

Examples of dos and don'ts in external communication



Find out consumer responses to technological terminology

'It is very important and a company needs to be careful about small changes in the society (especially among youth) that can become great trends in the future. It is important for the consumers to see that the companies are sincere about the concerns.'

Find out consumer responses to technological terminology

Although consumers do not understand new technological terms, these terms can still create various associations in consumers' minds. These associations can be positive or negative and thereby lead to positive or negative attitudes towards the technology. As unique association can be triggered by a single word (or even part of a word) consumer responses to new technology terminology need to be studied case-by-case when deciding which terminology to adopt in communication to consumers.

Consider social and ethical concerns

'In R&D, responses to technology and terminology are not sought early on. Consumers are not seen as relevant in the early stages because it is difficult to discuss new technology with consumers because maybe they don't understand it.'

'Consumers seem to want natural and simple products and if technology is mixed into it, then the consumer may assume that it is something artificial and something that they don't want to have.'

Consider social and ethical concerns

Adopting new technologies typically implies changes in the way food is produced or processed. These changes may be linked to social and ethical concerns in consumers' minds and raise questions about safety and sustainability of new production/processing methods that go beyond formalised safety assessment. Food manufacturers need to take these concerns into consideration and engage in open dialogue or other transparent communication activities to discuss these concerns and assess their relevance and potential consequences.

Provide transparent and balanced information about uncertainties of new technologies

'Successful communication is achieved when the consumers understand the message from the science technologists and all concerns or doubts about a new technology have been explained openly and in an understandable way.'

Provide transparent and balanced information about uncertainties of new technologies

New technologies provide benefits to the production methods or end product quality, but these benefits may come with a cost or contain uncertainties. For long-term consumer acceptance, it is important to be open, not only about the benefits, but also about the possible disadvantages and uncertainties. This allows consumers to make up their own mind whether the pros outweigh the cons and what the possible risks related to the uncertainties are..

Consumer research on different product ideas

'Yet, that is not done much in the industry. It needs more resources in the beginning and companies often don't see the effect on how they can save money.'

Consumer research on different product ideas

The earlier in the product development we can integrate the consumer views, the more cost-effective it is to reject the obvious failures from the innovation. Using appropriate methods to extract ideas that reflect consumers' needs and desires will enable to guide the development process and help to set the common goals for the innovation processes. For idea generation, qualitative and indirect methods, such as in-depth interviews, observing consumer behaviour and focus groups, are often most suitable. Consumer research has to be able to translate consumer responses into product characteristics that product experts can work on.

Consumer research on different product concepts

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Once the project ideas have been tested, appropriate consumer research methods need to be applied to further develop and test product concepts and translate the responses into actionable product attributes. While idea testing is likely to require mainly indirect and qualitative consumer research methods concept testing will require both qualitative and quantitative approaches (such as rating concept descriptions, market introduction experiments).

Build systematic databases on successes and failures

'Something that could be a reason for success in one product can be the reason for a failure in another.'

Build systematic databases on successes and failures

- Learning from earlier experiences is important for any organisation. Having adequate formalised knowledge management systems enable gathering data bases on decisions that has been made at different stages of NPD. To combine these decisions with consumer data they were founded on and whether developed products passing through the different stages of development process become successes or failures provide an essential knowledge base for a company.
- Generally, companies did not have any database to track their successes and failures. A few (large) organisations claimed to be tracking their innovations, but did not have a structured process for this despite considering it important. One example given was having a shared spreadsheet where everyone can upload and communicate successes. However, this was not solely meant for new technology or product development projects.

Build systematic databases on successes and failures

- Similarly to the knowledge management systems, systematic databases on success and failure were not widely used in practice. Especially smaller organizations tended to consider this recommendation as too time-consuming to provide short-term value. It was stated that the project development differs from case-to-case and thus, the projects may be too different from each other to make the documentation relevant enough for future projects.

Consumer research on different product prototypes

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- Product prototypes combine the physical product attributes (sensory quality, nutritional composition) with those based on product concept and linked to the product with information (e.g. marketing claims, production method). Consumer acceptance of the physical product needs to be tested with the target consumer population and this testing should also include the additional information to get a more realistic picture of consumers' responses.

Tailor messages according to consumer segments

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Consumers differ in what they value in products. When being informed about new products consumers are mainly interested in the benefits these new products provide them. Identifying consumers according to the benefits they desire enables to target the messages accordingly.