

Developing an Effective Brand in the Health Food Market

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the factors of design and determine their effects on consumer behavior. It is valuable to discover the psychological and physiological factors that drive consumer behavior. The Graphic Communication industry plays a significant role in the success of brands. Research was used to gain insight to design and develop a brand identity for a mock business using Graphic Communication skills.

Chapter 1

Purpose of the Study

In recent years the concept of design has evolved. Products are not purchased simply for their purpose, but because of the aesthetic appeal of their graphics and packages. From print advertisements to packaging, everything can and will be used as a selling point for products. The development and utilization of design has paved the way for more products to evolve. Markets and products employ design techniques in various ways to catch the eye of a wide range of consumers. The food industry is a market that has begun to explore endless design capabilities. Health foods in particular target an audience that is constantly seeking something new and better. The ability to market towards people living a healthy and active lifestyle is constantly growing.

What influences consumers to purchase particular styles and designs of health products and their packaging and labels? Companies must consider the consumer to capitalize on the opportunities of the market. New products are designed to appeal specifically to personality types so that the product can resonate with the purchaser. An ongoing trend of niche markets provides the ideal platform for innovative design.

Among these niche markets is the emerging popularity of açai bowls. The Amazonian “superfood” is consumed and craved regularly by health-conscious consumers on the West Coast. As a new product development, an açai bowl brand can merge with recent developments in the understanding and psychology of design to become a product that takes on a personality of its own. A consumer’s first glance at the color, type, texture, or shape of a product can make or break the buying decision.

This study focuses on the psychological and physiological effects that result in purchasing decisions. These effects will be considered in determining trends in current niche

markets. The research will provide a deeper understanding of the importance of design and the ways that design pertain to a new market. The results of current and future studies can be used to create a mock business for açai bowls that encompasses the dominance of beautiful design and healthy lifestyles in the modern market.

Significance of the Study

The food and design industries will continue to grow as people continue to research and innovate. The health food market is evolving as research and science contributes to new trends in eating habits. The health food trends that have experienced growth in recent years have created a new demand for wholesome, simple products that were not previously available as prepackaged foods. As new products become available, graphic communication is crucial. The ability to design and package a product that is aesthetically appealing to a range of demographics contributes to success. Beautiful design can be used to establish trends and prove the effectiveness of design in every market. The proper understanding and utilization of aesthetically pleasing design can determine the overall success of a company, especially when a brand identity can resonate with a personality.

Interest in the Study

Consumer preferences are apparent in the global market. Certain colors, images, shapes, and more can be the selling point of a product, however most consumers are unaware of the science behind such behaviors. The Graphic Communication industry focuses on important facets of the consumer market today, including design and packaging. Design Reproduction Technology within the Graphic Communication major provides the knowledge to identify trends

in the market today. The skill set and knowledge also provide the ability to develop a mock business while considering the importance of design in the market. Materials, colors, and graphics are a few of the things that come into play when a consumer is making a decision, whether consciously or subconsciously. Existing research was used and further conducted to determine what motivates purchasers in different markets.

It is valuable to understand the importance of design. The skills acquired from the Graphic Communication department can be compiled in to a brand identity in the form of a mock business for an açai bowl shop that encompasses design and effective packaging while targeting a niche market. The research compiled has provided a deeper understanding of the importance of design and how minds work in the consumer market.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The look of a product is its primary selling point, and research suggests that consumers are more inclined to purchase a product that has a unique visual appeal. The communication potential for marketing collateral and packaging in the food industry is ever changing. Visual appeal enhances the perception of quality. Color, typography, and shapes are among numerous factors that capture the attention of the consumer market and fuel the success of products. Products are designed and positioned in a particular way because the perceptions of a given set of consumers reflect and inspire at the same time the company's strategy for its products (Ampuero & Vila, 2006).

The consumer market on the West Coast, for example, is fueled by messages of personal and global health. Sustainability has become a dominant concept from the technical level of packaging materials to the global overview of enhancing the quality of life by being "green." Jane Dirr, president and CEO of cosmetic brand Nvey Eco summarized the importance of brand identity by stating that "the materials used, the graphics and the performance must reflect our commitment to the health of our clients and of our planet" (Newman, 2009). Companies that have been successful in establishing brand identity and creating quality products have merged simplicity with honesty. A brand name is sold just as much as the product itself.

