



Sampling Effectiveness Advisors

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About the Author: Cindy Johnson is a product sampling expert for the CPG industry. Before starting Sampling Effectiveness Advisors in 2004, Cindy worked with all brands at P&G in her role as Corporate Sampling Programs Manager. She now owns SEA, a specialty marketing and research firm, which focuses on helping brands improve product sampling results. Clients include brands, sampling vendors, industry suppliers, and promotion agencies.

New technology provides brands with more sampling options

Peel 'n Taste® edible film strips give many product categories a new way to target consumers

Many product categories have been limited on the type of sample delivery vehicles they could utilize in the past due to issues such as refrigeration, packaging limitations, weight of the sample, or legal restrictions (alcoholic beverages).

That was until First Flavor came up with a patent-pending technology which replicates the flavor of a product in a quick dissolving edible film strip. These flavor strips are distributed through individually packaged pouches. The edible film strip gives the consumer the same taste-experience as the actual product.

Many food and beverage brands have been limited to targeting shoppers in grocery stores — sampling via in-store demonstrators or bearing the cost of expensive (and often wasteful) events. If the product requires refrigeration, obviously mailing a sample to the brand's target consumer is not an option. Beverage brands have had to rely on expensive mobile or event sampling programs, where the cost is often prohibitive or didn't provide an adequate return-on-investment. Some food products (dessert mixes, ice cream, prepared entrees, gelatin or puddings, for example) are nearly impossible to sample due to the complexity of preparing and storing product. State laws often prohibit manufacturers of alcoholic beverages from sampling in retail stores or other locations.

Imagine the possibility of mailing "Mom" a Peel 'n Taste® edible film strip of a new flavor of cake mix, or giving children at after-school programs a flavor strip of a new juice product. Or how about inserting a flavor strip of a new energy drink into *Rolling Stone* magazine? Adults could receive a Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip of a new wine cooler through a dispenser at their local convenience store.

Never before have Brand Managers of these types of products been able to fathom the idea of reaching their target consumer when and where they are receptive, through a sampling vehicle that will deliver strong purchase results - not to mention a positive ROI! This new technology opens the doors for brands like Finlandia®, Snapple®, JELL-O®, Ben & Jerry's®, and Betty Crocker® - to name a few. But is a "taste" enough to persuade consumers to purchase the product? That's what SEA wanted to know.



Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip pouch used in Kroger study to sample SunnyD Smoothies® new Orange Whirl beverage.

First Flavor produced the Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip samples for Sunny Delight's new SunnyD Smoothies Orange Whirl drink. The flavor strips are individually sealed in a foil package and provide the consumer with the SunnyD Smoothies Orange Whirl taste experience. To determine the impact of the Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip, SEA designed market research to see if the flavor strip would drive purchase of the brand equal to the actual product sample. The SunnyD Smoothies Orange Swirl flavor strips were distributed to shoppers in a test cell of Kroger grocery stores and the SunnyD Smoothies Orange Whirl beverage samples were provided to consumers in the control Kroger grocery stores.

The results indicated that both the test and control groups received a significant increase in claimed purchase; the increase in purchase for the test cell was virtually no different than for the control cell. (The study was a pre/post quantitative sampling effectiveness study with a base size of 150 per cell. Research results were reported with a 95% confidence level).

The consumers who hadn't yet purchased SunnyD Smoothies since receiving the sample were asked "what was the main reason you haven't purchased SunnyD Smoothies?". The reasons given were almost identical for both test and control respondents: "Didn't like the flavor" was only 15% in control and 17% in test.

This learning indicates that the Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip experience provided consumers with enough of a trial experience to make their purchase decision. The control cell using actual product did not have a significantly higher net purchase conversion increase than the test cell, so using Peel 'n Taste® flavor strips provided an adequate trial experience for the brand, but at a significantly reduced cost.

In an attempt to determine consumer receptivity to this type of trial vehicle, test cell consumers were asked; "If you received a Peel 'n Taste® sample via the following methods, would you be inclined to try it?" Consumers answered favorably to future Peel 'n Taste® sampling opportunities; more than 70% of consumers surveyed are willing to try a flavor strip sample of a product regardless of the type of sampling program.

These same consumers were also asked "Would you say you would be more likely to purchase a new product, if you were able to taste it first, via a Peel 'n Taste sample?" 94% of respondents answered "Yes".

What does this mean for the sampling industry?

Obviously, it makes sampling effective and affordable for a number of product categories, for a number of reasons;

1.) The Peel 'n Taste® sample gives brands a lower cost per sample delivered. For some brands, sampling hasn't been an option because it's been cost-prohibitive. Due to packaging, distribution or weight issues, brands could not afford to ship samples around the country or bear the production cost of live product samples.

2.) The Peel 'n Taste® sample allows brands to effectively extend reach to their target customers by utilizing mass media vehicles which may result in higher purchase results. Because brands aren't restricted to the grocery store or expensive events – they can now mail a flavor strip sample to a more targeted audience or insert a flavor strip sample into a print ad or magazine.

3.) The Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip may also improve the response to coupons or results of a direct mail campaign. In the past, brands that couldn't sample often targeted consumers with direct mail and/or coupons. If a flavor strip sample were included with the coupon, more consumers may be inclined to purchase the new product if they could taste it first. If the consumer isn't a coupon-user, the flavor strip may persuade them to buy the brand.

4.) The Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip enables product categories to sample that were previously unable to sample due to logistical or legal restrictions. The Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip enables those brands with storage issues (ice cream, yogurt, etc.), logistical challenges (beverages, microwavable products) or legal restrictions (alcoholic beverages or OTC medicines) to be able to sample new flavors.

Bottom line, the Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip sample will likely increase sampling possibilities and improve the ROI for many brand programs! The Peel 'n Taste® sample:

- reduces sample waste,
- will reduce the distribution costs in most cases,
- may reduce the cost of the actual sample, and
- will increase purchase results thru better targeted programs.

Sampling Effectiveness Advisors helps brands determine the best way to sample and offers unbiased advice on how to improve results and ROI. We also design market research to measure your program results. Contact SEA with questions or for help with your 2010 sampling plans!

Another reason why the Peel 'n Taste® flavor strip may be a more effective way to sample:

Due to the small size & weight of the Peel 'n Taste sample, it would be possible to mail the sample for less than \$.60 per consumer.

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