



Packaging Effectiveness

Business and Research Challenge

Olive Orchard Options

California Olive Ranch is a young company founded with a single-minded focus: create and market a premium olive oil that consumers would love. Creating the product itself was something that they were well-suited to do. It's delicious and admirably high in quality; in fact, California Olive Ranch leads the development of a new way of harvesting olives that results in the freshest oil. But making a superior product is one thing. Launching a new brand into an already-full category is another. California Olive Ranch knew that the most effective marketing they could muster was core to their business strategy and goals.

The brain responds to food marketing in some specialized ways. Mirror neurons play a key role. When observing someone else consuming a food, the brain actually experiences the same sensations itself, as if it were consuming the food as well. As mentioned above, products that you ingest or apply to your body invoke different sensual hierarchies than other products.

Another key point is that the brain prefers to see presentations of 'natural' images associated with food; and there are more such distinct neurological characteristics which can improve the effectiveness of food marketing efforts.

Being the savvy business people they are, the California Olive Ranch team sought to leave no potential advantage unused. In a category like theirs, with long-established and entrenched competition, relatively low levels of consumer interest and engagement, and retailers for whom shelf space is some very valuable real estate, launching a new product presents stiff challenges.

California Olive Ranch had developed two different package design solutions: one we'll call "Map", featuring a stylized map of California; and the other "Orchard". Diving to the deep subconscious level of the mind would uncover the neurological effectiveness of each of these two options.

Study Design Parameters

We devised a neurological testing scenario that would plumb those depths and discover

Category

Food & Beverage Packaging

Young company launching product in an already-full category



NeuroFocus measures the brain at 2,000 times a second

Test subjects are monitored for their complete brain reactions. Eye-tracking indicates objects of focus.

Subconscious response to packaging as well as brand

how consumers would respond at retail to this new olive oil. The first phase would explore consumers' subconscious responses to the package design. The second phase would tease out those deep-seated, precognitive responses to the new brand itself and its perceived attributes.

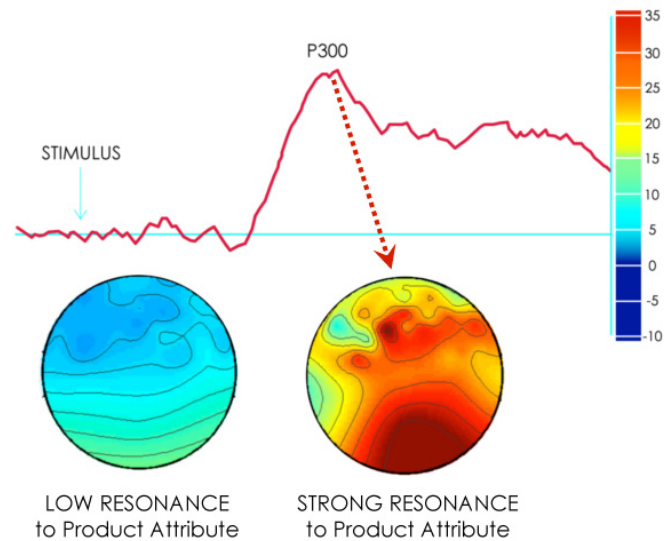
Test Variables: Two different package designs

Precise Measures of Attention, Emotional Engagement, and Memory retention

There were four fundamental objectives for the testing:

1. Determine each package's ability to score well in our three primary NeuroMetrics: capturing consumers' attention; engaging their emotions; and stimulating memory retention
2. Evaluate how the packages scored in our derived market performance metrics of purchase intent, novelty, and awareness
3. Measure how well the packages conveyed the intended messaging
4. Compare the packages' performance to two competitors

Image: Deep subconscious response indicated by the P300 spike



Baseline

First, we conduct neurological testing to measure the brain's responses to these three words. This measurement establishes a 'baseline,' giving us a clear picture of how the brain reacts to these specific stimuli. The chosen words are inserted among other 'distractor' words, so no special attention is paid to them during this phase of the test.

