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## **MIXIT: PERSONALISED BREAKFAST EXPERIENCE**

### **Strategies to promote sustainability of Mixit.cz**

#### **Background**

Mixit is an innovative project enabling consumers to mix their own muesli from ingredients of their choice. Launched in 2010 by Martin Wallner and Tomáš Huber as a completely new idea in the Czech Republic, the company has managed to successfully build a solid portfolio of stable customers and gained fair popularity among the Czech population.

Mixing self-service is currently available purely online (Figure 1); on the website [www.mixit.cz](http://www.mixit.cz) consumers can either combine different sorts of cereals, oats, dried fruit, nuts or other flavourings, or choose from already pre-mixed packages. Few other Mixit products (e.g. porridge, biscuits, flapjacks, snacks, see Figure 3) can be purchased via online shop on the website as well. The online chosen mixture is then delivered in original packaging – tubus (Figure 2) – by post or it could be collected personally. At some collection points some Mixit products are offered, nevertheless the amount and choice is significantly limited.



**Figure 1:** Screenshot of Mixit website and description of components





**Figure 3:** Mixit products (nuts, dried fruit, chocolate, flapjacks, cookies, snack packages)

The concept of Mixit claims to offer more than just shopping or ordering online. Particularly emphasised is the consumers' experience, friendly relationship with producer and quality of ingredients (Mixit, 2010). Whole process from the choice of distributors through production, marketing, design and PR is done in-house, which is presented as one of the main added values of the brand. However, at the same time it is marked as a drawback resulting in higher price of the final product.

Despite of current uniqueness and originality of Mixit idea in the Czech Republic, the dynamic of the market with cereals and healthy breakfast options becomes increasingly competitive. For example a new business Janova Pec ([www.janovapec.cz](http://www.janovapec.cz)) offering similar service<sup>1</sup> as Mixit was launched recently.

<sup>1</sup> They offer already pre-packaged muesli (more granola and baked muesli than natural cereals) with emphasis on quality and local production, no mixing self-service provided however they distribute their products in few in-store and café locations.

In this light, following memorandum building on theories from social and consumer psychology proposes few recommendations that could be considered in order to maintain or highlight both Mixit economic, social and environmental sustainability.

## Memorandum



**To:** Tomáš Huber and Martin Waller, founders of Mixit

**From:** Consumer Psychology specialist, LSE

**Date:** 28/03/2015

**Subject:** Strategies to promote Mixit

Dear Mr. Huber and Mr. Waller,

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on the great success with which you managed to develop small start-up project into a well-known brand and nation-wide popular service. It is always encouraging to see that healthy eating could be promoted in a creative way that is designed with consumers in mind.

Emphasising not only utilitarian value of consumption, but also aesthetic and emotional appeal on one hand, and quality and sustainability on the other seem key for today's consumer experience. Although your enterprise speaks for rather illustrative example of such business model, I would like to kindly suggest few additional recommendations to improve your current services as well as maintain your competitive advantage on the market.

Through detailed analysis of your current services and values I have identified three areas where your company could be enhanced in term of economic, social and environmental sustainability.

- Strictly limited **physical availability** of your products in stores might unintentionally discard certain group of customers with strict preferences for offline shopping.
- **Symbolic value** of Mixit products could be underlined even further through more intense, explicit consumer engagement and experience sharing.
- Significance of **social missions**, e.g. education or awareness-raising, might not be the primary Mixit objective, however, they could bring public acknowledgement and increase the market value of your brand.

