

PACKAGING TO ENHANCE FUNCTIONAL OR LUXURY FOODS

Packaging solutions targeted to functional and luxury food sectors need to fulfil the functions of convenience and containment while emphasising brand protection and communication.



FUNCTIONAL & LUXURY

FOODS

PREMIUM
FOOD AND WINE FROM OUR
CLEAN
ENVIRONMENT





This fact sheet presents a summary of the packaging characteristics and technologies to consider when creating functional or luxury food products

The Functional and Luxury Foods Research Project, carried out by the VTT Technical Research Centre in Finland for Primary Industries and Regions SA analysed the opportunities for South Australian producers to supply functional or luxury products to key markets in Australia and Asia.

From the research, it was identified that a critical success factor in developing a functional and luxury foods market in South Australia is the role that packaging plays to support these products and their value in the minds of the end consumer. In particular, the VTT report highlighted the opportunities that exist through the implementation of active, intelligent and polysensual packaging options, which can drive customer demand and better protect the integrity of the product.

South Australia's packaging industry

Packaging solutions targeted to functional and luxury food sectors need to fulfil the functions of convenience and containment while emphasising brand protection and communication. The current packaging supply in South Australia is focused on conventional packaging solutions, with limited specialisation in active and intelligent packaging solutions. To be successful in the functional and luxury foods market, South Australian food and beverage companies need to develop competencies to exploit state-of-art packaging solutions. Currently, these solutions fall short of communicating the supreme quality, exclusivity and sophistication of a product in the luxury foods segment.

The actual amount of production, or economy of scale, in South Australia alone is currently a limiting factor in creating demand for advanced packaging solutions. There is an opportunity to develop a collaborative packaging model aimed at attracting a modern multiplatform packaging company that can work across sectors in both functional and luxury products.



Designing functional packaging

Packaging for functional foods need to communicate the benefits of the product to consumers while meeting the target market's labelling requirements. Many of the latest innovations in intelligent, smart and active food packaging are aimed at enhancing product safety and shelf life while securing the brand experience.

FUNCTIONAL PACKAGING	EXAMPLES
Active packaging (changes the condition of the packed food to extend shelf life, improve food safety and sensory properties)	Examples in active packaging include: absorbing and scavenging systems (sachets), releasing systems and modified atmospheric packaging (labels and polymer based oxygen scavenging films).
Antioxidative packaging (reduces or stops oxidation)	Antioxidative packaging options include butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA) butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT) and Irganox. In response to consumer concerns, research is currently underway to look at natural oxidants and their potential to be incorporated into packaging polymers.
Antimicrobial food packaging (aims to reduce microbial growth in foods)	Antimicrobial food packaging is currently only used in significant numbers within Japan. Most common processes use silver-substituted zeolite incorporated into the plastic packaging. This option is still in development.
Intelligent Packaging (a system capable of carrying out intelligent functions to facilitate decision making, to extend shelf life and to enhance safety)	The main components of intelligent packaging are indicators, sensors and barcodes/ indication tags, which allow better tracking, recording and communication of a product.
Food packaging indicators (provides visual and qualitative information about the packaged food)	Food packaging indicators will change colour if, for example, changes in temperature are detected, there are breaches in packaging integrity, volatile amines or fruit ripeness perceived.
Food packaging sensors (provide detailed quantitative information for a period of time)	Sensors record information on aspects such as humidity, pH, temperature and light exposure. There is potential applications for this type of packaging in the detection of volatile organic compounds and gases.
Automatic Identification technologies (RFID, barcodes, QR codes etc.)	Automatic identification technologies provide identification, automatization, anti-temper, anti-counterfeit properties.



