



WHITE PAPER

# Unboxing Better Customer Experiences



**Ernest  
To The  
Rescue**

*Since last year, YouTube unboxing videos are seeing a 57% traffic surge, while uploads have exploded by 50%. Now, modern brands are looking to packaging experts at companies such as Ernest Packaging Solutions for ways to ride the tradewinds backing the trend, revamping their approach to packaging. Let's explore what this trend is all about — including three ways that you can leverage it for your packaging.*



Moto E Unboxing!  
(Youtube 2015)  
by Unbox Therapy

Good things can still come in small packages. But those small packages better be beautifully and elegantly designed, and ready for primetime unboxing, according to new consumer research.

“In our current YouTube culture, packaging plays a pivotal role in how brands build relationships with their customers,” says Tim Wilson, president of the Los Angeles-based packaging industry leader Ernest Packaging Solutions. “Now, modern brands are looking to packaging experts at companies such as Ernest for ways to ride the tradewinds backing the trend, revamping their approach to packaging.”

Since last year, YouTube unboxing videos — are seeing a 57 percent traffic surge, while uploads have exploded by 50 percent. “These videos not only document the experience of opening a product, but they often dramatize it and, in turn, take on a quirky, playful spirit, showcasing products in all of their freshly unopened glory,” according to a new report from Google, which unveiled the latest YouTube data in November.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/youtube-insights-stats-data-trends-vol7.html](http://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/articles/youtube-insights-stats-data-trends-vol7.html)

Why unboxing? According to Google's research, it "fuels anticipation" and "provides useful product information."

"More than the emotional feeling that unboxing videos elicit, there's also a practical side to them," according to Google's Think Newsletter. "We found through research with TNS and Ogilvy earlier this year that 66 percent of recent purchasers of beauty products said YouTube allowed them to visualize the product they're going to buy. So it's no surprise that according to the recent Google Consumer Surveys, 62 percent of people who view unboxing videos do so when researching a particular product."

In addition, watching unboxing videos releases the pleasure chemical dopamine and engages the part of the brain related to viewers' tactile sense, says Roger Dooley, a neuromarketing expert and author of the book *Brainfluence: 100 Ways to Persuade and Convince Consumers with Neuromarketing*.

"Science has shown us that when we watch someone else perform a physical action, 'mirror neurons' in our brain reproduce that activity," says Dooley, a consultant who writes at [neurosciencemarketing.com](http://neurosciencemarketing.com). "Pop psychology writers often overstate the capabilities and influence of these neurons, but to me it seems likely that seeing someone physically unbox a product allows us experience the process in a more powerful way than, say, watching someone describe the items spread out on a table. In other words, seeing another person handle the items vicariously engages the viewer's sense of touch."

But beyond metrics and neuroscience, it's also about telling a remarkable, shareable story. Apple's Jonathan Ive once said of packaging: "Steve and I spend a lot of time on the packaging," Ive said in Walter Isaacson's biography of Jobs. "I love the process of unpacking something. You design a ritual of unpacking to make the product feel special. Packaging can be theater, it can create a story." From retail to food products, the trend transcends categories, Wilson, the Ernest president, says.

*It would take more than 7 years to watch YouTube's current stock of videos with "unpackaging" in their title.*

Wilson points to the healthy snack delivery service SnackNation as an example of an innovative company reimagining the role packaging plays in customer delight and satisfaction.

SnackNation is one of the many forward-thinking companies seeking to leverage the trend. As they try to grow their brand, much of the efforts center around delighting prospective human resource departments to whom they send introductory packages.

To help, they've turned to Ernest. "Unboxing videos show that packaging is a major part of our experience with our favorite stuff," says Ernest's Stephen Simich, director of Ernest's Creative Design Group. "If product packaging didn't matter, we would just have product reviews. Because packaging matters, people love to watch people open and explore the packaging before taking a look at the packaging. A blank box will result in a boring unboxing video and — even worse — a bored customer."



*1 in 5 consumers  
have watched an  
unboxing video,  
according to  
Google Consumer  
Surveys.*

PS4 Unboxing (2014)  
by Gamebits

An elegantly packaged product can mean the difference between acquiring a new customer and not, says Travis Miller, creative director at H.U.M.A.N Health Vending, the company behind SnackNation. “It’s a little bit like unwrapping a Christmas present,” Miller says. “For us it’s tricky, because we are presenting our product with just one box. We are obsessed with how our snack boxes look and feel.”

