

Lesson 1-5.

What Are They Really Selling?



Topic:

Does Packaging Make A Difference?

When you go into a store, how do you decide which product to buy? All things being equal (e.g., cost, quality, name recognition) you would probably pick the product with the most attractive packaging. In fact, businesses spend millions of dollars designing packages that will attract potential buyers. In this lesson, club members learn to become more critical consumers of products when they experience a taste test. The objective is:

- Club members will discover how we may make assumptions about the “goodness” of a product based on its packaging.

Materials

In preparation for this activity, collect a variety of magazines and periodicals that contain ads that might appeal to youngsters. Also, make recordings of commercials that air during children’s programs. Collect wrappers and packages from name brand and off-brand products with which the children are familiar.

This activity requires the use of 2

products—a name-brand and an off-brand—that are basically the same but packaged differently by their respective companies. For example, you might select a cereal from a major company and a bag of the same cereal only in a “bulk” plastic bag. (Note: Corn chips, potato chips, crackers, and soda drinks also work well. We recommend avoiding high sugar products, such as candy.) Prior to the demonstration, switch the contents of the packages (i.e., put the generic product in the name-brand packaging and vice-versa). Label the generic package “A” and the name brand package “B.”



Use the rating scale in Appendix 1-3.

Discovery Procedures

Use the following steps to engage club members in the activity:

- Give club members a chance to immerse themselves in looking at various advertisements and packages. Encourage them to be conscious observers—that is, to study the ad or packaging and think about their reactions. What do they like? What don’t they like?
- Ask the club members if they have ever heard the term, “plain brown wrapper.” Invite them to share their views on the meaning of the phrase. Show them a wrapper from a name brand candy bar and a comparable one from an off-brand (you might want to mount these on tag board). Ask the club members to tell you which candy bar they would

- pick, and record their answers.
- If the children tend to pick the name-brand wrapper, then ask them: Would you still pick it if it cost more? Ask them to respond to the following rating scale: I would pick the candy in the pretty wrapper if it
 - (1) _____ Costs 5 cents more;
 - (2) _____ Costs 10 cents more;
 - (3) _____ Only if it costs the same amount. Again, record their answers.
 - Tell the that they are going to learn more about packaging by performing a taste test. Present the two products that you earlier labeled “A” and “B.” Point to the generic packaging and then to the name brand packaging. Ask the club members to predict which one they think is best. Record their answers.
 - Pass out a sample of each of the cereals you labeled “A” and “B” to each club member. As you pass out the samples, make sure that the children know which box the sample came from. Ask them to taste both and then record which one tasted best. Record everyone’s answer in a composite chart. If you are working with a small group, you may wish to have each club member come up and taste individually. This adds a certain dramatic flair to the experiment.
 - No matter which sample was picked, ask the club members

to share why their choice was the best. At the end of the discussion, reveal the deception and return to the youngster’s predictions. If the club members picked the name brand product, ask them the following: “If the product really is better, why do we need a better package?” If the club members picked the generic product, ask them to share their views about how packaging can influence buyers. With their new knowledge, do they look at the packaging of products “differently?”

- Look back at the scores on the candy wrapper segment. Would they spend more for a product because of the wrapper? Has their opinion changed? At the end of the activity, club members should have discovered the first steps in becoming informed consumers.

Discovery Book

The following suggestions can be used to help club members reflect on their discovery:

- Have the club members title the page “Packaging.” Give them this challenge: You are assigned to design the package for a new brand of cookies. You can spend an extra \$.50 per package on fancy packaging, or you can go with a plain brown wrapper. Which one do you choose and why?
- Think about your favorite treat. What is it about the package that you like best?



I would pick the candy if it:

- (1) _____ Costs 5 cents more.
- (2) _____ Costs 10 cents more.
- (3) _____ Only if it costs the same amount.





Product Rating Scale

- 1) _____ No way, I definitely would not buy this product.
 - 2) _____ No, I probably would not buy this product.
 - 3) _____ Yes, I probably would buy this product.
 - 4) _____ Yes, I would definitely buy this product.
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