

## GOT PRINTS? The Case for Category Marketing

By Jeff Manning



One could reasonably ask what do photo prints have in common with milk? And why is a guy with roots in Got Milk? marketing taking up this space? The answer is simple. The photo print industry has the same choice today as milk processors had in 1993. Despite explosive growth in digital printing, total photo print volume is declining. Consumers seem less compelled to print. This industry has a window of opportunity to stabilize, and perhaps reverse this trend through category marketing. Or, it can deny that there's a problem and hope that, somehow, things will fix themselves.

Given my Got Milk? lineage, it's not surprising that I believe in the power of category marketing. It strikes me that there are several reasons why this industry should, at a minimum, explore this option.

- ❖ **Category marketing works.** It can lead to breakthrough consumer research, powerful strategic insights, brilliant communications, extensive, positive publicity and ultimately change consumer behavior. This has been well documented on a range of categories, from "Pork. The other white meat." to "Got Milk?" Importantly, category marketing transcends food and includes industries like cotton, wood products and RVs.

***"Got Milk? altered the course of a \$22 billion category."***

- ❖ **The obstacles to printing appear intrinsic to the category.** Consumers are printing less **frequently** not because they lack delivery options or because of quality or that they don't have the time. They are storing billions of images. Consumers don't feel an imperative to print. If attitudes and behavior slip further, printing may become peripheral. These are not issues easily or effectively addressed by brands.
- ❖ **The problem is serious and not likely to evaporate.** Industry data indicates that total domestic print **volume** is declining at 3% annually. That's about a billion prints or \$200 million per year. Digital prints are not making up the difference.

Further, once digital camera sales slow/flatten, the problem becomes greatly amplified and dramatically more difficult and more expensive to reverse.

***“Consumers need imperatives to print.”***

- ❖ **Category marketing can unite an industry and enhance branded marketing.** Once an industry **accepts** that problems exist, companies are able to “take off their brand hats” and work collaboratively. The goal, to stabilize/grow the category, becomes that important. Critically, by improving consumer attitudes and behavior, category marketing can lay the foundation for more effective brand marketing.
- ❖ **Category marketing can deliver a very high ROI.** In the case of milk, both independent sources and sophisticated econometric models indicate that generic milk marketing delivers up to a 10 to 1 return to the industry. In California, we estimate that GOT MILK? results in approximately \$240 million in incremental, annual sales. The industry spends \$21 million, in line with national ROI.

***“The goal is to elevate prints above images.”***

- ❖ **Category marketing is a highly testable, low/no risk proposition with limited, up front costs and a fast turnaround.** Phase I might include analysis of existing data, consumer focus groups and quantitative concept testing. This phase would net the **industry** valuable insights and the basis for further plans. Costs would be minimal and results could be presented by Fall 2006, in time for 2007 plans.

***“It isn’t a photo until you print it.”***

So, it strikes me that the photo prints industry is at a crossroads. It can deny that a problem exists and hope that it goes away. Or, it can take the first, small step toward charting its own marketing destiny. I prefer the latter. Please contact me with your thoughts. Now is the time for discussion and debate.