

Ep 116 - The 4 P's of Marketing: Product

MichaelAaron Flicker: [00:00:00] Welcome back to Behavioral Science for Brands, a podcast where we bridge the gap between academics and practical marketing. Every week we sit down and go deep behind the science that powers great marketing today. I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

Richard Shotton: And I'm Richard Shotton.

MichaelAaron Flicker: And today we're diving into our third installment on the miniseries of the four Ps of marketing.

Today's episode is all about the P product. Let's get into it. So Richard, as young marketers, we were told there are four Ps in marketing, product, price, place, promotion. Then as we got into the industry a little bit more, if somebody came up with six Ps and I once learned about the seven Ps of marketing and loving all the words that you come up with p.

The basic concept of the four Ps of marketing's been around a long time and has driven a lot of value. Agreed. [00:01:00]

Richard Shotton: Yeah. And often you look at these kind of new versions and they're a often a little bit dubious that they've misunderstood what each of the original four Ps stand for. So I think traditionalists, as it might sound, let's just stick with the the classic, the original and the best, the original four, and.

MichaelAaron Flicker: I almost said to myself, do I feel I need to do research to introduce the P of product? And I said let me just remind myself of some of the core tenets. And as I got into it, it was really enjoyable to reread some of the base ideas that power product. Because it starts with this idea that the core value proposition of what you're selling must solve a customer's problem or satisfy a demand better than its competitors.

How about that as a definition of product? It must solve a [00:02:00] problem and satisfy a demand, and it is designed and defined to be beyond the physical item. So it's. Packaging branding functionality and the product can also include customer support or the warranties product is the entire brand experience.

And it and it can be a product that you buy at the shelf, or it could be a product like an experience, like if you go to a, if you go to a restaurant, the P of product is the entire dining experience from soup to nuts from the reservation. Through the follow up after. I know I did that soup to nuts in a dining example.

I got it. I've

Richard Shotton: I've never heard of this phrase. I'm just, you could say anything and I'll be believing it's some kind of fancy American phrase. So

MichaelAaron Flicker: it is a fa well, it is not fancy, but it is an American phrase. Yeah. Soup to nuts. It means the whole kit caboodle.

Richard Shotton: Yeah.

MichaelAaron Flicker: So the, so p. [00:03:00] Is the cornerstone. A P of product is the cornerstone upon which price, place, and promotion grows from.

But if you don't have a strong product, if it's not differentiated, if it's not the thought of as the entire thing the consumer is buying, you're missing the expansiveness of product. And to me, that was just like lovely to recenter on because it's easy for product to be. The liquid in the bottle or the food at the dining reservation or the cream inside the the whatever you're purchasing.

Richard Shotton: Yeah. Yeah. No, I think it's a very good reminder. And I think. Going back to some of the original definitions and looking at what was incorporated makes us realize that many of these things like the four piece, they're remarkably sophisticated and often they are criticized as a straw man. And if you go back to the [00:04:00] original, many of the bills were already incorporated into the original thinking.

MichaelAaron Flicker: And as a industry. We have a love of the new thing. We have a love of the most advanced technology. Yeah. And for us to take some time to go back to the roots just gives us a good grounding to build from for today's episode.

Richard Shotton: Absolutely.

MichaelAaron Flicker: So we're gonna take some behavioral science, we're gonna apply it to product.

Where did you want to start?

Richard Shotton: So I thought we could start with a lovely set of experiments that aren't discussed very much around optimal newness. So it's very easy to think if you have created a phenomenally innovative product. What you need to do is emphasize the innovation and the groundbreaking nature of this product, [00:05:00] and it will just fly off the shelves.

Actually, there's an awful lot of evidence that suggests that would be a mistake and that what consumers want is a balance of the new and familiar. So the original study I wanted to talk about was by Karen Karney, who's a Harvard Business School, and Kevin Boudreaux at London business School. Oh no sorry.

He might actually be, I think he's moved around to London Business School, Northeastern University. One of the, one of the two. And. What they did was recruit 142 world class. These are genuinely leading scientists very proficient in their field, and they gave them each 15 funding proposals and the academics the scientists had to rate the kind of quality of these proposals.

Now before they were given the [00:06:00] psychologists Lakhani and Boudreau had rated every one of these funding proposals from being highly innovative to very derivative. So they were on this kind of continuum of innovativeness. And what they found when they looked at the scores for these funding proposals.

