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Cereal Marketing Targets Different Audience

In recent years, there has been a rising concern about food marketing to children due to the increase in childhood obesity. When shopping for food, the first thing shoppers see is the packaging which plays a primary role in purchasing decisions. Packaging promotes different key features that the brand wants to draw emphasis on, enticing its target audience to buy the product. Cereal is just one example of this. There are dozens of different types of cereal and many different brands, all with a variety of marketing on their packages. General Mills is one brand that is well known for staple cereals with high amounts of sugar, such as Lucky Charms, Cinnamon Toast Crunch, Coco Puffs, Trix, Cheerios, and more. On the other hand, Cascadian Farm is known for its organic and natural ingredients, without artificial ingredients and low or no sugar added. An analysis of General Mills' popular cereals and Cascadian Farm's cereals designs reveals that the brands cater to drastically different audiences. General Mills often markets to young children and teens through its focus on cartoon mascots and colorful palettes. In contrast, Cascadian Farm appeals to individuals who may be more concerned about their health and contributing to the environment through the use of its text and the nature-esque design.

A common theme among products geared toward kids is the vivid colors, fun graphics, and sometimes cartoon imagery. General Mills' popular cereals feature vibrant and exciting visuals, enticing kids. Color is the quality that is initially eye-catching. The cover and text of its boxes often are extremely vibrant and saturated. This can especially be seen on cereals such as

Lucky Charms and Trix, with bright and bold colors like red, yellow, green, and blue filling the majority of the box. Almost all its cereals similarly utilize an extremely vivid color covering a significant portion of the packaging. Furthermore, the title is often in fun fonts, moving and warping around the mascot; the fonts are bubbly, large, and sometimes in multiple different colors. Some boxes include text that promotes the tasty or fun aspects of the cereal, such as “Great Chocolatey Taste!” or “Fruity Shapes!” (General Mills). However, outside of the mentioned, there isn’t much other text that appears to be the focus on the boxes – most seem to blend into the background colors and are written in an unnoticeable, slim font. These color palettes and advertising of a tasty experience can draw in younger audiences that may often associate many bright colors with fun.

Another critical feature that is prevalent in General Mills’ designs is the appearance of mascots. A few examples of this are how Lucky Charms has a bright green leprechaun, Cheerios has a striking yellow cartoon bee, and Trix has an excited cartoon bunny with exaggerated features. On the front of the box, mascots are frequently oversized and framed directly in the middle, mainly showing the mascot’s face. They each showcase specific body language. Each with wide eyes—as if they had seen something magical—specifically staring at the cereal and carrying an excited smile. The mascots’ eyes point out each cereal’s primary focus it’s promoting. In Lucky Charms, there is a rainbow with shiny charms flowing above the leprechaun. The leprechaun stares directly up at the charms, hinting that the charms are the main focus. Similarly, Cocoa Puffs’ bird mascot looks in amazement with its shoulders comically shot upwards and its gaze directly down at the bowl of the chocolate-colored cereal it is sipping at. In Cinnamon Toast Crunch, one of the mascots has its tongue sticking out, drooling at the cereal, which suggests to the audience that the cereal must be incredibly appetizing. These mascots

illustrate excitement through their colors, expressions, and body language. This is especially tempting to kids as they frequently love cartoon characters and may be easily impressionable through characters. The minimal text indicates the target audience may be more engaged by the descriptions of taste and appearance rather than nutritional information or the origins of the cereal ingredients.

On the other hand, products geared towards health and environment-concerned consumers often have a less flashy color scheme, showcase nutritional information, and promote how their brand relates to the environment. All of Cascadian Farm's cereals showcase layouts, colors, and themes that are almost identical for all their boxes. The box consists simply of a header, a picture of the cereal from an overhead view in a bowl, and some text. The background is always a white or cream color with a header that features a hint of muted colors. The header also depicts an abstract pattern, typically of 1 to 2 subtle colors that are found in the cereal, such as brown, tan, yellow, green, and sometimes blue or purple for fruity cereals. The actual picture of the cereal is often photographed with fresh fruit and is pushed to the side on many of its boxes, making room for text. This simple design is a stark visual contrast to General Mill's cartoon Mascots and intense colors.

There is a significant amount of text on Cascadian Farm's boxes; the font is plain in a straight line and in singular muted color. A noticeable characteristic of the box's text is the phrases that are a slightly smaller size than the name of the cereal and are, in some cases, even as large or larger than the name. These phrases include: "No Sugar Added," "Organic," "The Farmland, Join us in restoring 25 million S.Q. FT," "Always Real Organic Honey," "Save the Bees," and nutritional information such as protein per serving (Cascadian Farm). It implies that they are targeting an audience who are concerned with nutritional intake and the quality of the

ingredients as they would be drawn into products that don't have added sugar or have high fiber or higher protein. The consumer may be enticed by the brand's involvement in farms, the environment, and bees. They may prefer to support a brand that aligns with their personal beliefs and is interested in contributing to the betterment of the environment.

General Mills and Cascadian Farm advertise distinctly different designs to appeal to very different audiences. General Mills focuses on vibrant colors, provoking fonts, and cartoon mascots that are visibly excited to see the cereal. This attracts children who may not be as concerned about nutrients and health, often more persuaded by the unnatural colors and cartoons. On the other hand, Cascadian Farm focuses on colors found in nature, a more simplistic design, and brings attention to the text information revealing beneficial nutrients or environmental call-to-actions. This appeals to a more mature audience who are more invested in health and may be interested in contributing to the environment. Therefore, General Mills and Cascadians Farm use cereal box designs to target different audiences; one with a focus and marketing towards children and the other on health or environmentally-concerned shoppers. In these cases, cereal manufacturers use visual marketing to affect the consumer's choice of cereal, which raises the question of how marketing may contribute to consumer health.



“Lucky Charms Gluten Free Cereal” Amazon,

<https://www.amazon.com/General-Mills-Lucky-Charms-Cereal/dp/B006K3Y0K2>.



Tan, Angela. Photograph of General Mills' Cereal at Store. March 1, 2023.



Tan, Angela. Photograph of Cascadian Farm's Cereal at Store. March 1, 2023.



GRAHAM CRUNCH CEREAL



HEARTY MORNING FIBER CEREAL



HONEY NUT O'S CEREAL



HONEY OAT CRUNCH CEREAL



MULTI GRAIN SQUARES CEREAL



NO ADDED SUGAR BLUEBERRY VANILLA GRANOLA

“Cereal + Granola” Cascadian Farm, <https://www.cascadianfarm.com/products/cereal-granola/>.

Works Cited

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<https://cereals.generalmills.com/products/>.