The behaviors in the consumer market vary among demographics but share a common factor: consumers are drawn towards products that reflect their lifestyle. Representing a lifestyle through brand identity is the ultimate way to establish a brand name in a niche market.

The graphic communication and food industries are related in the sense that both have endless potential for innovation. They provide unique opportunities to capitalize on both

industries by identifying a demand from a lifestyle perspective and fulfilling that demand with a product that enhances particular characteristics. The demographic of the West Coast tends to favor the trends of healthy living and environmental awareness. Nine out of ten purchasers buy on impulse, so it is important that the first look at a product immediately relates to the purchaser (McNeal & Ji, 2003).

Factors of Successful Design

Differentiation in product design is a strategic tool in the consumer market, particularly when price and quality are similar. The aesthetic appearance of a product is just as important as its purpose in the consumer market. Color, images, typography, shape, size, and texture can be considered as the factors of design.

Consumers have psychological associations with color, whether it may be a personal response or a common identification with a particular color. Green may represent envy, purple is indicative of royalty, and red can be used to imply intensity. The saturation and shade of all colors come into play as well in design. Psychological associations have been observed and evaluated. The framework in figure 1 provides a better understanding of the theories of voluntary and involuntary attention in relation to color (Kauppinen-Räsänen & Luomala, 2010).

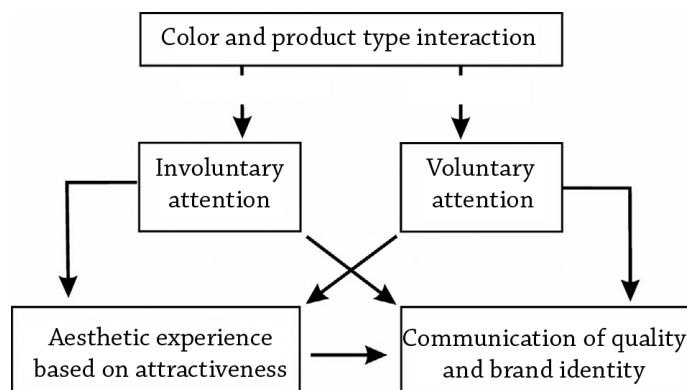


Figure 1.
The Theoretical Framework of Voluntary and Involuntary Attention

From a theoretical standpoint, color can elicit a particular response from a consumer. Research suggests that, for example, a consumer may prefer blue clothes but may dislike that color in home furnishing, or red may communicate pain in the connection of painkillers, but it may convey the idea of sportiness when associated with cars (Kauppinen-Räsänen & Luomala, 2010). The emotions that are related to colors influence decisions made in the consumer market. Figure 2 displays an example of these colors in the marketplace.

Further scientific research supports theoretical evidence. Aesthetic stimuli shape individual perceptions of color, both through embodied and referential meaning. A two-dimensional framework for color suggests that one dimension results in a physiological response, while the second dimension relates to evaluative response. Physiological response affects brain activity and heart rate. Evaluative response results in attitude change (McClelland 1988). Memory models in neuroscience suggest that people store semantic information in a complex network comprised of conceptual nodes and links (Labrecque & Milne, 2012). Links are the pathways between nodes and can be positive or negative. The activation of nodes spread to links, which represent knowledge and “learning is conceptualized as the adjustment of weights as individuals use feedback to update associations” (Janiszewski & Van Osselaer, 2000).

Since color triggers an association, a brand logo should imply related color associations. A brand personality is displayed by an individual’s perception of the brand aesthetics. Color research has shown that consumers are drawn towards products of a particular color due to factors such as gender, age, demographic, and the like.



Figure 2.
Color theory in packaging

Shape is a second consideration that influences effective design. Similar to color, shapes have particular connotations. Circles can create a softer look, while rectangles and squares have sharp lines that result in different consumer associations. Studies suggest that elongated packages appear larger and packages that are bigger in size may communicate a better deal to the consumer (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). The shape of a product can also alter the perceived weight. A research study confirmed that consumers select a product based on the perceived volume and weight as portrayed by the package shape (Deng, 2009). Shape and size go hand-in-hand in design principles. Small products may appear more delicate and thus have a packaging shape that is scaled to the appropriate size.

