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**Innocent drinks:  
How applied consumer  
psychology helped find  
the sweet spot for one  
savoury proposition**

**Olivia Taylor**



Behavioural economics has brought a new lexicon of terms that are demonstrably important in human decision-making e.g. 'heuristics', 'priming', 'framing' and 'loss aversion'. However, just how many of us really understand how to apply these into meaningful insights to drive brand success?

This case study outlines the work that Innocent carried out with psychologist Phil Graves to aid development of a Cold-Pressed Fruit & Vegetable juice.

### The background

Living a fulfilled and 'well-thy' life is increasingly on the agenda of the 2015 consumer. With ever busier lives, there is growing pressure for brands to provide convenient ways to help consumers fuel their bodies with 'good stuff'. In 2015 there is more focus than ever before on proactive health management and a subsequent thriving market for convenient, healthy products.

Innocent have always prided themselves on being the brand to provide consumers with healthy, natural and all round good stuff.

With the development of new Cold-Press technology, it has become possible to cram their drinks with even more good stuff, in the form of vegetables, well known for their nutritional content, whilst managing to maintain a delicious and crisp taste through the absence of a heat process.

Including vegetables in drinks is a growing trend across Europe and the US, however is still a niche offering in the UK market. Innocent knew they were the brand to take this niche offering to the mass market; a delicious, natural and healthy fruit and vegetable juice.

### The business challenge

The insight brief was relatively simple; help us position the concept to maximise a mainstream launch. As with concept development research in the past, the Marketing Team approached the Insight Manager with a number of written positioning statements to explore with consumers.

There were a number of potential positioning routes that could be capitalised on;

- Healthiness through inclusion of vegetables; well known for their nutritional content, this is what brought new news to the proposition, offering consumers a super-healthy drink.
- Cold-Press technology; the technology behind the manufacturing process which enabled the inclusion of vegetables whilst maintaining a delicious taste, this is what gave the drink a point of difference and should help Innocent justify the price premium
- Taste Superiority; unlike other vegetable drinks, the clean, crisp taste, enabled by the Cold-Press technology ensured this range of vegetable drinks are more delicious than other competitors

Innocent needed the comforting guidance from consumers

to develop the optimum positioning. Surely the answer was to work collaboratively with consumers to understand their preferred route, which would then be developed into a FOP offering further down the line, and taken through quantitative testing?

However, the Insight Manager at Innocent was aware of a growing body of work from behavioural psychology and behavioural economics that suggested asking consumers what they think was problematic. Given that previous research investigating the appeal of vegetable juice drinks (both qualitative and quantitatively) had suggested the opportunity was small, either UK consumers were at odds with those in Europe and the US, or something was amiss with the research.

Innocent approached psychologist Phil Graves who founded Shift Consultancy to see if there was another way of exploring the opportunity.

### The methodology

Priming is, arguably, the behavioural economics elephant in the market research room. Numerous studies have shown how powerful an effect what people are influenced to think of first can have on their subsequent decisions. The problem for research is that every element of the research process is a potential prime: the recruitment, the introduction, each question that precedes another and each answer that a respondent hears himself give. As Philip described in his book, *Consumer.ology*...

*"Understanding the nature of priming is vital to understanding consumer behaviour. First experiences, first brand messages, first impressions, first sensory experiences, and the first things people say about a product are hugely influential. If consumers pick up on a message they will unconsciously seek evidence to support it. The conscious notion that reason or balanced judgment might win through simply does not apply."*

*"Two other studies demonstrate how little we understand about what shapes our own reactions and the potential prize for marketing that connects with the unconscious mind. Diners at a restaurant in Illinois were given a free glass of wine to accompany their meal. In each case the actual wine used was the same (and inexpensive). However, different bottles were used to signal different wine qualities. Where the wine was perceived (purely from the label) as being better, people rated both the wine and the food as tasting better, and ate more of their meal. In a second study, people given a wine they believed (from the packaging) was from a superior region rated the wine 85% higher and the food 50% higher. 14 How many of these people, if interviewed two weeks later in their local High Street, would have said: "I enjoyed the meal because the wine looked nice"?*

*Unfortunately (for consumer research), all these studies are interesting for the very reason that the people taking part can't attribute their responses and behaviour to the variable being manipulated by the experimenters. What people see, hear, and feel influences their behaviour, but they can't account for what has happened or how it has influenced them. However, this inability to understand ourselves doesn't stop us answering*

questions in research.