They saw this kind of inverted U-shape. If the proposals were very run of the mill, very derivative lots of known information. They were scored very badly, but at the other end, if something was absolutely groundbreaking and innovative, they were often scored really badly as well. What scored best were those proposals that managed to blend newness and familiarity.

They come up this phrase optimal newness, and it's essentially the argument that yes, [00:07:00] newness is very attractive. It attracts our attention. It's exciting, but newness is also scary. So what you need to do when you are creating your product, especially if it's highly innovative in its nature, is try and inject an element of familiarity or your.

Launch your success might be far less than you expect.

MichaelAaron Flicker: We have used the term to define optimal newness as the most advanced, yet acceptable form of the product that you can bring to market, and it's really a easy phrase to remember. If optimal newness may not stick, Maya may stick and. In our book, hacking The Human Mind, we did a

chapter on Apple and we talked about other topics [00:08:00] upfront, but towards the end of the chapter, we introduced a new word to me when we first started this.

Yeah. Which is called skew morphism. And the concept that the way that Apple was designing new features into the iPhone had to. Bring people along for the journey. They wanted to get folks to accept this new technology. But it had to relate to something they could understand. So in two, 2007 when they launched the Apple iPhone, they had buttons.

For the camera, the notes app and the contact and the camera looked like a old timey camera lens. And the note had the notes app had a line note paper that you could look at. The contacts app was an address book and they looked like buttons. They were three dimensional. They would look like you had to touch them to push [00:09:00] them down.

And this is an example of how. Folks were coming along for the journey. Oh, this is a flat piece of glass, but I can tap and when I tap it's gonna activate something. And that sounds a little farfetched in 2012. Senior designer at the time, Johnny, Ive, who is went on to become the right hand person to Steve Jobs.

And then even after after jobs continue to drive lots of visual innovation, Johnny, I've said. By 2013, people were comfortable touching glass and no longer needed physical metaphors, giving our designers the liberty to remove skew, morphic textures and continue to make them feel more flat and more sleek.

So really. This is a practical example about how Apple brought a revolutionary technology, but [00:10:00] then its design language made it much more understandable to all the different generations that were gonna use the device.

Richard Shotton: Absolutely. And. That example of an innovator applying this principle of optimal newness or as you said, most advanced.

Yeah. Acceptable. That wonderful phrase that Raymond Lowey came up with and Apple were not the first. Inventors to, to use that. There's an amazing 2001 paper from Andrew Hargadon, who's a uc Davis, and he looked back at the inventor Edison and what he showed is that when Edison invents the electric light bulb, or I think built on many other people's work, I don't wanna get into that kind of controversy, but his first light bulb comes out in 1879.

And then throughout the 1880s, Edison applies this principle of optimal newness [00:11:00] again and again. So when they created the electric light bulb, it had the potential to be much, much brighter than the gas lamps of the day. But Edison realized that electricity was already a radically new technology, so don't make the light bulb even brighter than the gas lamp.

Put it at roughly the same strength, maybe a little bit stronger, but roughly the same strength to make it that bit familiar. He also incorporated lamp shades. Into usership and if you think about it, a lampshade is a strange thing to have over a light bulb. The original purpose of a lampshade was that it went round a gas kind of flame to stop the wind blowing out.

You don't need that with an electric bulb, but again, it was there to try and make this new technology feel more familiar. Edison was all also really firm, his belief that electricity cables had to go underground 'cause that's where [00:12:00] gas pipes had gone. Now again and again, he recognized if you've got a radically new technology that's genuinely game changing, what you need to do is use design to make it feel more familiar.

You've got to ape some of the existing technologies. There's a brilliant Derek Thompson article, so he's a writer at The Atlantic, and he sums up this principle of optimal newness. He sums up Raymond Lowe's idea of most advanced, yet acceptable, and he says, look, if you want to sell something surprising, make it familiar.

If you want to sell something familiar, make it surprising. And that, I think, is a key element of product innovation that people could harness.

Michael Aaron Flicker: It's such a great summary because it's helping us evaluate. The balance between novelty and familiarity. What, where on that spectrum, what do we go? And if you [00:13:00] think about buyers on an adoption curve, that famous graph of early adopters, the big middle and late adopters ahead of early adopters are your true enthusiasts, your first adopters.