Brand/Product Presentation

The next step is to show an image of the brand or product. In California Olive Ranch's case, we had bottles with the two different label designs on them.

Message Resonance

The third step is to repeat exposing the words, intermixed with the distractors.

*Subconscious response
to brand*

Comparing the neurological results of the first baseline test with the results from the second “resonance” round, after exposure to the brand/product, reveals the degree to which the subconscious mind associates those attributes with the brand. From a scientific perspective, this process produces unequivocal evidence—there are no other variables involved, so the results are clear and reliable indicators of the brand’s attributes.

Considerable cost-savings

Business Value Delivered

In this California Olive Ranch example, the results of the neurological testing of the overall package design, coupled with the brand attributes study, gave the company detailed knowledge of how consumers would respond to the two different labels. The savings that can be realized at this stage of a new product launch are considerable, when you factor in the expenses incurred in the conventional model of having to conduct focus groups, test-market two different bottles, and related costs.

In comparison, neurological testing cuts right to the central issues and delivers precise, concise answers, in a fraction of the time at a fraction of the cost of traditional methods. What did measuring consumers’ subconscious responses to the two different package designs produce for California Olive Ranch? How did this new brand measure up against two existing brands?

A clear winner in all six Neurometrics™

Key Results and Insights

“Map” versus “Orchard”

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a winner: “Orchard”.

Consumers’ brains preferred that label design in every one of our six metrics: attention, emotional engagement, memory retention, purchase intent, novelty, and awareness. In five of the six, the margins were significant—sometimes major. In memory retention, the two designs were close enough to be called even, although there was an identifiable edge for “Orchard”. When we developed an Overall Neurological Effectiveness score for both bottles, “Orchard” notched significantly higher than the “Map”.

Brand Attributes

Both label designs attained positive rankings for the brand attributes studied. “Orchard” gained the upper hand, though, in two-thirds of the target messages.

Competitive Products Comparison

Both California Olive Ranch package designs fared well against the two competitors that were tested. While there was more variance across the six individual NeuroMetrics than in the head-to-head comparison between the two California Olive Ranch bottles, the net outcome was:

- “Orchard” scored higher than the competition in Overall Effectiveness (by as wide a margin in one case and even greater in the other as it had against “Map”), as well as in emotional engagement, purchase intent, and awareness.

- “Map” also scored well in these categories, with rankings greater than or equal to the competition.

Why?

Scores and other statistics are excellent objective quantifiers of a packaging design’s performance. But as central and useful as they are, they only reveal the end results of any market research methodology, including neurological testing. Discerning the broader, underlying strategic reasons for the results are where neuromarketing really adds critical value. Being able to offer specific, highly actionable recommendations on how to improve package design puts neurological testing ahead of the pack.

Best Practices and Lessons Learned

In California Olive Ranch’s case, here’s a small sampling of what we deduced from the brain-wave, eye tracking, and GSR measurements we conducted for packaging design and execution:

Standing out from the competition

- Clutter-free is a decided plus. Both competitors’ packaging is very cluttered, and the fact that both of California Olive Ranch’s designs were markedly less so gave the brand a clear competitive advantage.

Natural imagery wins

- Going natural scores points. California Olive Ranch had already made good use of ‘natural’ imagery, which the brain prefers in association with food products. We counseled that incorporating even more realistic ‘natural’ imagery (for example, the olive and orchard trees) would likely improve scores even more.

The brain loves images on the left, text to the right

- Off-center is a good thing. Our studies have shown that the brain prefers an attentional focus that is slightly off-center. California Olive Ranch already had imagery at the center of the label, which is basically pleasing to the subconscious. But shifting the central imagery a little to the left--because the brain prefers images on the left side of the visual field--might further spike effectiveness.

Continuous engagement

Client Actions

There were additional specific recommendations made, ranging from ideas for improving effectiveness using the top of the bottle to the application of certain design elements such as color and text in other locations.

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