Designing luxury packaging

Luxury food packaging solutions need to shift away from designing ‘for a product’ to creating ‘an experience’ that triggers an emotive response. Successful packaging aesthetics are about communicating trust and a narrative or personality that encourages a human connection. This could be in the form of a hand illustration that tells a story, or declares the personality of the product and its brand through design. In the case of luxury goods, this often means packaging that is stripped down to the pure essence of what the brand represents by focusing on subtle and minimal designs that create a strong sense of composure. These considerations play an essential role in determining consumer purchasing decisions. Package colour and picture labelling is one of the highest factors influencing a consumer’s willingness to purchase a product.

The hedonic aspects (pleasant or unpleasant sensations) of packaging also need to be taken into account, with practical characteristics less important. A positive hedonic influence is drawn from purchasing luxury goods for enjoyment and stimulation. In order to understand the hedonic aspects in detail, it is important to discover what kind of mental and visual attributes consumers associate with a luxury package. Experience mapping is one possible avenue to understand and visualise how consistent the consumer’s perception is with the values of the brand owner/producer.

LUXURY PACKAGING CUES	EXAMPLES
Packaging interaction (how the customer must handle the packaging to reach the contents)	Delaying instant gratification by allowing the consumer to discover the details and functionality behind a layered unveiling process can lead to stronger brand impressions. Pop-up constructions, pull tabs, unexpected uses of materials; plush suedes, smooth tyveks, ribbon closures, box toppers, or tissues are all examples of packaging interaction.
Audible (sounds that the packaging makes)	Each sound provides the opportunity to fine tune the perceived value of the packaging design, and therefore the brand. Creaking hinges, crinkling cellophane, slide of two piece rigid boxes (low pitch if heavy weight board is used) or cracking of blister packs (high pitched) are qualities that set apart luxury packaging.
Olfactive (smell)	The fragrant frontier is currently being employed to provide layered brand identification and recognition across many retail environments. This needs to be carefully assessed if and how this can be utilised in the context of luxury foods.
Haptic (relating to the sense of touch)	Luxury can often be recognised through both touch and the number of hand positions required to interact with packaging. The sharply folded 90° angles on boxes or bags, the smooth bevel of a perfume bottle, all communicate something at every touch point. Sharp folds and ease of use speak to quality and craftsmanship, both virtues of luxury.
Tactile (connected with the sense of touch)	Tactile design features are able to create brand-defining cues. A classic tactile cue to luxury is pairing an all-over embossed uncoated paper with a sculpted metallic or high-gloss hot-stamp. The finish and tactile contrast presented by many top prestige retailers follow this classic rule.
Closures	Satin ribbon closures create a luxe in-home product unveiling experience. Custom moulded snap closures can also add visual weight to differentiate keepsake from throw-away packaging. Commodity products are packed with a secure, in-store, and on-shelf at-a-glance experiences. Luxury products require the exact opposite, a well-designed, layered, unveiling process to build suspense.
Contrast finishes	Light interacts with materials and finishes differently. Packaging material stock should be smooth and crisp, consistent in colour, and evenly distribute light across the sheet without imperfections, regardless of texture. Matte sheets can be contrasted with gloss UV, or foil hot stamps to make a crisp impression and reflect light in any given environment.
Heritage	From customised papers and fabrics, to stock materials with bespoke processes, luxury and prestige is a matter of restraint, not excess. The complete opposite of flaunting logos, prestige brands instead focus on projecting a look and feel rooted in the brand’s heritage to visually communicate their story.
Anticipation	Creating mystery, romance, elevating suspense or utilising a well-orchestrated unveiling process are considerations for creating anticipation in packaging. The idea of opening a box and revealing the final product immediately, leaves much to be desired. When incorporating a moment of pause once the pack is opened, can create a sense of anticipation, reinforcing the luxury, or exclusive, nature of the product.
Quality control	No matter how well your design communicates luxury on screen or in photographs, the package is what has to deliver the goods. Understanding how climate impacts materials and print processes at every stage of production through to final user interaction is critical to understand luxury packaging. Humidity is often the most overlooked element in packaging design. Are materials from a humid environment being imported to a dry climate or vice versa? This understanding of quality control is what can make or break the sense of luxury in packaging.