The consumer response to texture has also influenced design. Whether a brand is establishing an identity that is sleek, clean, or playful, the texture of a product enhances the look-and-feel that becomes an important point of sale. The aesthetic appeal of textures in the consumer market can be explained by scientific research of aesthetic stimuli (Radford & Bloch, 2011). Stimuli in the brain are triggered by sight and create observable reactions. Visual design is critical as it is the consumer's first assessment of a product in a competitive market.

Q-Sort, MDS, and the Behavioral Perspective Model

The analyses of factors that influence successful design have been scientifically and methodologically researched. Q-sort “offers an initial insight into the relationships among products being judged by consumers” (Radford & Bloch, 2011). The Q-sort method was developed as a method in psychology to study personality development. The results of the study of personality can be subjective and qualitative, or objective and quantitative. William Stephenson, the founder of Q-sort, viewed the method as encompassing distinct interpretations of sampling, scaling, and data analysis that offer insight into individual variation and structure (Ozer, 2005). The method finds correlations between variables and helps researchers understand a variety of subjective viewpoints on an issue.

The non-metric multidimensional scaling procedure, or MDS, analyzes stimuli on a two-dimensional map based on relative distinctions between the stimuli. The method involves a three-step data reduction process that compares stimuli distances. An analysis of the results provides further insight into similarities and dissimilarities of brain responses. MDS has an emphasis on visualization and “relies on researchers’ interpretation of the dimensionality of a perceptual map” (Radford & Bloch, 2011). MDS is used in the analysis of product design due to the interaction of the stimuli with aesthetic associations. The configuration of stimuli indicates the activity of the brain based on visual perceptions. Q-sort and MDS offer intricate scientific procedures that confirm the importance of aesthetics.

The Behavioral Perspective Model is the third method of analysis that can be applied to consumer behavior. Unlike Q-Sort and MDS, BPM focuses on consumer actions rather than brain stimuli functions. The radical choice model offers a framework derived from behavior analysis, behavioral economics, and marketing (Foxall, 2013). The framework suggests that

consumer behaviors result from previous behavior. Figure 3 depicts how attitudes and intentions result in behavior.

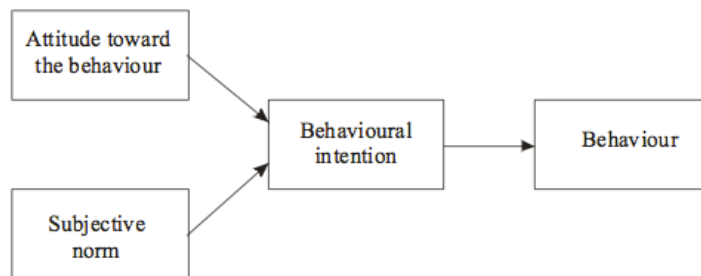


Figure 3.
Theory of Reasoned Action

BPM can be used to explain consumer behavior from a psychological level rather than the scientific analysis provided by Q-sort and MDS. It is effective in identifying more immediate behavioral responses from consumers and predicting the implications of behavioral responses.

How Design Influences Consumers

Psychological and physiological analyses confirm that product design sets competitors apart. A product's visual design is among the first pieces of information consumers encounter and thus plays a front-line role in the success of a product (Kotler & Rath, 1984). The visual appearance of a product allows a consumer to draw inferences about the particular brand and triggers responses that ultimately result in the success of a brand identity. A study concluded that over 70% of purchase decisions are made at the shelf (Ahmad, Billoo, & Lakhan, 2012). As brand name or image increases the value of the brand in the eyes of the customers so they are purchasing a particular brand again and again (Gabbott & Hogg, 1998).

A company must consider the intent of the product along with the general desired perception of the brand identity. The aesthetic factors of design, as supported by research methods, are key to success. While individuals stimulate such factors in different ways, products

throughout all consumer markets can be optimized in their design to best identify with the traits of the purchaser. The ability to relate brand identity to personal identity is an important consideration for the overall success of a product and brand. The correlation between identities will benefit all facets of design and the consumer market.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to identify and analyze the psychological effects of good design and apply them to developing a brand in the health food market. Design is a primary selling point in the consumer market. The importance of design has become increasingly evident in the food market. Aesthetic appearance has become as much of a selling point as the actual product. The objective of this study was to determine how to best develop a brand design for an açai bowl shop based on consumer reactions to various colors, shapes, textures, typography, and more.