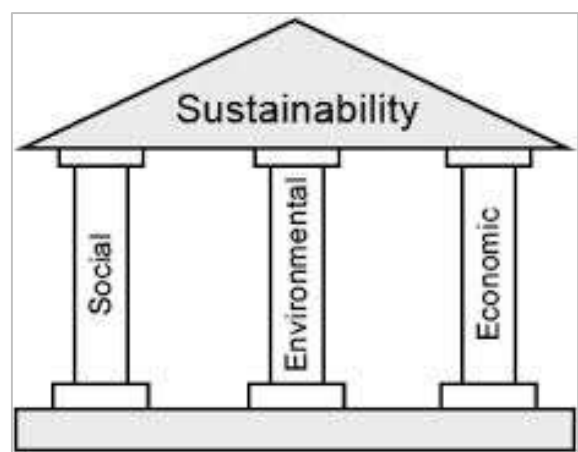
With reference to respected social and consumer psychology theories, six specific comprehensive strategies, two corresponding to each of the three points, are proposed to supply possible solutions for recognized limitations. For your convenience, I summarized them in Figure 4.

All recommendations are overarched by Installation theory, a logical and straightforward theoretical framework, which stands in the heart of every innovation or social change. It is distributed over three layers - physical, psychological and social layer - which clearly conform to the three abovementioned areas of improvement.

PHYSICAL LAYER	PSYCHOLOGICAL LAYER	SOCIAL LAYER
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability in store</li> <li>• Sensory experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-creation of value</li> <li>• Sharing the Mixit experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health education</li> <li>• Sustainability awareness</li> </ul>

**Figure 4:** Summary table of suggested recommendations within each layer

In the following section, detailed recommendations demonstrate, how proposed alterations on different levels might facilitate positive image of Mixit in terms of all three pillars of sustainability (Figure 5).



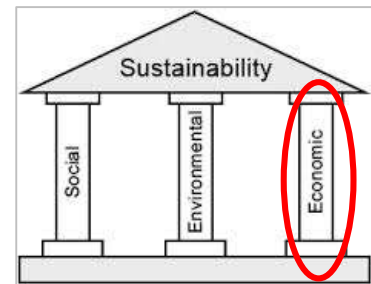
Source: Jones, 2013

**Figure 5:** Graphical illustration of three pillars of sustainability

### Physical layer: Physical availability of Mixit products in store

I would like to propose two recommendations within this level:

- a. Availability of products in stores and other places
- b. Sensory experience of customers with Mixit products

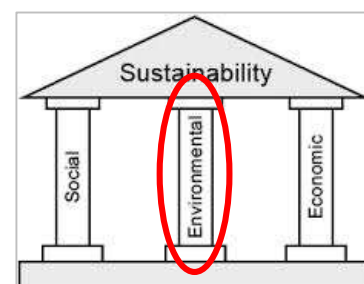


Although most people see your online service as beneficial, building your brand purely on online basis might cut off a significant part of your potential customers. For example, availability of your pre-packed muesli, biscuits, dried fruits or nuts and other snacks in supermarkets, organic food stores, cafés or fitness centres could definitely attract attention of customers, who could later turn out into your stable clients. Despite more difficult controllability of the final price of the product, such a step would definitely promote brand awareness and possibly generate additional profit to your company. Moreover, many consumers might actually prefer to have the opportunity to sensory experience the product before buying it; especially in case of novel foods or exotic ingredients. Hence, consider installing mixing devices in stores (or food festivals as less expensive alternative) and let consumers live their Mixit experience, similarly as M&M World store in London ([www.worldchocolateguide.com/shop/mms-world/london/](http://www.worldchocolateguide.com/shop/mms-world/london/)), would be a good step to take. Also, enable degustation of some of your extraordinary ingredients would surely add to the overall experience.

### Psychological layer: Symbolic value of Mixit products

Within this layer, I would advise to consider following:

- a. Support co-creation of value with consumers
- b. Sharing the Mixit experience in group



No doubt your company proudly belongs to flagships of consumer engagement in the Czech Republic. Aiming to push your enterprise to excellence, consumers could become co-creators of the unique Mixit value even more if they could for example design their own personalised tubus. Similar strategy was adopted by a café Vypálené koťátko ([www.vypalenekotatko.cz](http://www.vypalenekotatko.cz)) in Prague, where you can come and design your own personalised mug. It could not only underline consumers' sense of belongingness, but