*Of course, all these unconsciously processed elements exist in every consumer experience. We don't buy products in whitewalled, sterile laboratories devoid of smells or visual content. Marketing, in all its forms, is surrounding products with associations. However, as any brand that isn't experiencing soaring sales will testify, marketing is a fairly hit-and-miss affair. This is precisely because it is success at the level beyond conscious awareness that is required, but conscious appraisal that is directing the show. Getting all the elements around a product right allows us to feel desire, however it may ultimately be expressed and rationalized consciously. Indeed, in most studies conscious awareness of potentially subliminal influences entirely negates their impact. Utilizing the sphere of unconscious influence around your product is one thing, but it only works if you accept that the people it is influencing will never be able tell you directly that it's working."*

So Philip recommended developing the propositions into packs that encompassed all of the elements that might influence consumer response. Shift then used their proprietary approach for recreating a purchase experience and made the packs the prime to explore how respondents' reacted to the same product when it was positioned in different ways.

Great care was taken not to evoke primes that wouldn't be in the consumer's mind at the moment that he or she reacted to the product. For example, whilst the product is targeting consumers who are looking for the health benefits of vegetables, we knew that a conversation about their attitudes to health would prime them to think in ways that might be quite different from their mindset when they are choosing a drink at the fixture.

*"How big a difference can priming make in surveys? David W. Moore, author of The Opinion Makers and a former senior editor at the Gallup polling organization, compared two polls looking at US citizens' support for oil drilling in Alaska's wildlife refuge. One found that the public was opposed to drilling there by a margin of 17 percentage points. The other, conducted within a month of the first, found people in favour of drilling there by exactly the same margin. (Both polls corresponded with the interests of the groups that had commissioned them.) The poll that found more people in favour of drilling preceded that question with 13 others about the cost of oil and the country's dependence on foreign suppliers. The poll that found more people against asked only the question on drilling in that region of Alaska." Consumer.ology*

### The findings

Even within the constraints of an 'on-brand' design, subtly different elements of the proposition led to very different impressions of the product. As anticipated, the balance of the elements of healthiness, taste and naturalness – and in particular where consumers start their mental journey – had a profound impact on the appeal of the product.

- For a mainstream consumer, vegetables, when included in fruit juice are a double-edged sword. They trigger strong nutritional associations (above and beyond pure fruit)

and serve as a mental shortcut (heuristic) to 'healthiness', which has the potential to be a powerful differentiator in the category. However, they trigger associations with a compromised and unappealing taste, which is a significant barrier within the impulse drinks category

- A vegetable and fruit juice is not the same as a fruit and vegetable juice. The nuances of communication of the proposition, in particular where vegetables are encountered in the hierarchy of communication and the implicit signalling of the balance of ingredients, shape product appeal to a dramatic degree.
- The level of branding has a significant impact on perceptions of how appetising the product will be. The remaining sections of this paper discuss each of these key learnings.
- Innocent need to reassure customers by signalling that they have created something, in the way a chef would, rather than throwing together ingredients simply because some of them are particularly good for you.
- The cold-pressed manufacturing process doesn't justify a price premium. Consumers will, first and foremost, consider the brand and flavour cued by the pack design and view of the contents through the clear plastic bottle. If these don't trigger the desire to buy then no claim about how the drink is created will influence the product's desirability.

The research methodology gave the business confidence that the concept of a fruit and vegetable juice had appeal in the UK market. The understanding of the nature and importance of priming both in proposition and research gave Innocent confidence in the results. Rather than having two data points – one from this piece of research and one from the previous research – the business appreciated why the difference in results existed and why they should have confidence in the insight from the approach used by Shift.

### The action taken

The positioning that had been favoured internally was one of the poorest performing expressions of the concept. (Although it's worth mentioning that in subsequent NPD, informed by an understanding of how consumers really think, the team has correctly predicted which route will appeal most.)

With the understanding of exactly how the different routes were decoded by consumers, the design team was able to create a new pack design. The understanding obtained from the research meant that the business was confident it knew how consumers would react to this route and what it would be signalling about the product.

Vegetables were taken down the communication hierarchy; still clearly present as a part of the product (and a key part of its appeal), but carefully balanced against the other ingredients and design elements that reassured consumers that this was, first and foremost, a refreshing, tasty and natural drink; very much in keeping with everything else Innocent creates.

The range was launched in September 2014 with a small London based Starbucks trial. Following success, it has been agreed the full range will be launched nationally later this year. This is great recognition that through the insights gained using applied consumer psychology, innocent drinks were able to find the sweet spot, for this savoury proposition.