Data Collection Plan

Açai bowls have become a growing trend in the health food market. Research was compiled from two markets: design and food. The research for design explored the aesthetic factors that influence consumer reactions. A survey was used to gather the opinions of the target market. The most effective way to administer this survey was through Facebook. While Facebook may not seem to provide the most accurate data, it encompasses the ideal target market for the mock business. The survey was administered to participants ages 15-60. The participants were asked about their interest in the health food market, the importance of design when purchasing a product, and the driving forces behind their particular choice of a design.

A focus group was then used to test reactions to various designs. The focus group consisted of a small group of Cal Poly students. The behavior of the participants, who varied in age and gender, were observed when given the chance to select a particular design. None of the students selected were pursuing a major or minor in Graphic Communication to avoid

curriculum-induced bias. The results from the survey and focus group were compiled and used to further develop designs for the mock business.

Data Analysis Plan

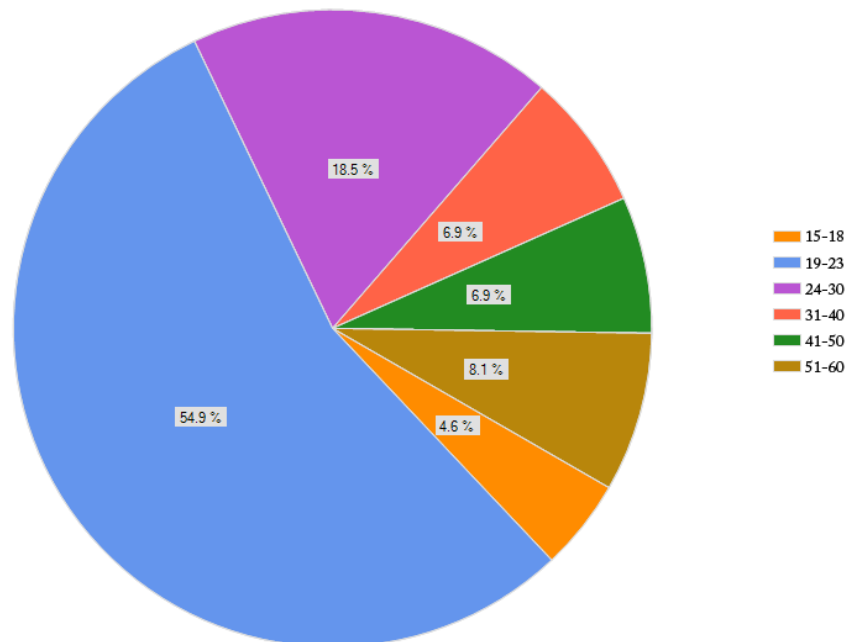
The results from the survey and focus group were used to determine the effects of age, gender, and demographic in regards to health food product design. The data was used to design brand identities for a mock açai bowl business. The results from the surveys were displayed as charts to show trends in preference. The results from the focus group were used to further develop design mock-ups. The participants' opinions were taken into account throughout the brand development process.

Chapter 4

Survey

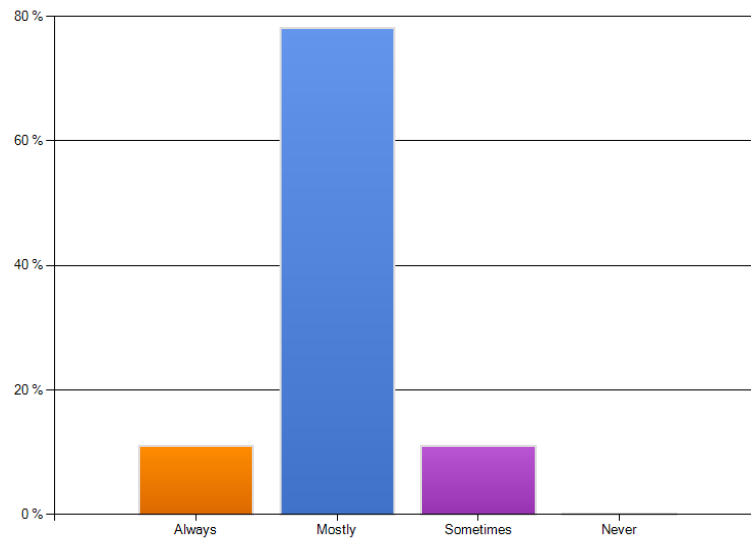
A survey was designed and administered to evaluate opinions for a mock business design of an açai smoothie shop. The business was fictitiously called “The Purple Press Berry Bar” and a variety of logo designs were developed around the theme of a health-oriented smoothie shop. The survey was targeted towards individuals aged 15-60 living in California. The chosen demographic was determined as the most applicable sample for the mock business proposal. According to the California demographic statistics from the 2010 census, the population of individuals in California in the 15-60 age range is approximately 21,345,466. A sample size of 150 was required to obtain results with a confidence interval of 95% and a confidence level of 8. The following questions and charts depict the results of the survey.