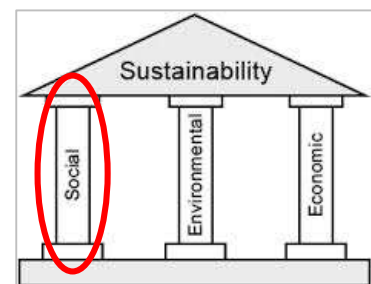


also reinforce their identification with the brand and within the group where the experience is shared. Additionally, pleasure from group consumption, sharing of mixing experience and healthy eating habits could be boosted even further by for instance providing Mixit muesli as breakfast to offices; alike a company “Fruit for the office” ([www.fruitfortheoffice.co.uk](http://www.fruitfortheoffice.co.uk)) in London, which daily delivers a basket full of fruit into offices. As many people eat their breakfast at work, giving them the opportunity to choose Mixit products or mix their own muesli might bring joy, reinforce network relationships, impact positively on team values and in the same time function as promotion of your brand.

### **Social layer: Promote social mission behind Mixit products**

In the social layer, I would suggest to favour the following points:

- a. Support health education among young children
- b. Encourage consumers in sustainable behaviour



Childhood is a crucial period in food habits formation. Catering Mixit products or mixing services to nurseries or primary schools might positively impact children’s health awareness and nutrition education. Furthermore, giving them the opportunity to contribute to the preparation of the meals could enhance their skills as well as develop desirable attitudes towards variety of healthy foods you provide as the ingredients. Such educational practices could be then easily linked to programs popularizing sustainable and plant-based diet or reduction of food waste. On top of that, referring to the first recommendation concerning availability in store, supply some of your ingredients (nuts, dried fruit, muesli base mix) in bulk – concept adopted for example by the supermarket chain Whole Foods Market in the UK ([www.wholefoodsmarket.com](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com)) – could also be considered as more pro-environmental move.



I hope you will find my insights and advice helpful, I acknowledge that implementation of some recommendations might be costly, yet I am still confident they would definitely be beneficial for current and future success of your company.

Lastly, I would like to wish you good luck with your Mixit business, do not hesitate to contact me for further discussion or additional details.

Yours respectfully,

Consumer psychology specialist, LSE

## **Social psychological justifications**

Following section provides theoretical frameworks and evidence-based justifications for the above outlined memorandum. Bringing together insights from consumer and social psychology and persuasive writing techniques, both content, style and structure of the memorandum are discussed. Firstly, writing strategies to convince the reader are reviewed (A). In the second part, the concept of the Installation theory is outlined as overarching theme for all advised improvements (B). Subsequently, each of six recommendations is examined in detail to clearly support the idea of sustainability (C).

### **(A) Persuasive writing strategies**

To underline persuasiveness and convincing tone of the memorandum, adjusted version of Monroe's (1951) "motivated sequence" is adopted. Building on the five distinct steps corresponding naturally to reader's decision making process (p. 200), this approach aims to motivate the audience to accept the speaker's proposal:

#### **(1) Attention**

Before even starting to communicate the message, it is crucial to grab reader's attention and make him fully engaged in the presented issue.

#### **(2) Need**

The attempt to introduce a change will only be successful if a reader is conscious about the need of necessity of this change.

#### **(3) Satisfaction**

Suitable and the most appropriate solution for addressing mentioned needs and limitations should be clearly stated. Emphasis on benefits outweighing disadvantages is crucial.

#### **(4) Visualisation**

Proposed solution will seem more plausible if visually expressed and personalised.