The quality of that box, he says, might be their only chance to acquire a new customer. But it’s deeper than that one customer, too: If they post an unboxing video, it could mean thousands—maybe hundreds of thousands—of more customers are exposed to the products.

“It gives you the experience of buying the product without actually buying it,” Miller says of the trend. In other words, unboxing videos build greater trust—social proof—between the brand and the consumer.

“Product packaging influences consumers far deeper than most manufacturers appreciate,” says Greg Feinberg, President of Aisle 9, a product development and marketing agency. “The unboxing of a package creates an experiential moment, creating a memory about the process of obtaining the product. This experience will last far longer than the product itself.”

## 3 elements of unboxing-worthy packaging

### *Make Packaging Well-Constructed.*

Among the leading reasons SnackNation sought out Ernest: They were experiencing a delivery malfunction. In some cases, their packages arrived less than Instagram or YouTube-worthy: Because of the packaging design, there might be dents in the packaging material, for example. Ernest engineers added a little support structure inside the box, making it more sturdy—and ready for its viral unboxing closeup.

How and online purchase appears on the doorstep, for example, definitely delivers a brand message, says Feinberg, of Aisle 9. “You can remember opening up presents at your birthday party years ago but likely don’t remember the presents themselves. While the product may be forgotten, your brand is part of that memory like your first Tiffany box or Apple product. Packaging then enables the manufacturer to create a lasting bond with its brand that, frankly, the product itself so often fails to do.”

To accomplish this, Dooley says it’s critical to consider how the packaging feels, looks and even smells. “I would recommend that companies focus on the sensory aspects of their products and their packaging,” Dooley says. “Apple does a brilliant job of this, sometimes reviewing hundreds of packaging variations to get it right. Most companies don’t have the resources Apple does, but that doesn’t mean that the product and packaging can’t employ good design.”

Conversely, poor packaging can prevent your product from a viral unboxing. “If you’ve ever struggled with a heat-sealed plastic clamshell package, you know how frustrating (and sometimes dangerous) that can be,” Dooley says. “Watching another person struggle with it would evoke those same memories and emotions.”

## *62% of people who view unboxing videos do so when researching a particular product.*

### *Make Packaging Personalized.*

Adding that little something—a sticker inside, like Apple includes in their packaging, for example—romances the customer, and can be the pièce de résistance. Miller’s SnackNation understand that, and so they are experimenting with including a little Livestrong-like wristband and award certificate recognizing the recipient as a new citizen of SnackNation. “It’s designed to unify our customer base, and activate them as part of our tribe,” he says.

“Our best packaging solution consultants and designers have found that personalizing packaging can lead to better, more shareable unboxing videos,” Wilson adds.

Scott Gardner, CEO of Liquid Agency, says that packaging is best approached as an opportunity to provide a customer with a memorable and tactile brand experience.

“We’re seeing such a shift to people shopping and procuring products online,” Gardner said. “There’s a big opportunity to deliver little surprises that delight your customers and show them how much you care about their relationship with your product.”

You never want to inconvenience your customers with solutions where products are damaged or near impossible to unpack. “Take advantage of the opportunity you have as it will be noticed and appreciated,” Gardner added.

*Make it Trendworthy.*

Giving your customer cues that prompt them to share their unboxing on social networks is important. In re-thinking their packaging strategy, for example, SnackNation keeps their hashtagged brand—#SnackNation—front in center in their packaging. “It’s important to give customers cues to share their product experience online,” Wilson says. To leverage the unboxing craze for your brand, it’s important make in investment in packaging that delivers a wow experience, says Ernest’s Simich. He points to research showing that remarkable packaging can boost your brand’s sales by as much as 47 percent.<sup>2</sup>

“People don’t just want products; they want experiences,” Simich says. “These videos are a way for people to get a detailed preview of items before they get them, but it’s also a way to relive that feeling of Christmas morning when you couldn’t wait to unwrap — or unbox — your new toy.”

Brands hoping to capitalize on the unboxing phenomenon are now aligning their resources and investing into revamping their approach to packaging. They’re not thinking outside the box, nor inside the box—they’re focusing on the box itself. Are you?



<sup>2</sup> www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/how-package-designers-use-science-influence-your-subconscious-mind-158319



To deliver unboxing-worthy packaging,  
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