1. What is your age range?



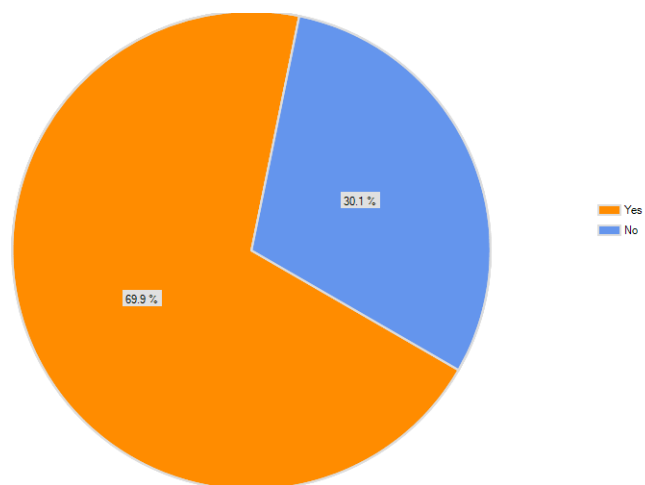
The majority of participants fell within the 19 to 23 age range. Ages 24-30 made up the second largest portion of those interviewed and all other ages were relatively equal.

2. Do you consider yourself a healthy person?



The majority of the sample of 170 individuals who participated in the survey considered themselves mostly healthy individuals. According to the 95% confidence level, this sample suggests that between 70.5 and 85.5% of individuals aged 15-60 in the state of California consider themselves mostly healthy.

3. Do you ever purchase a product based on the design rather than the contents?



The survey confirmed that design is an important factor in purchasing decisions. 69.9% of participants responded positively to the question that asked about product design versus contents. The survey suggests with 95% confidence that between 61.9% and 77.9% of individuals aged 15-60 in California purchase products based on design rather than the contents.