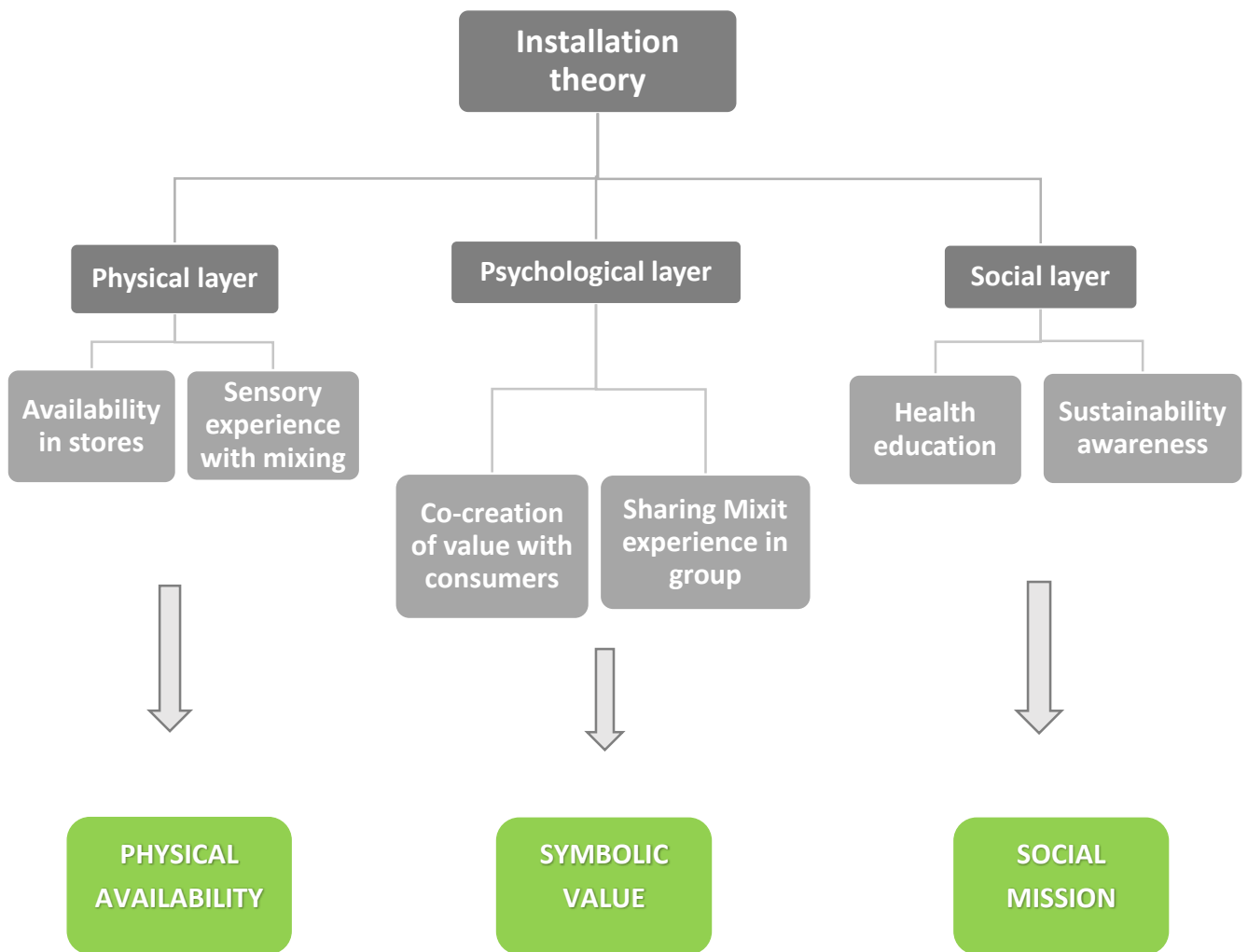
#### **(5) Action**

Concluding suggestion that boosts the reader to make desired action is key to deliver expected outcome.

