

The Marketing of the Green

A good time for algae shampoo

BY RYAN DORAN

rdoran@westfairinc.com

The Zunda Group in South Norwalk has found green to be a package design must in 2009. The trick now is to have those designs resonate with consumers who like familiarity with established brands, but who place much faith in green claims and spend accordingly.

Jackie DeLise, vice president of new business development at Zunda Group, a visual identity and packaging design company for consumer brands, said that not all sustainable consumer products and practices are connecting with their audiences.

"The notion of doing your part for the greater good is a guiding principle," said DeLise. "Not only does it establish an element of hope in this economic climate, but consumers today are looking for products, services, and retailers that they feel represent experiences that connect them more on a personal level."

DeLise said that before diving into the green movement, manufacturers should be seeking first to be transparent and cautious about the claims they communicate, since today's consumers are curious yet wary about how they can improve the environment.

DeLise said according to new research from The Hartman Group, the term sustainability is not yet a household term and unfamiliar to almost half of U.S. consumers.

"Many of those who do know what it means don't know for certain what companies or products are truly sustainable," said DeLise.

DeLise said it is hard for consumers to know which companies support these values and which products are truly sustainable.

DeLise said one industry that has jumped on the sustainable wagon, though in different degrees, are the personal care products.

"Despite the current economic climate, the personal



care category usually maintains a consistent level of demand, because consumers deem their personal products to be a major part of their essential buys," said DeLise.

According to a study by the Greenwashing Forum at the University of Oregon, four out of five consumers continue to buy products that claim to be green. Though data from the science-based research organization Green Seal, and the Austin, TX-based socially conscious marketing firm EnviroMedia, found that about one in three consumers acknowledge not having enough knowledge to determine whether green product claim is accurate.

"There remains a great willingness among consumers to want to buy these products and do their part," said DeLise. "But the reality is that consumers are not making green a priority in their shopping behavior or buying green as much as some marketers believe. They are still making purchase decisions based on brand recognition."

DeLise said packaging professionals are in agreement that sustainability will only begin to make sense to the buyer when transparency and rationality are instilled in it.

"When a balance of 'reduce, reuse, recycle' and the beauty, efficacy, or functionality of a package are not compromised," said DeLise.

DeLise said that in addition to using the green and

substantial trends, smart retailers are creating new, unusual, and innovative ways to act and interact within the retail environment. "The goal is to create brand-activated and customer-interactive shopping that take customers beyond the mere notion of buying a product," said DeLise.

DeLise said at the Zunda Group they are helping their clients brands like Dannon, Colgate, Newman's Own, Playtex and Palmolive, create these kinds of connections.

DeLise said the advent of viral marketing has created consumers who are actively seeking interactive experiences.

"Addressing consumer needs with package and display design will help retailers to start thinking outside of the vanilla box.

DeLise said that though e-tail and big-box mass shopping has grown the consumer experience of today has not changed all that much from the '80s and '90s; still the majority of purchase decisions are being made at the retail point-of-sale, most shelf sets are either under stocked, cluttered or confusing and at best, most retail environments are difficult to shop, with customers generally frustrated. DeLise said that leaves tremendous opportunity.