4. Which of the following designs do you prefer for an açai/smoothie shop?



14.5%



38.7%



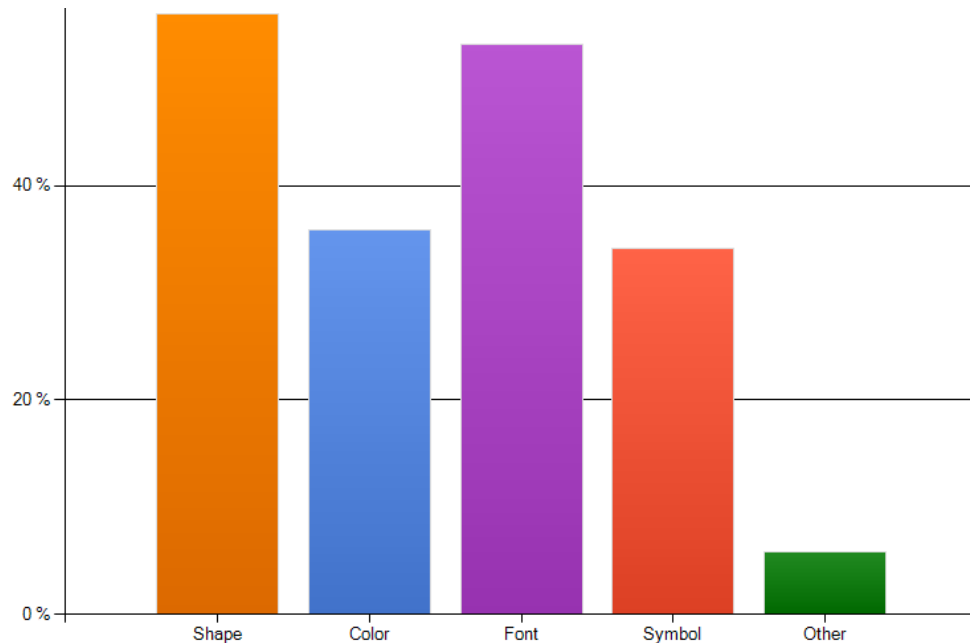
18.5%



28.3%

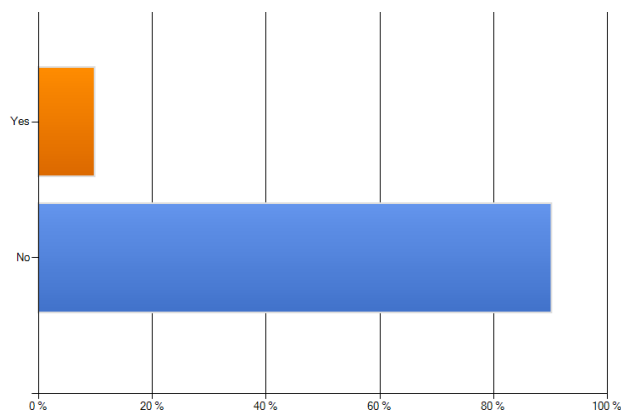
These designs were influenced by and created according to modern design trends in the food industry. The majority of responses favored the top right design. 38.7% of participants chose this design. The bottom right was the second favorite among participants with an overall vote of 28.3%.

5. Why did you choose this design?



When asked about their choice of design, participants were primarily drawn to the shape and font used. 56.1% of responses favored shape and 53.2% chose font. Participants noted that the swatch of purple under the main title was an attractive feature. Other descriptive terms included clean, modern, legible, and simple. Color and symbol were selected at 35.8% and 34.1% respectively. The “other” selection included responses that mentioned the appeal of the descriptive terms like “Central Coast” and “Açaí Bowls.”

7. Are you a Graphic Communication, Graphic Design, or related major?



To prevent bias from individuals who have studied design, the survey responses filtered out any individual that is a Graphic Communication, Graphic Design, or related major. The survey results reflect the opinions and information provided by 156 individuals who did not pursue an education in a design-related field of study.

Focus Group

Eight Cal Poly students were selected to form a focus group for further research. The focus group represents 10% of all survey participants who live in San Luis Obispo, California and have not studied a design-related field. The focus group participants included four males and four females who all fell into the 19 to 23 age range, which made up 70% of all respondents. The focus group was asked to choose a design and describe their initial reaction. The most common explanations for responses can be reviewed in Appendix C. The focus group was also asked to discuss what type of presentation, particularly in a menu, they prefer for the mock business. The menu design in Appendix D was the most popular choice. In choosing a presentation method for the physical product, respondents preferred a transparent container that shows the contents of an açai bowl. Various colors and styles of cardboard containers were rejected. The participants agreed that the choice of a transparent container inferred the concept of health foods, which are known for not hiding any harmful or synthetic ingredients.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to determine the significance in design, particularly in the health food market, when consumers are selecting a product. The study focused on the creation of a mock açai smoothie shop business to collect feedback from consumers about the effects of design on purchasing habits. As stated in the research proposal, a product's visual design is among the first pieces of information consumers encounter and thus plays a front-line role in the success of a product (Kotler & Rath, 1984).

This conclusion was drawn from a study that surveyed the opinions of individuals upon introduction to a design concept. The survey was administered to participants ranging in age from 15 to 60. The majority of participants considered themselves mostly healthy people. None of the responses were skewed from bias of having a Graphic Communication, Graphic Design, or related background. The survey results indicated that design plays a role in purchasing decisions. People also select particular designs for different reasons. A focus group that was conducted after collecting the survey results confirmed the majority opinion. The results of the survey also reflected the findings of a study entitled “Effect of product packaging on consumer buying decision” from the Journal of Business strategies, which concluded that over 70% of purchase decisions are made at the shelf (Ahmad, Billoo, & Lakhan, 2012). In a sample of 156 individuals surveyed, 69.9% claimed to purchase a product based on the design.

The scientific and methodological research employed in analyzing consumer decisions can be detected in the results of the study. Among the individuals who considered themselves mostly healthy, 42% preferred one particular design out of the possible four. The non-metric multidimensional scaling procedure claims describes similarities of brain responses based on the

interaction of stimuli. The popularity of one particular design over other options from individuals who all relate to a particular lifestyle suggests that these stimuli responded in a certain way to aesthetic appeal. The results also indicated that shape and font were among the most important factors for the choice of design. Further comments claimed that the legibility, cleanliness, and simplicity were significant considerations in design choice. A few participants commented on the modern look of the chosen final design.