In the Mixit memorandum, acknowledged prosperity and well-deserved appreciation of Mixit values in the first paragraph attempt to trigger the attention of addressees (1). Flattering and respectful tone is chosen because even subtle ingratiation can potentially shape person's response to the request (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004, p. 599). Following on that, limitations of the current state are outlined (2) with reference to the three pillars of sustainability. Assuming the reader's involvement at this stage is high, such negative framing highlighting shortcomings helps to convey the message in more persuasive manner (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). The next section brings recommendations to supply potential solutions to identified needs (3). Unless the reader is given clear and effective solution to the issue, focusing on negative aspects or consequences might have detrimental effect (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990, p. 366). For the reader's convenience, recommendations are visually summarized in the table (4). In fact, additional imagery of the three pillars of sustainability is used as a motto throughout the memorandum since visual presentation directly impact on comprehension, retention and reader's perception of the speaker (Morrison & Vogel, 1998, p. 134). Finally, confidence and strong belief in benefits for current and future success if undertaken advised action are explicitly stated (5). As Cialdini & Goldstein (2004) claim, individuals tend to behave consistently with their belief and past actions (p. 604), hence commitment to the proposal could serve as foot-in-the-door (p. 602), which afterwards ensures compliance to the request.

## **(B) Installation theory**

All recommendations proposed in the memorandum match with the core idea of the Installation theory (Lahlou, 2008), a straightforward concept developed to structure and systematize the change of social systems. As this theory claims, human activity and behaviour are guided and determined by the environment around us, by so called "installations" (Lahlou, 2008). Such installed scaffoldings are distributed over three distinct layers – physical, psychological and social. In Figure 6, visualisation of the Installation theory adapted specifically to the Mixit case is presented. As you can see, three theoretical layers encompassing discussed recommendations directly comply with outlined limitations.



**Figure 6:** Systematic schema of proposed recommendations overarched with the Installation theory

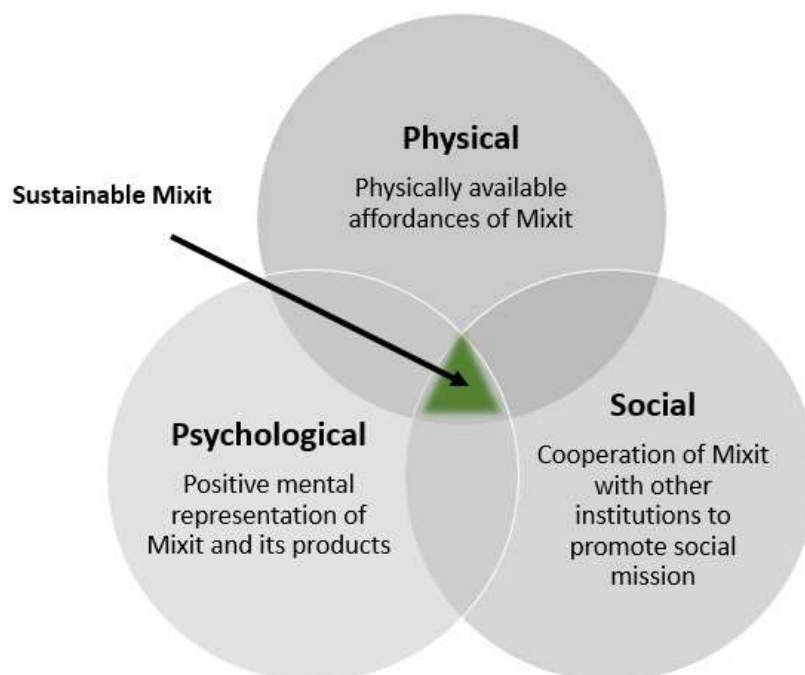
The **physical layer** provides us with material reality and affordances (Gibbson, 1967 in Lahlou, 2009). Such material artefacts shape our actions within the environment; we are limited by what is afforded by the external installation (Lahlou, 2008). For example, physically available Mixit products or mixing service in store afford interactions with the product and trigger buying behaviour. On the contrary, artefacts available only implicitly (via website) constraint certain activities, in which consumers would be otherwise spontaneously enrolled in, if the product was explicitly physically present.

The **psychological layer** supplies interpretations of affordances constructed by practice and sharing of mental representations (Lahlou, 2008). In the Mixit case, it refers to representations of Mixit products as convenient and healthy food. It provides knowledge about living joint experience through mixing,

and also includes motives and perception of engagement in consumption in group (Lewin, 1943); for example a person convinced that muesli is food appropriate for dinner and not for breakfast will probably hardly ever participate in eating muesli for breakfast with other colleagues.

