

Packaging That Sells

How a Consumer-Centered Design Drove a 39% Lift in Purchase Intent



A fresh perspective on fresh produce packaging, branding, and strategy.



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Executive Summary

Fresh berry packaging is often treated as protection — with clamshells and punnets used to move fruit safely from grower to shelf. But what if packaging could also persuade shoppers to buy? This white paper explores the gap between what blueberry packs currently communicate and what consumers actually want to know.

Through a research project combining student insights, category data, consumer purchase trends, and a 445-person packaging test, I set out to reimagine the blueberry punnet as a sales tool.

The results were striking...while traditional packs still resonated with older consumers, a new, consumer-centered concept pack was more eye-catching, more distinctive, and drove a 39% lift in purchase intent among younger shoppers (18–29 years).

“If berry brands want to connect with future consumers, they must move beyond packaging as protection and start leveraging packaging as a persuasive sales tool.”



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The Problem – Packaging As Protection

In today's market, most blueberry packs do little more than state the obvious.

"Blueberries" is often the dominant message. Grower logos and decorative graphics take up valuable space, while cues consumers actually care about — flavor, nutrition, lifestyle benefits — are missing.

My Produce Marketing class students at Cal Poly State University saw the same thing. When I asked them to analyze a range of blueberry punnets, their feedback was consistent: the packaging didn't tell them why blueberries were different, healthy, or worth paying more for.

As one student noted, *"If the packaging doesn't tell it, I don't buy it."*

This disconnect between what's on the pack and what consumers want to know leaves value untapped.

By default, typical berry packaging (like this punnet) just shows grower name, logo and product name. It is not designed to persuade consumers to buy blueberries.



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My Approach: Research and Concept Development

To explore how packaging could be reframed, I followed a five-step process:

1. Student Analysis – Engaged Cal Poly students to identify gaps in current blueberry packaging. Their observations reinforced what I had seen in-market: packs lacked messaging that connected with shopper needs.
2. Consumer Research – Reviewed industry data, including Fresh Trends and US Highbush Blueberry Council insights. These showed consumers look to blueberries for taste, health benefits, and functional attributes like antioxidants, hydration, and energy.
3. Segmentation Review – Used aggregated retail sales data (USA) and analyzed purchase patterns to identify which consumer demographic segments were over-purchasing and which were under-purchasing blueberries. Younger demographics under-purchased blueberries.
4. Concept Development – Created a consumer-centered brand and pack that added health benefits and messaging aligned with what shoppers, particularly younger shoppers, wanted to know about blueberries. (Note: to protect proprietary IP, this white paper does not reveal the specific brand name or design details of the concept pack.)
5. Consumer Testing – Fielded a 445-person survey through SurveyMonkey to compare the traditional punnet against the new concept. Respondents rated the packs on distinctiveness, appeal, innovation, and purchase intent.



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The Results: 39% Lift in Purchase Intent Among Younger Shoppers

The testing revealed both strengths and increased sales opportunities:

Traditional Pack:

- Rated higher on familiarity and overall appeal.
- Preferred by older demographics.

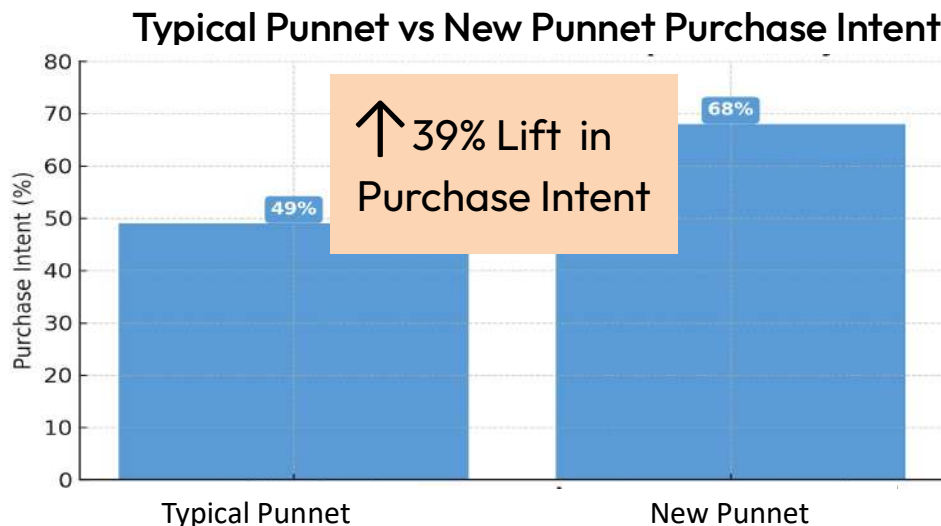
New Consumer-Centered Concept Pack:

- Rated higher on eye-catching design, distinctiveness, and innovation.
- Stronger connection with younger consumers.

New Concept Pack Increases Purchase Intent by 39%

The most compelling result came from the 18–29 demographic:

- The new consumer-centered concept pack generated a 39% relative increase in purchase intent among 18–29 year olds compared to the traditional pack (49% vs 68%)



Why This Packaging Test Matters

Blueberries are becoming a mature category with strong consumption — but future growth depends on connecting with younger consumers.

These consumers are health-conscious, brand-savvy, and trained by CPG categories to look for cues like “supports focus,” “rich in antioxidants,” or “boosts hydration.”

If packaging doesn’t communicate what younger shoppers want to know, they walk past the produce aisle to packaged alternatives that do.

This 39% lift in purchase intent proves that even modest packaging design changes — when guided by consumer insights — can translate into meaningful commercial advantage.

This project demonstrates:

- Packaging can influence purchase intent.
- Health and lifestyle messages resonate strongly with younger shoppers.
- Designing with consumer needs in mind isn’t cosmetic — it’s strategic.

“Globally, berry packaging is underutilized. Rather than using berry packaging to motivate shoppers to buy, the industry belief is “fresh produce sells itself.” As a result, valuable space is wasted — reduced to grower branding and restating the fruit name — instead of communicating information shoppers value.”



Conclusion

Blueberry packaging today is largely protection. But protection doesn't persuade.

By incorporating consumer insights, functional benefits, and health messages, packaging can do more than hold berries — it can sell them.

This research proves that even in a mature category like blueberries, packaging designed with persuasion in mind can drive measurable results — including a 39% lift in purchase intent among younger consumers

If your berry packaging is still protecting instead of persuading, it's time to rethink your strategy. This is the work I do with produce leaders worldwide. Let's talk.



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About the Author

Lisa Cork is a fresh produce brand and packaging strategist with more than 30 years of experience helping companies create packaging that sells. She is a marketing award winner and was named as one of 35 industry vanguards for her work on fresh produce branding and packaging.

As an Adjunct Professor of Produce Marketing at Cal Poly State University, Lisa brings unique insight into the mindset of next-generation consumers and has advised leading growers, marketers, and retailers on packaging strategy, brand differentiation, and market positioning.



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