

Formulating for marketing success by thoughtful adaptive aesthetic design

By Mark Chandler and Dr. Gabriella Baki

The goal

The ultimate goal in the development of a new cosmetic product is to build a sustained business equity. Cosmetic products are luxury goods. We do not need them, but we want them, and are willing to often pay large sums of money for them. The goal should not merely be to gain an initial sale, but to build a long term relationship with the customer. The consumer should be satisfied and excited about this relationship, excited enough that he or she willing to tell others of this fulfilling relationship.

The competition

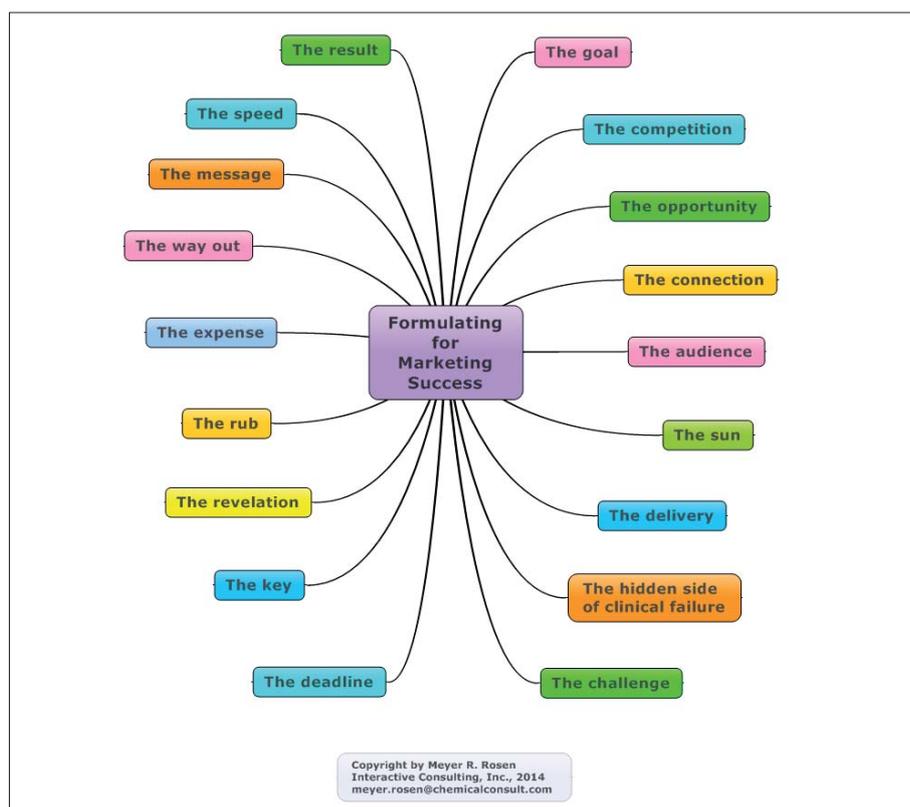
The cosmetic marketplace is a very competitive one. New offerings are continually arising. Claims of new, different, better, and faster reign. Merely staying with the competition is not enough. A different approach must be taken in order to get ahead.

The opportunity

Consumers are looking to build relationships with products. These relationships are not only built on performance, but also on emotional elements. This emotional bond can be established straight from the initial look and feel of a product. The goal is to develop a product that the consumer looks forward to using every day (or even more frequently). With this, superior performance has the opportunity to emerge in the consumer's awareness and additional sales will follow.

The connection

Since cosmetics, especially skin care products, are really luxury goods, there is an emotional component that goes along with the rational in the selection and purchase of a product. The real connection is made, though, when the product is first ex-



perienced. Making a connection via the look (appearance), the initial touch (pick-up), and application (rub-out) of the product are vital steps to building a long term relationship. These experiences are all happening long before any of the claims of the product are being realized. At this stage, the consumer will either have their purchase decision initially validated, or dissolution can arise.

The audience

There is no perfect aesthetic which is right for every application or every target audience. What someone likes on the face will be very different than what has appeal on their hands or body. A product designed for use in the morning should differ from one suggested for night application. Beach wear and daily wear sunscreens should not be the same. Skin care products designed

for young skin and aging skin should also be different. Additionally, cultural disparity can also have a huge impact on product preference. Therefore, culture, physical environment, skin type, skin condition, and age are all variables that must be taken into account.

The sun

As we now know, the ultimate anti-aging product is one that provides sun protection. It is generally believed that a combined approach of daily photoprotection and sunburn protection during episodes of intense sun exposure is the key to minimizing the risk of skin cancer and early skin aging. Consumers, armed with this information, are often still hesitant to take on this regimen. Cost does not appear to be the roadblock to sunblock. Aesthetics are likely the issue.

The delivery

In the Part 1 of this series (May 2014 Euro-Cosmetics), Formulating the Carrier Phase for Clinical Success, engineering the phase in which the drug or cosmetic active resides for maximum delivery to the skin was discussed. Adapting the emulsion platform to the characteristics of the active is also effective in building efficacy in a formulation. Important factors include emulsion structure (classic oil in water, water in oil, and liquid crystalline among others) which impact the coverage of a product on the skin. These factors are especially important when formulating such products as sunscreens.