And I forget what the models say. 5%, two and a half percent of the viable audience. It's very small. And so if you plot where you wanna be on that adoption curve, the Apple iPhone example was very clear. They were not looking to sell to only a very small tech forward audience. They wanted it to be a mass device.

And all those ways, they can make it acceptable, usable, exciting for a 20-year-old, 40-year-old, 60-year-old, and everyone else above and below that range, that really requires thinking strongly about how new and how familiar.

Richard Shotton: Yeah, absolutely. [00:14:00] So I think I was. Not drawing attention to some of the nuances.

You're absolutely right. I put it as, oh, there is this tension between the new and the familiar and people both love the new but fear it. And generally that's true, but you're absolutely right. There are a couple of percent of people, I'm sure it varies by market, by product, but some people just absolutely laugh what's new and they don't suffer from this neo phobia, but.

That is a very small percentage of the market. The vast majority of people have these conflicting feelings. So if you want to go from a niche product to a mass product, if your product is groundbreaking, think about Optimum Un. It is something that will make you more appealing to the real volume of market opportunities.

MichaelAaron Flicker: It strikes me also that we are talking about these massive innovations, iPhone disrupting the [00:15:00] cell phone market, Edison's light bulb changing the the how electricity bring, get brought into homes. It. Even when you think about the way that you introduce a new concept to an existing category, you have this chance to ask that many moons ago, you and I I might not get all the details right.

Did a topic on yogurts and whether or not it should be. Low sugar talking about the deprivation of something or a full flavor, whatever we were talking about. We were discussing at that time do you want to focus on something you're taking away or something that you're adding?

But to me, this idea that when you are talking about product benefits, product attributes. You are talking about the innovation of any product, and you have the chance to [00:16:00] decide how much does the public want to, how far do they want to go on a certain realm? How open are they to a new idea? And so the product packaging, what you decide to feature about your product that all plays into this question of how advanced and how acceptable might it be.

Richard Shotton: Yeah, I completely agree on that. And there might be a structural issue going on, which is. Marketers are often not the same as their target audience. So if you work in, let's say the spirits industry or the music industry, and you spend 40 hours of your life every single week thinking about

these products, you probably crave something different and new to give you an element of exciting excitement.

But for the audience who maybe only spend a couple of minutes or an hour thinking about that product every week for them. Newness has much more of a downside. So I think marketers often [00:17:00] tend to be lovers of the new, the audience they're selling to, or at least the mainstream mass bulk of who they're selling to.

They tend to be much more driven by optimal newness, yes. Has a little bit of an appeal, but people also see it as an edge too. And I think it's this discrepancy between the marketer and the audience that leads these principles that La Haney and others have developed being ignored too often.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Lovely. So we have that first bias that we've talked through. Do we have a second bias that we want to talk about?

Richard Shotton: We do. It'd be remiss to come on with only one bias,

MichaelAaron Flicker: only one. We made a promise to the public, Richard.

Richard Shotton: Yes.

MichaelAaron Flicker: They must hear always. At

Richard Shotton: least three. At least three. So yeah. The second principle that I think applies to product.

Is implied. Social proof.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Yeah,

Richard Shotton: so we've talked about this before where certainly social proof. We often discuss [00:18:00] this idea that if you make your product look like it's popular, it will become more appealing and more people buy it. Now, often we talk about that in relation to promoting a product. You should run ads saying that you've got 10 million users, or you're the most popular brand in the market.

That's. Explicit statements of social proof. But when it comes to product design, then I think you have an opportunity to imply popularity. So let me take a step

back. Let me first go through a study that shows implying Popularities powerful. So it's a 2008 study, comes from Kees Kaiser at the University of Groningen, and he does this experiment in the Netherlands.

He finds an alleyway where loads of people park their bikes, and crucially, there is no trash can in the alleyway. Early in the morning, he puts flyers, so these are [00:19:00] ads for a fictitious sport shop. He places them on the handlebars of the bike. He then wanders off a few yards, and he monitors what the returning cyclist do, because remember, there's no bin.

This essentially means that the cyclists have a choice. They've got this bit of Rubbish in their hand. Do they put it in their backpack like good citizens and take it home with them, or do they just chuck it on the floor? Now, the twisting experiment is sometimes Kaiser cleans up the alleyway before the experiment starts, so it is spotless, no rubbish, no graffiti.

