

Case Study: Understanding the Impact of Color on Supplements

Business Problem

Our client is working towards the removal of artificial colors from a healthcare supplement product line, with the goal of creating a more 'natural' product.

- Obtain feedback on an initial production line with more natural colors
- Understand potential issues that may arise with these changes in colors

Our Approach

We conducted a Central Location Test (blinded sequential monadic design) to evaluate six different variants, including the Current.

Aside from standard hedonics, we included just-about-right measures, so we could conduct Penalty Analysis to determine where to optimize in terms of color and size, if need be.

Following the product evaluation, peel-off In-Depth Interviews were conducted to obtain additional understanding around the colors.

What We Learned

Purchase Decision Factors (in Priority Order)

- **Brand** - Trust is key
- **Efficacy** - Should do what it says it does, particularly if gender or age specific
- **Size** - Should both look easy to swallow and be easy to swallow
- **Color is not necessarily important**
 - Most consumers could not recall what the color of their supplement was.
 - A daily vitamin should not be confused with other medications, nor candy.
 - A vitamin that discolors over time is not a good thing, but could be a trade-off for a vitamin containing no artificial colors.



I have always gotten [brand] just because I know the name and feel it is a reputable company.

My vitamin is always [brand]...color doesn't matter as much as what's in there - that it's giving the health benefits that it's supposed to.

What's important to me...the ingredients mostly. I prefer more natural ingredients, but also a very broad spectrum of vitamins...color is not important because I trust what is in there.



What We Learned (cont'd)

Adult
General

Prefer a neutral or natural color, close to Current, such as Beige or Yellow or Clear

Seniors
General

Prefer a neutral color, close to Current, such as Grey-Blue color

Men
Adult & Senior

Prefer a neutral or natural color, however a slightly more "masculine color" is also well liked, such as light blue

Women
Adult & Senior

Prefer a product that is brighter and has a more "feminine" color such as pink, light purple or purple

Insights to Action

Current consumers strongly believe in the brand's reputation and efficacy. So while the brand is "internally" pressured to make this change, a change "within reason" will not deter brand usage – as trust in the brand overrides the color of the tablets.

Further, current consumers already believe the tablets to be natural, so while the company desires to state this on the package as a benefit, it may cause consumer concern and lead consumers to question their prior experience with the product.

Overall, there is not much concern in making this switch, but there are some issues around specific colors, which came out in the qualitative interviews...

- Having a brighter color or a gender specific color helps differentiate what consumers are taking; this also sets their supplements apart from "little white pills".
- Exceptionally dark colors are not as acceptable, because they lead one to believe they are taking something else.
- Although all tablets were the same size, different colors may lead to the perception that some tablets are larger and more difficult to swallow (e.g., those darker in color).