The hidden side of clinical failure

Simply put, the most carefully formulated, clinically tested, and validated formulation will not perform if it does not leave the package on a regular basis in the correct amount. Most skin treatment products take weeks of regular use to see effects. Daily facial moisturizers with critical sun protection only work if applied to the skin in sufficient quantity. Most consumers will not grind through poor aesthetics, or aesthetics that are not appropriate for the application in order to realize the desired performance. Sadly, the market feedback, often shown to the world through blogs, comments, and ratings, is "the product did not work!"

The challenge

To begin with, the product development team should define the target audience. Too often, products are unwittingly formulated for the masses, with little attention paid to the specific desires of the people who will (hopefully) purchase the product. This can easily happen when the development team has no representative from the target market. Additionally, formulating to the aesthetics of a popular benchmark can present several strategic flaws in logic. The popular product may be popular due to many factors other than aesthetics.

The deadline

Once a project is initiated, a launch date is generally set. Shorter and shorter deadlines have become the rule. Innovation and exploration are sacrificed on the altar of the date. Risk aversion abounds. As a consequence, new products that mimic older products also abound.

The key

A study by Dr. Johann Wiechers and his team, published in the IFSCC Magazine in 2021 explained that emulsifier choice plays the dominant role in determining the aesthetics of a skin care emulsion. This runs counter to conventional wisdom (and most current emollient marketing efforts), which says that the oil phase controls the skin feel of a formulation. Appearance, Pick-up, and Rub-out characteristics, as described by Sensory Spectrum in the 2002 article, are dominated by the emulsifier choice. After-feel parameters are a mix of effects from emulsifier and emollient selection.

The revelation

Considering this information, a significant amount of strife between formulators and marketing departments can be distinguished. Formulators develop an initial submission to a marketing representative based on a brief. Feedback is provided and subsequent submissions are offered. It is no wonder that frustration is encountered by all parties when formulators are changing the wrong variable, expecting big changes in aesthetics of formulations and obtaining small ones. Only when the emulsifier is changed can the fundamentals of aesthetics be altered.

The rub

Doing things differently can be difficult. Proposing to do things differently can be an even bigger challenge. All must be clear as to the rewards associated with a different approach. Change will mean more time in development, more cost to the formulation, and a higher degree of difficulty in manufacturing. To the bold go the spoils!

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The expense

The promotional costs of launching and sustaining a new product or brand are staggering. Classical means of promotion through print, radio, television, and point-of-purchase are high dollar affairs, and now rivaled by costs of effectively getting the product message across electronically through social media, blogs, and websites. All this means that the stakes are extremely high for long-term success of a product. A new product launch must live past the introduction and be self-sustaining in order to provide a positive cash stream. Put in perspective, the investment in the product in terms of additional development, material, and manufacturing costs would appear to be a good one, though this thought is lost on many marketers eager to hit self-imposed targets.

The way out

There is an alternative to the formulator/marketing back-and-forth approach to aesthetic design. It is an adaptive method which relies on producing a series of prototypes in advance for use with a marketing brief. This palette of formulations should be used to design a product that is most appropriate for the task. The selection of the prime base formulation can be done at the beginning of the development process. Representatives from the target audience should be involved in this critical early stage.

The message

Every product has a message, a story to tell to a particular audience. A consumer purchase is a (positive) response to that message. For long-term success, product aesthetics must be adapted to that message. Fragrance, color, and packaging need to carry that same message. Where the message meets with the performance, there is power.

The speed

Using a thoughtful adaptive design process would appear to lengthen the time to market. With sufficient up front work in developing

aesthetic palettes for various applications, development timelines, in fact, can be compressed. This time saving can be 'spent' on what may turn out to be additional time necessary to scale-up a non-standard manufacturing process. In addition, it allows for integration of preservative and fragrance into the formulation at an earlier juncture. Adding these two elements at the very end of the development cycle has been the death knell of many a formulation.

The result

A formulation that excites and performs is one that can win in the marketplace. All

design elements must be brought together in order to achieve this. When performance, aesthetics, fragrance, and package are in alignment, meeting or exceeding consumer expectation for the particular application, a long term relationship can be established. Along with this, a sustained (profitable) business model can be built.

1 J Wiechers, M-C Taelman, V Wortel, C Verboom, and J Dederen, Emollients and Emulsifiers Exert their Sensory Impact in Different Phases of the Sensory Evaluation Process but How Does One Demonstrate the Absence of such an Influence?, IFSCC Magazine 5(2)99-105 (2002) ■



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Mark is in his 30th year in the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industry, most recently serving as Skin Care Applications Manager for Croda Inc (formerly Uniqema/ICI). For 15 years Mark has taught the Society of Cosmetic Chemists (SCC) Cosmetic Formulation course, in addition to instructing on emulsions for the Center for Professional Advancement and Cosmetic Raw Materials and Low Energy Emulsification courses for the SCC. Mark has made technical presentations in more than a dozen countries on 5 continents, and has written numerous technical articles and textbook chapters, and has 3 patents.



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Gabriella is a pharmacist, graduated in 2008 from the University of Szeged, Hungary; and she also has a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutics from the same university. Gabriella has been a faculty member at the UT CPPS since January, 2012. Her research area focuses on cosmetic and topical pharmaceutical products with the ultimate goal of increasing consumer experience, patient adherence and product performance. Gabriella has made several technical presentations, and over a dozen poster presentations. She has also written more than a dozen publications, has contributed to a few book chapters and is currently working on a textbook.