pt. Impact,
colored at a 60 % tint of the background color so it too recedes in comparison to the logo
and pill texture. The spacing between the letters (leading) was opened to help increase
legibility at a small font size. Product information on the back is 6 pt. Verdana, color
coordinated to match the label color on the front. This sans serif font reads easily at such
a small point size.

I chose yellow 24 pt. Georgia Bold Italic for the brand and primary product
information text on the front of the label targeting the 40 year old demographic. Serif
fonts are very elegant, thus fitting the analysis of the target demographic group. This
sophisticated font is further emphasized by an italic face. The combination of point size
and color makes this font very legible and equal in visual hierarchy to the deep blue label
and pill pattern. Product information on the back is yellow 6 pt. Verdana, reversed out of the blue label for maximum legible contrast.

Arial Black was selected as the primary font for the 60 year old demographic because it’s heavy block face is very legible at medium to large font sizes. The white brand font, reversed out of a bold red bar, is 24 pt. Secondary product information is dark grey 14 pt. Arial Black, providing maximum readability while receding in comparison to the dominant red. The product information on the side of the label is dark grey 10 pt. Verdana face. Information headings are emphasized in red 10 pt. Verdana. A larger label surface allowed for a larger typeface, which helps increase legibility for hard-of-sight seniors. To further aid in readability of the product label, the brand name Tylenol is spelled out in Braille so that the seeing-impaired public is still able to determine that they are indeed taking the proper pain relief medication.

The effectiveness of a package design is due in large part to the cohesiveness of visual, textual, and color elements. One dimension of the overall design where my solutions further target each demographic group is the analysis and appropriate inclusion of uniquely shaped packaging. Because different age groups use different amounts of the product, size of the container became an important consideration in finding the appropriate packaging solution. Shape, material, and style of enclosure were all given consideration. The sleekly styled tin that targets the 20 year old demographic is small enough to hold 100 caplets, enough to last any student through a difficult semester. Its shape allows it to easily fit in a pocket or purse, appropriate for easy storage that fits the nature of this active demographic. Made out of aluminum, the packaging will stand up to any wear and tear it may receive as a result of being dropped when impaired. Of course,
the smooth technological look of the overall package meets the high-style requirements of this appearance-conscious age group and matches today’s top electronic innovations.

A 300-caplet bottle fulfills the pharmaceutical use of the 40 year old demographic, providing enough pain relief for the parent/office worker/weekend warrior. A sleek rectangular shape gives a sharp sense of sophistication that is matched by the clear plastic construction, yet the package is tough enough to stand up to any household accident, mid-life crisis, or tantrum-throwing toddler. A hard plastic enclosure is difficult for children to tamper with, yet easier for adults to open than the press-and-turn cap on most pill bottles. Both visually and functionally, this package meets the sophisticated style appropriate for the 40 year old demographic.

Relieving pain shouldn’t have to be a pain. Thus, easy use was of primary concern in the development of the packaging for the 60 year old age group. A 500-caplet bottle provides enough relief for the everyday aches associated with older age. Because of its bulk, this economy-size bottle is also more cost-effective and easy to handle with arthritic hands. Made of durable white plastic, this bottle is designed to keep the product fresh for an extended period of time and withstand anything active seniors can throw at it. The larger bottle also helps visually distinguish this medication among the cupboard mass of pharmaceutical containers in the bathroom or kitchen. A majority of the people I questioned concurred that the push-cap enclosure was much easier to open than a push-and-twist lid, further facilitating the user-friendly design of this package.

Since our economy is so consumer-driven, product sales depend heavily on powerful brand promotion. Effective promotion depends on an analytical understanding of a target demographic. Designers are called upon to reach their audience in the most
effective manner with intelligent products and creative solutions that are tailored to the needs and preferences of those specific people. In evaluating 20, 40, and 60 year old age demographics, I have redesigned appropriate package solutions for a product common to all three groups- Tylenol pain reliever- and gained a further understanding of the research and analysis that strengthens a visually appealing solution.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


**Tylenol**

**Extra Strength**

**Pain Reliever**

*Active Ingredient (in each caplet)*
Acetaminophen 500mg

*Uses*
- temporarily relieves:
  - headache
  - backache
  - the common cold
  - menstrual cramps

*Purpose*
- Pain reliever/fever reducer

*Direction*
Adults and children 12 years and over:
- Take 2 caplets every 4 to 6 hours as needed
- Do not take more than 8 caplets in 24 hours

Children under 12:
- Do not use this product for children under 12.

*Warnings*
- Overdose warning: Taking more than the recommended dose may cause liver damage.
  - In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.

*500 caplets 500 mg*
tylenol  (Impact)

extra strength

pain reliever

100 caplets  500 mg

tylenol  (venus rising)

tylenol  (haottenschweiler)

tylenol  (andale mono)
100 caps

500 mg

Tylenol (verdana italic)

extra strength

Tylenol (news gothic mt italic)

Tylenol (myriad italic)

Tylenol (georgia italic)

Tylenol (montype corsiva)

Tylenol (book antiqua bold italic)

Tylenol (baskerville seminal bold italic)
Drug Facts

Active Ingredient (in each caplet)
Acetaminophen 500mg

Purpose
Pain reliever/fever reducer

Uses
temporarily relieves:
• headache
• backache
• the common cold
• menstrual cramps

• muscular aches
• arthritis
• toothache
• reduces fever

Directions
Adults and children 12 years and over
• take 2 caplets every 4 to 6 hours as needed
• do not take more than 8 caplets in 24 hours

Warnings
Overdose warning: Taking more than the recommended dose may cause liver damage. In case of overdose, get medical help or contact a Poison Control Center right away.