Other times he goes down to the alleyway. So it's the same alleyway just does this on different occasions. He makes the alleyway a complete tip. So there's loads of rubbish on the floor. There's graffiti in the walls. So one occasion, it looks like most people litter one occasion. It looks like no one litters.

And what you find is that this has a massive effect on littering rates. If it looks [00:20:00] like the social norm is not to litter, just 33% of cyclists do. So if it looks like the social norm is to chuck the rubbish around. Then 69% of cyclists chuck their rubbish on the floor.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Amazing.

Richard Shotton: So you've got this more than doubling in littering rates dependent on what people think the norm of behavior is.

That experiment definitely relates to product design because what many products allow to happen is their usership or their consumption to be invisible. What brilliant product designers is think about how can I make consumption of my products as visible, distinctive, and public as possible? And if you do that, I think you're harnessing arguably the most powerful bias in your favor.

MichaelAaron Flicker: It reminds me of a chapter that we wrote in Hacking the Human Mind all [00:21:00] about aol. I'll set the stage for everybody to see if we can make the connection here. You walk into a bus a busy bustling bar. You wait in line few people deep, you have an idea what you wanna order, you,

the bartender looks at you, and now it's the moment and you're feeling the pressure.

You look left. You see a bunch of Coke filled drinks, you look right and you see maybe what looks like some type of red wine. You're not sure what it is, and then right in front of you is a big bulb. A Aperol spits class with glistening orange color, and you notice that there's also Aperol coasters all over the table, and you look behind you and there's aperol umbrellas out in the patio.

Aperol has taken [00:22:00] its distinctive orange color and it's made it. Eye catching all over the bar. Now, the lateral application you are talking about is that they've taken the color of the liquid, the orange hue, and they've made it visible for everyone to see. The glassware that they recommend makes the light shine through it and everybody can see it.

So you call for an Aperol spritz in that moment. Why? Because you could see it and it looked popular. Maybe only. A few people had Aperol Spritzes at the bar, but because you could discern that, and all the other liquids and all the other glasses were relatively the same color, you don't notice it. And so what we're, what Aperol so brilliantly did was they took that orange color from their liquid.

They made the product itself look more popular because of the glass, and then they applied that coloring. To everything else. They brought in what we call point of sale at the [00:23:00] bar to make it even more popular, but that they're implying their popularity by just making sure their product was more visible.

Richard Shotton: Yeah I think that's absolutely right. You compare this with your example of, you look around the bar and there's a dozen Coke field glasses. Now you have no idea what's in there. Is it Jack Daniels? Is it Maker's Mark? Is it Smirna? Now what those brands have done is allow the consumption of their product to be invisible and hidden away.

What the best product designers do is try and make sure that the consumption of their product is really distinctive and obvious because people's perception of the popularity of product is not based on pouring over a market research report. It's based on, it's not

MichaelAaron Flicker: mathematical.

Richard Shotton: Yeah, it's not mathematical.

It's intuitive, it's reflexive, it's how quickly does an example of this product being used Spring to mind. And because aall, even if there's only a [00:24:00] hundred of in the bar being drunk, because they are so distinctive, because they are so noticeable they feel like they're much popular than they actually are.

If you look around an awful lot of super successful products, they have baked that visibility very much into the design.

MichaelAaron Flicker: We were talking in the pre-show about a product that was so popular. Everyone could recall it. I'm gonna say the brand and you say the color Live strong.

Richard Shotton: Oh, yellow. Yeah.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Yeah.

And today. For a number of reasons that we won't get into on the show. Livestrong bands are not as popular as they once were, but that moment where it felt like everybody was wearing them really had it. It was something you wore on your wrist. It made a statement about your values and your commitment to health, [00:25:00] but it also was a part of a bigger movement.

Yeah. It was really in a visible sign of its popularity.

Richard Shotton: Yeah. Yeah. Maybe a less controversial example of that is, is Vember. And I think the important thing here is to think about and recognize that these aren't just natural things that happen. They are things that you can have control over.

So imagine the two of us are raising money for charities in the office. If you raise money for the American Cancer Society by doing a fund run. I am doing Vember. The massive advantage I have is every single moment I'm in the office, it is obvious that I am raising money for Vember.

It is the. Participation in Vember is visible and it's public on my face. Your participation in the fund run is hidden away. People only know [00:26:00] for the rare moments that you go and corner people in the office kitchen or in the lobby, and it's that element of making usership public rather than private.