The focus group of Cal Poly students in the 19 to 23 age range further confirmed the consensus provided by survey results. The students selected for the focus group did not have any bias based on the knowledge or factors of design. The discussion questions that provided greater insight can be viewed in Appendix B. Among the group of students, six selected the design that was most popular in the survey. When asked about the modern or trendy appeal, most students claimed that this style of design was becoming more popular. A few commented that they typically associated this style of design, including the swatch of color and symbols, with unique products. Participants also referred to positive experiences they have personally had when choosing a product based on the design without prior knowledge of the quality. The students who chose a different design than the one selected for final development commented on the appeal of different symbols and descriptive phrases used in other logo designs. The participants discussed the ambiguity of the name in certain designs and upon first glance. This would affect the number of consumers, as some may not consider purchasing a product that does not have an obvious description in the name, brand, or logo.

The focus group was asked to pick up the package that they were initially attracted to. Seven respondents chose the transparent container that can be seen in Appendix D. They discussed how they liked how they could physically see the product. This provides a more

enjoyable experience because it seems more “clean” and “fresh,” the participants explained. This discussion played a significant role in developing the menu designs, which provide pictures of menu items to enhance the customer’s understanding of the product and its contents. The focus group was also asked about the growing popularity of the health food market. Respondents shared personal experiences about their adaptation to a healthier lifestyle due to the availability of products such as açai bowls. The consensus among the focus group participants was that the evolution of design and the growing knowledge about the health food market were equally important factors in establishing a brand or product in the current market.

In conclusion, research suggests that the aesthetic appeal of a brand and product is an important factor of success. In a growing market, companies must look beyond the product and develop a brand identity and design to sustain a competitive advantage. Design is a powerful tool that has proven to engage consumers at first glance. Developing a brand identity and using it effectively to establish, grow, and market a business is crucial factor of differentiation and ultimately a significant source of success.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study

If time permitted, the development of a brand identity for a mock business should incorporate digital trends. The development of a website and mobile application would provide more data on the effect of design from a digital standpoint. A larger sample size and more discussions would provide more accurate data and insight into tracing the patterns of individuals when questioned about design preferences. Additionally, it would be effective to establish the business and periodically evaluate the effect of the design in the overall success.

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Appendix A.

Mock Business Survey

1. What is your age range?

☐ 15-18

☐ 19-23

☐ 24-30

☐ 31-40

☐ 41-50

☐ 50-60

2. Where do you live?

City:

State:

3. Do you consider yourself a healthy person?

☐ Always

☐ Mostly

☐ Sometimes

☐ Never

4. Do you ever purchase a product based on the design rather than the contents?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Appendix A (continued).

5. Which of the following designs do you prefer for an açai/smoothie shop?



6. Why did you choose this design?

- ☐ Shape
- ☐ Color
- ☐ Font
- ☐ Symbol
- ☐ Other

7. Are you a Graphic Communication, Graphic Design, or related major?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Appendix B.

Focus Group Survey

1. Please select an image of the design that most appeals to you.
2. What initially attracted you to this design?
3. After the discussion, what have you realized about the design that also caught your eye?
4. Would this design influence you to purchase a product from the shop, even if you had no prior knowledge of the company or product?
5. Does the appearance seem modern? Trendy? If so, how does this influence your decision?
6. Which type of packaging would make the product most appealing and why?

Appendix C.

Comments on Chosen Design

Comments included the following:

I like the smear of purple

The design as a whole looks clean and modern

I want to know it's a berry bar, not a newspaper

Arrows

I liked the pop of purple color and how the font makes it stand out. Simple but overall caught my eye the most.

Readability. Not old fashioned.

Modern looking

Cleanliness and simplicity of design

Simple and stands out

Clean/Easy to read

Clean and concise

I feel like I've seen other designs out there before. The new one would catch my eye.

Size & centrality of words not too crowded not too small

Clean Design

Size/Simplicity

Easy to read

Simplicity

Appendix D.

Final Designs

Logo design



Partial menu design



Full menu design



Appendix D (continued).

Business Card design



Package design

