The Experience Standard™

How Consumer Experience Is Redefining Product Quality

Organizations create quality. Consumers recognize it through experience.

The dietary supplement industry has mastered creating quality. Ingredient science, manufacturing discipline, and quality systems have made today's products safer and more consistent than ever. Very little of that work is visible to the person who buys the product. Consumers judge quality through what they see, smell, and taste, and they keep judging it every time they use the product.

The Experience Standard holds that the next stage of quality is making sure consumers recognize the quality organizations already create, from the first opening of a bottle to the last.

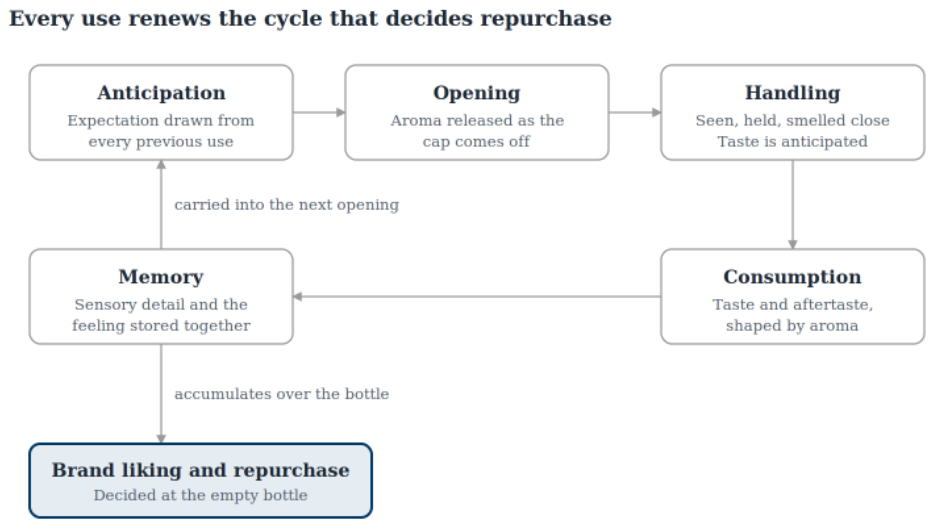
How Consumers Recognize Quality

People judge fast. Research on first impressions shows that durable assessments of trustworthiness form within roughly a tenth of a second, and that more time tends to confirm them.[1] The senses shape these judgments largely below conscious awareness,[2] and impressions formed from a product's sensory cues transfer onto beliefs about the product itself, a principle known as sensation transference.[3]

Aroma carries special weight. Most of what we perceive as flavor is delivered by smell,[4] and smell reaches the brain's centers of emotion and memory by a remarkably direct route.[5] The aroma a consumer meets shapes what they expect, and what they expect shapes what they taste.[4]

Every Opening Counts

A 90-count bottle taken once a day is opened ninety times. Each opening is a complete sensory encounter: the aroma as the cap comes off, the capsule seen and smelled in hand, the taste that follows. Each one adds to what the consumer believes about the brand.



The first opening sets the expectation, and each one after it tests whether the product keeps its promise. When the daily experience is pleasant, the routine is easier to keep. Research on oral nutritional supplements finds that unpleasant odors and off-flavors are associated with poorer adherence,[6] and that physicians most often name smell as the sensory characteristic influencing whether patients keep taking them.[7]

The decision to repurchase is made at home, when the bottle runs low, and it draws on the memory of every opening before it. That makes consistency across the life of the bottle a quality attribute in its own right.

From Acceptability to Preference

For years the sensory goal in supplements was to remove barriers: reduce bitterness, control off-odors, and make products tolerable. That work still matters. A product used every day for months, however, depends on whether the daily experience is one the consumer welcomes or merely tolerates. Acceptability minimizes barriers. Preference creates engagement, and over time engagement becomes habit, repeat purchase, and loyalty.

Preference earns its place only when it reflects genuine product quality. Experience should express quality and should never be asked to stand in for it.

What It Means for Your Organization

For brand owners. Brands invest heavily to win a first purchase, through advertising, retail placement, promotions, and sampling. Whether that investment pays off is decided later, at home, as the consumer works through the bottle, and the daily experience plays a large part in whether they come back. A designed sensory experience is also moving from advantage to expectation. As more of the category delivers one, its absence becomes a gap consumers notice even when they cannot name it. Designing each opening with care turns quality that lives in a certificate of analysis into quality a consumer can feel every day.

For contract manufacturers. Sensory consistency across a product's in-use life extends the quality work you already own. As brand clients compete on experience, the manufacturer that helps them deliver it becomes a strategic partner, a meaningful advantage in a category where manufacturing capability is increasingly commoditized.

Questions Worth Asking

- Does our product experience reflect the quality we have created?
- Is the experience on day sixty as good as it was on day one?
- Are we designing products consumers prefer to experience, or products they merely accept?
- Will the memory of this bottle bring the consumer back for the next one?

Read the Full Paper

The complete Experience Standard, with eight chapters and full references, is available at **www.ScentCerts.com**.

ScentSational Technologies is a sensory innovation company with more than 25 years of expertise in the science of aroma and taste, and the developer of ScentCerts® Aroma-Taste Technology for dietary supplements. **www.ScentCerts.com**

Sources

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