That's what brilliant product designers do because social proof is one of the most powerful drivers of behavior. Humans. Our herd species, we are very attuned to doing what other people do.

MichaelAaron Flicker: So I love this point because it talks about how we can use this insight of a, of human behavior and use it to make a product, a movement, an idea more successful.

I wanna take it one step deeper and probe on this a little bit. Something like Vember, something like the live strong band. It also says something about yourself, so you wanna make it visible, but when you make it visible, it's also a statement of maybe your [00:27:00] identity's too strong of a statement, but it says something about you.

There was a time when you pulled out an iPhone and it said something about who you are. Do you think that there's something. In trying to be the popular choice and trying to be the show your success that requires that it have, not just visibility, but that it's connected to an idea or to, to an easy connection of what it means.

I, that's another layer of this question. Yeah.

Richard Shotton: That's interesting. I think the danger might be if you try and make a behavior very. Public if you try and apply this principle of making people's behavior visible to others, if that behavior reflects badly on the the participant, they then might just stop using the products altogether.

'cause it brings them shame and reputational damage. So maybe there is a fair point there of. [00:28:00] This is probably something that is easy to apply in probably the 90% of products where it doesn't bring you embarrassment or shame. We've probably moved on from this a little bit, but let's say we were having this conversation, maybe, I don't know, five, six years ago, non-alcoholic drinks might have had this problem.

Now you want to make a non-alcoholic drink look like it's a common choice so people don't feel embarrassed. To do it if all their mates are having a pint. But if people are slightly shame's, too strong a word, but if they feel they might be judged for drinking non-alcoholic by making it really distinctive, you might have put them off.

So I think you are right, they, with all these principles. Context is important. 90% of brands I think can probably apply this implied social proof, but there might be a five, 10% where there's a little bit of negativity associated with usership where you want to avoid it. That's, I think [00:29:00] that's absolutely fair.

MichaelAaron Flicker: I don't know why this is coming up for me, but I, it strikes me I'm calling Richards in London. I'm in New York City and in the New York City metro area. It will not be uncommon to be driving and seeing a Tesla. In front of you with a bumper sticker that says, I purchased this before Elon went crazy.

Yeah, that's a fascinating psychological insight that the person is bought a car, drives the car, is upset with whatever Elon has said that has maybe upset them, and they put a bumper sticker on the car. To me, it's the big admission that people judge. Part of who you are by the car you drive. You know what I mean?

They they don't, they, it's a, it's that acknowledgement. And so I guess the build I'm adding to this conversation is, and the products change and the world changes. And so [00:30:00] what might have been a good reason to stand out in one moment may change over time and not be as good of a reason in another moment.

Richard Shotton: And interestingly, Tesla is a pretty rare case where you've seen this almost

MichaelAaron Flicker: Yes.

Richard Shotton: Complete

MichaelAaron Flicker: hyperbolic

Richard Shotton: U-turn in what the brand stands for or what some of the associations are. I think what's also quite interesting is how that is reasonably rare. You might see something fade from fashion, but to have gone from being.

I dunno, they're quite terminology progressive to conservative to see such a swing. It is quite a rare change.

MichaelAaron Flicker: So beloved to a segment of the buyers being angry. It's a fa like that. It, it is more rare. Which, which is to say that as using this as a principle to make your [00:31:00] product more successful, it's a pretty safe one.

You, you were you recently just said. 80%. It's a safe thing to do. And I think what we're calling out is these edge cases, which really fairly rare that's gonna change. So maybe the bigger point that you rightly started us on, is for the vast majority, making your popularity visible is a good idea.

Richard Shotton: But I would say this for all the behavioral science principles. These are about probabilities and propensities. They generally are proven tactics for boosting success. But that doesn't mean it's gonna work for every single mantra in every single category in every single country. That would be ludicrous to suggest.

So people should always try and think, is there a reason why something that works for most other people? Wouldn't work for me. And I think that's a little healthy question mark [00:32:00] is always useful.

MichaelAaron Flicker: And it's the fun, it's the fun of it because that's where you get to put your own mark on the work and your own mastery over the topic.

So

Richard Shotton: yeah, this isn't paint by numbers, there is choice, there is creativity to be brought to bear on all these ideas.

MichaelAaron Flicker: We foreshadowed my friend that we would bring three biases to today's talk. Yeah. And we have done two. Yeah.

Richard Shotton: Yeah.