Finally, the **social layer** consists of rules and conventions that control the system. Represented by institutions which create and enforce norms, this layer provides macro-level influence on the running processes and updates (Lahlou in Boy, 2011). Mentioned cooperation with nurseries or potential engagement of primary schools in health or sustainability educational programs exemplifies such institutional influence.

Obviously, it should be noted that such strict division into three levels might be useful for analysis and visualisation, yet in practice these categories often interact and considerably overlap (Figure 7). Consequently, the acceptability of the social change in the installed system could be thus ensured only through alteration on all those three levels (Lahlou in Boy, 2011, p. 167). Similarly, sustainable values, both economic, social and environmental, lie in the intersection of three levels. For this reason, threefold sustainability of Mixit could be easily promoted by addressing recognized limitations on those three levels.



**Figure 7:** Overlap of the three layers in the Mixit case

## **(C) Three distinct layers of Installation theory**

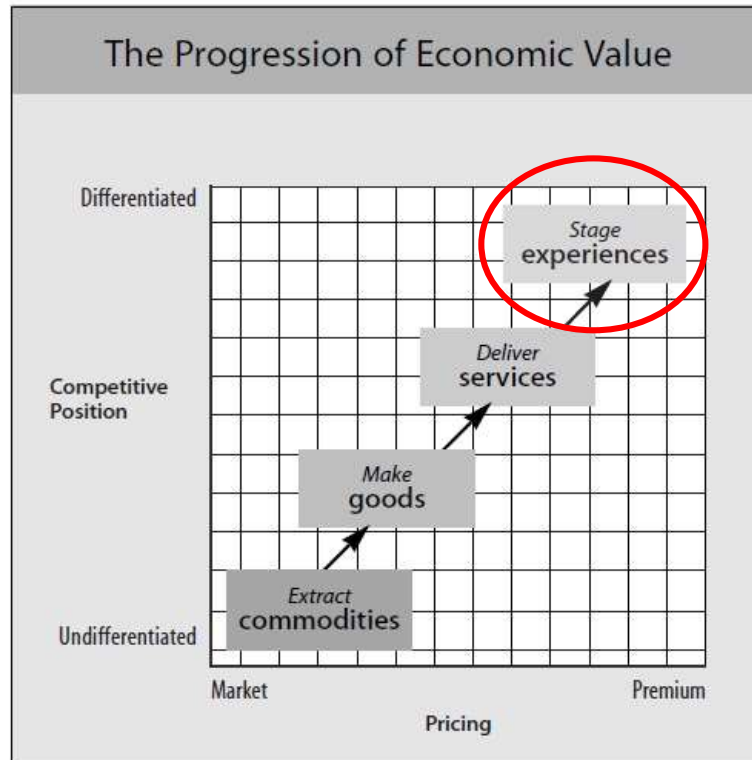
### **Physical layer: Physical availability of Mixit products in store**

#### **a. Availability of products in stores and other places**

Furnish Mixit products physically in stores or other relevant locations could attract attention, raise awareness and actually make customers engage with the product; be it just reading ingredients or directly buying the product. This statement corresponds to what Norman (2004) calls the behavioural design of the product (p. 314); not only aesthetics and symbolic value, but also functionality and usability that link the product to particular situation are key for the consumer. Logically, the more visible, accessible and relevant such external cues are, the more likely they would be influential on the consumer (Lewin, 1943). In other words, Mixit products are definitely more appropriate to offer in fitness centres than in stationary stores. Similarly, a flapjack would perhaps seem as more attractive product to buy there than a large package of porridge. In addition to that, excessive and abundant amount of choices available, e.g. different Mixit ingredients or flavours, might instead of happiness with unlimited options lead to actual dissatisfaction of consumers with their final choice. This paradox of choice (Schwartz, 2005) is thus important to bear in mind to avoid adverse effects of multiplicity of choices on final level of customers' satisfaction.

