

Nice and Neat

Convenient, affordable green products can allow grocers to clean up.

By Barbara Sax

Shoppers want a clean house, but they don't want to spend a lot of time cleaning. "Consumers are more likely to prefer to clean as they go, doing quick cleanups that fit into their schedules, than setting aside time to give the whole house thorough top-to-bottom cleanings," affirms Todd Elms, VP marketing at Dallas-based Scotch Corp.

Category segments that place extra emphasis on simplicity, convenience, and quick cleanups and disinfection have had the strongest performance in the category, according to a recent report from Chicago-based Mintel, while products associated with more labor-intensive or time-consuming cleaning, such as abrasive cleaners and furniture polish, have experienced declines. Dollar sales in the specialty cleaner segment were down 6 percent in the food channel for the 52-week period ending Oct. 4, 2015, according to data from IRI, also based in Chicago.

Convenience is Key

A shift away from cleaning the whole house at once to quick cleanups has fueled sales of wipes and touch-up products such as SC Johnson's Windex Touch-Up Cleaner, an inventive push-down pump dispenser the company introduced in 2013.

"Windex Touch-Up Cleaner was truly the first product of its kind to hit the market and really change the category," says Kelly Semrau, SVP of global corporate affairs for communication and sustainability at Racine, Wis.-based SC Johnson. "It was created for consumers who are 'quick and convenient' cleaners."

Semrau adds that the company conducted extensive research that tested a wide range of designs and delivery mechanisms. "The resulting product design was chosen because it was aesthetically pleasing, works well in either their kitchen or bath, and is easy to use, so cleanups can naturally become part of your daily routine and weekly cleaning becomes more manageable," she explains.

According to Elms, consumers are migrating to products positioned as quick-cleanup solutions. "Our Instant Power Shower Tub & Tile Cleaner is



designed to tackle messes quickly and efficiently," he says. "More cleaning products promote a quicker clean, with less scrubbing time needed."

Those distinctions are important in a category where purchasers are only moderately loyal to individual brands: Mintel's study shows that roughly one-third of consumers tend to buy the same brand every time in most household cleaning categories.

A Push for Brand Loyalty

SC Johnson is looking to change that finding with a new program that displays the company's products, including Glade, Windex, Scrubbing Bubbles, Pledge, Shout and Drano, as a family. "Products will be displayed in end caps and free-standing displays across retailers in classes of trade," notes Semrau. "We have had significant partnership in grocery retailers, with executions planned with most major retailers."

The company is teaming on special programs with such companies as Meijer, Albertsons/Safeway and Dollar General. "In-store and shopper promotions will place all SC Johnson products together on the shelves," says Semrau. "This will help consumers identify the brands they use on a regular basis, with the trusted notion that comes with SCJ being a family company."

SC Johnson also launched a FSI and DSI coupon event in November. "We have not offered this type of incentive [on] this scale in the past," admits Semrau, adding that the company is likely to model future programs on the success of this event. "We coupon occasionally on these products to increase the trial and repeat on our products and brands."

Price is also important in this category. Recent research from Mintel found that looking for promotions and discounts in the aisle is among the most common household care product shopping behaviors. "Coupons and discounting drive this category," agrees Shelley Cade, VP of marketing at St. Louis-based Willert Home Products. "The category is very price-sensitive, and customers are not very brand-loyal."

Green Segment Growth

Natural cleaners are becoming a bigger part of the category. In the all-purpose cleaner segment, where IRI data show a 2 percent overall increase in dollar sales in the food channel for the period cited earlier, the Mrs. Meyer's Clean Day brand, from SC Johnson, saw dollar sales surge 50 percent. Method brand dollar sales in the segment were up 15 percent for the same period.

Rochester, N.Y.-based Wegmans Food Markets devotes an 8-foot section to environmentally friendly cleaning products, including products from Mrs. Meyer's Clean Day, Seventh Generation, Earth Friendly Products' Ecos brand and private label eco-friendly cleaning products.

"Natural cleaners are growing, and will continue to do so, because consumers are looking for



alternatives to the classic cleaners that focus on sustainability and child/pet safety," asserts Eddie Morabito, retail business development manager for Toledo, Ohio-based Canberra. "But they are also not willing to compromise on the efficacy" of such products.

Morabito points to research showing that a majority of consumers want products that work and are green. "A very small percentage of consumers want the product to 'just work' and don't care how, and a very small percentage want the product to be 'green' and will sacrifice effectiveness, but an overwhelming majority — over 90 percent — want both," he says. "They want a clean house, and they want to feel good about what they are using."

Canberra recently redesigned its Just Add Water System (JAWS) package for national launch. The first bottle of JAWS comes pre-mixed and ready to use. Once the bottle is empty, the consumer refills the JAWS reusable spray bottle with water, and then inserts a concentrated refill pod. JAWS is currently available in four streak-free, nontoxic, biodegradable formulas; the company plans to introduce additional cleaning products in 2016.

Meanwhile, trusted classic brands are also getting in on the natural act. Willert has launched Ty-D-Bol Natural, a line of all-plant-based bathroom cleaning products. All products in the line retail for less than \$5.

Willert plans to expand its natural offerings in the future, as the Ty-D-Bol brand is outpacing growth in the toilet bowl cleaner/deodorizer segment, with double-digit growth, according to IRI.

Natural positioning, combined with a competitive price, should give brands a bigger boost. Notes Willert's Cade, "We saw a need for natural-based cleaning products at an affordable price point." **PG**

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