MichaelAaron Flicker: So we do a third to round us out.

Richard Shotton: Okay. Yeah. So one, one final area, and it's a whole series of experiments and these are all based around the work of one brilliant psychologist, Charles Spence.

And it's essentially the idea. That if you create a product whose primary goal revolves around one particular sense, so you know a larger most powerful thing is its taste. What Spence has shown is actually all those other senses like [00:33:00] hearing and the weight of the product and the color of products, they will influence the core sense.

So if that all sounds a bit vague and abstract, I'll give you a specific example that might help. So Spence did an amazing bit of research back in 2015. And he finds this upmarket restaurant who let him change the cutlery that's being used. So there's 121 diners and half of them are given light canteen cutlery half are given Heavy Cutlery.

Everyone gets the same dish. They all rate the quality of their food on a seven point scale. But Spence cuts the data. By the weight of the cutie, the diner got. Now, if people get light cuy, they rate the food on average at 5.1 out of seven. If they get heavy, cutie, that number jumps by [00:34:00] 12% to 5.7. Now remember, everyone is getting exactly the same food.

The only thing that changes is the weight of the Cuttery Spence's argument. Is generally over time through bitter experience. People learn a pretty reasonable rule of thumb that heavy goods tend to be higher quality, but his experiment shows that this association, this kind of statistical inference about quality takes on a life of its own.

So now when people get objectively the same product, if you change the weight around it. Then they will appreciate it more if it's that bit heavier

MichaelAaron Flicker: and interestingly. On top of the sense that it's higher quality food, they also are willing to pay more for the same food. [00:35:00] You got a 12% uplift in the taste perception, you get a 16% increase in the willingness to pay.

So really, there's a lot of impact in expenses work. It, it may have been perceivable. You might have guessed. That you might ta think it tastes better. I don't know if you would've guessed 12%, but you might not have guessed that you were willing to pay more for the same food.

Richard Shotton: Yeah. So this isn't just a a nice little bonus to give to the diner.

This affects the bottom line, I think in his experiment. Yeah. 12 pounds for the. Meal. If you had the light curry 13 pounds and 90, it was the heavier Cuttery. That is a when margins are working on wafer thin margins when, sorry. When restaurants are working on wafer thin margins, getting that extra one pound 90 is absolutely crucial.

Yeah. This affect, this affects the bottom line. [00:36:00] Yes. Yeah. When margins have light restaurants, yeah. Okay, so start again. And remember, this is the restaurant business. Now they are working on wafer thin margins. So what he found was that if you had Light Cuttery, you paid 12 pounds heavy Cuttery, you thought the dish was worth 1390.

That's an extra one. Pound 90 when you've got such thin margins. This could be the difference between success and failure. So yes, this is a experiment that

affects the subjective quality perceived in a dish, but also it affects the bottom line. These are important finding.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Charles Spence was a guest of ours back in episode 60, and he wrote a book called Sense Hacking, which Richard and I both love.

And in it he takes this idea and he talks about how Bang and Olson, the premium speaker makers have [00:37:00] even extended this idea to the way they convey the quality of the sound. Through the weight of the remote control that they use, they. Add a heavier remote and people rate the sound coming out of the speakers as more premium.

To me, that's just a great example of how he extends the idea and it really, your senses are more connected than you would rationally believe.

Richard Shotton: A absolutely. So Spence calls this kind of crossmodal correspondence and he essentially invented this field that, that one sense affects another seemingly or thought to be unrelated.

And you mentioned hi Fis Spence has also done work around how. Sound effects taste. So he did a very famous study back in 2004 with Max [00:38:00] Zini, and they tell. The participants a little white lie. They say, look, you are gonna be tasting crisps. And they have all come from different packets with different best before dates, and we want to see can you spot the older staler crisps.

Now in reality, people get. Pringles from exactly the same tube. And they've specifically chosen Pringles because it's a uniform product with hardly any variation. But what happens is. All the participants are wearing headphones, and Zini and Spence play with this fact because what they do is essentially, for some people, they dial up the sound of the crunch.

For other people it's muffled. And what they find is it people. Pringles and the sound is muffled. They think they're stale. If the crunch is dialed up, they [00:39:00] think they're fresher. So same Pringles, same pack, but perceptions of freshness are completely influenced by sound. And again, this is because generally in life if you are eating, Christmas and Crunch are associated with freshness.

So people develop this very useful, reasonably accurate rule of thumb. The core point from Spence's work is they apply it even in situations where it's irrelevant.

So even when you have the same food, the same freshness, playing around with sound will change people's perceptions.

MichaelAaron Flicker: The loud crunch gets a 15% increase in perception of freshness.

So really it's a meaningful number.

Richard Shotton: Yeah. And it, it's so easy as a product designer to think we are in the world of food here. Just think, okay I'm gonna play around with the particles and the ingredients to take and create an amazing taste, and that's what I need to do. But what Spence says is [00:40:00] no.

That is just the first step. In this journey, what you need to be thinking about is the color, is the weight, is the sound. All these other areas will affect perceptions of quality, of freshness, of saltiness, of sweetness, and this gives you a, once you realize it, a much greater toolbox, a much greater palette to play with.

Thi this crossmodal correspondence opens up opportunities for the great product designer.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Lovely. So Richard, would you recap our big three topics from today?

Richard Shotton: Big three topics. Okay. So the first one was optimal newness, sometimes known as Maya. And it's the idea that newness has positives and negatives in most people's minds.

Most people think newness is exciting and they wanna give it their attention. But most people also have a slight fear of [00:41:00] something that is radically new. So the argument around optimal newness is if in the words of Derek Thompson, you want to sell something that is surprising, make it familiar. If you wanna sell something that's familiar, make it surprising.

It's this balance that is the most powerful sweet spot for the product designer. Then we talked about implying social proof through product design. Many products, they have allowed the consumption of the product to be invisible or hidden away. What a great product designer like Apal, like Guinness, like Hendrick, they turn what is normally a private matter into something that is notable, something that's visible, something that's public.

And if you do that. You're essentially hacking people's perceptions of popularity by making individual usage of your products really noticeable. You create a perception of popularity and that sets in train a virtuous circle of social [00:42:00] proof. And then finally, we talked about a couple of experiments, all about this idea of crossmodal correspondence.

The taste of a food is not just based on the physical elements and constituents that affect our taste buds. What also matters is the sight of the food, the sound of the food. The weight of the food one sense affects another. When you are designing a great product, you've got to bring to bear all of those senses, not just the core one that most obviously affect success.

MichaelAaron Flicker: As a takeoff and a sign off, a question for you.

Richard Shotton: Oh.

MichaelAaron Flicker: If you were to think about a favorite meal that you had with a loved one or a favorite meal that you had experience in your life, if you were to describe it back to us, what would be the thing you [00:43:00] remember most about that dining experience? Oh,

Richard Shotton: Do, you know what I think my wife and I like often for a birthday we'll take the day off work.

It's a Tuesday or Wednesday and we'll go for a really fancy restaurant. And what I've realized is if you go somewhere really nice, frankly, the, they've all got to such a level with the quality of the food that doesn't. Distinguish one from another. What distinguishes it is the the theater?

MichaelAaron Flicker: Yeah.

Richard Shotton: Or them leaning into exceptional service or a a beautifully displayed food. I think when you go to a kind of high-end cooking. The actual taste is the table stakes. It's the theater around it. That's what turns something from a good meal to an amazing meal.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Yeah. [00:44:00] As I was thinking about that question, I realized all of my favorite dining experiences were the view that we had or the setting or the, so in a very similar way to you, like memories, things that I would rate very highly. Of course had good high quality food, but had a lot more to it. And it's inspired by bringing up Charles Spence So much at the

end of our episode made me just think about how much that product in fine dining is so much more than the food.

And it's a, it's almost a, it's a good lesson that the product is always so much more than the thing we are directly selling for any brand marketer, for any one of us when we're working on, when we're working to make brands successful.

Richard Shotton: That's a lovely symmetry. 'cause as you said, that is baked into the original definition of one of the four P's.

The product. Now, the original definition emphasizes that. I think [00:45:00] often we forget it and we think the product is far more narrow and constricted than the reality of the experience that the user has. So that's, yeah, I think a lovely way to bring it back to the start.

MichaelAaron Flicker: If you like today's episode, please share it with those that would find it interesting.

And if you would please comment, or follow us on our social media pages. It helps the algorithm. Help us reach more people just like you. And until next time, I'm MichaelAaron Flicker.

Richard Shotton: And I'm Richard Shotton.

MichaelAaron Flicker: Thanks so much for listening.

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