#### **b. Sensory experience of customers with Mixit products**

There has been significant shift from traditional service-centred to experience-based market recently. As Pine & Gilmore (1998) claim, we are entering to the "experience economy", where "been there, seen it, done it" consumption becomes a new trend (Gelter, 2007, p. 31). The importance of living the experience rather than simply deliver services or provide goods has significant implication on businesses on the marketplace. Additionally to utilitarian values (*satisfy hunger*) and hedonic motives (*pleasure of eating*), consumers search for experiential aspects of the interaction (Candi, 2012, p. 280). Staging the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) is hence gaining popularity as a tool to accommodate such needs of today's consumer, and also to maintain competitive advantage on the market (Figure 7).



Source: Pine & Gilmore, 1998

**Figure 7:** Progression of economic value

Mixit already provides consumers with certain interactive experience via online mixing service. Nevertheless, staging of mixing devices explicitly – in stores or alternatively on food festivals, fun fairs or organic food events – would furnish real mixing experience that would more likely attract new customers (Candi, 2008, p. 291), would make the company more profitable (p. 292) and finally bring superior image and competitive advantage (p. 294). Those findings apply particularly for small or medium-sized enterprises, thus perfectly correspond to character of Mixit company.

### Psychological layer: Symbolic value of Mixit products

- a. Support co-creation of value with consumers

Consumers are no more just final passive recipients of products, services or experience. They rather actively engage in consumption process and co-create the value with producers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). With emergence of customization (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003) of everything,



enabling consumers to design their own personalised tubus, and thus jointly produce the value, simply brings pleasant and enjoyable experience at the first place, yet additionally it results in “win-win situation in buyer-seller relationship” (Fitzsimmons, 1985 in Bendapudi & Leone, 2003). Consumers’ creative and innovative ideas could reveal desires and values that would otherwise remain hidden; first-person perspective might serve as both inspiration for future planning as well as a source of competitive advantage (Schau, Muñiz & Arnould, 2009; Thomke & von Hippel, 2002 and Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Moreover, such personalised engagement underlines the sense of belongingness to the brand, the product then perhaps becomes a part of consumer’s extended self (Belk, 2010) or to certain extent potentially shapes individual’s identity (Lam, 2010). However, there is also negative side of the co-creation. As Bendapudi & Leone (2003) warn, participation in co-creating activities should be optional in order to minimise negative effects of self-serving bias (p. 15).

b. Sharing Mixit experience in group

Different studies have shown that consumption in group brings greater pleasure and enjoyment than if the product or service is consumed individually (Boothby, Clark & Bargh, 2014 and Widlock, 2004 in Belk, 2010). As Mixit survey (2010) revealed, almost 32 % of respondents eat their breakfast at work. Collectives of employees or teams of professionals therefore represent fruitful ground for introducing Mixit products collectively or engage groups in mixing muesli themselves. Living similar experience and sharing feelings, impressions and skills with others underline the shared sense of “we-ness” (Belk, 2010) that helps to build relationships and bonding with the product and also within members of the community. As Schau et al. (2009) argues “all such community-like qualities address identity, meaning, and status related concerns for participants” (p. 30). Humans are fundamentally motivated to create and maintain meaningful social relationships with others (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004, p. 598), we need to belong to a social group, because social relationships created through such belongingness relates to the pleasure and happiness (Vohs, 2007). Moreover, possibility to express, communicate and share recent or previous experience with other is key aspect of building Mixit brand community (Muniz & O’Guinn, 2001).

## **Social layer: Promote social mission behind Mixit products**

### **a. Support health education among young children**

Health education and consciousness of healthy diet is important in every age, nevertheless in early childhood it should be particularly emphasised because most food related experiences tend to persist in adulthood (Birch, 1980, p. 489). Nurseries and primary schools are therefore promising target group to address in order to extend Mixit social responsibilities. Children collectives at this age represent very influential environment, actually, peer groups are considered the primary influence in food choice in this age (Birch, 1980, p. 495). As a result of social character of eating, behaviour of others might significantly impact on children's preferences. Providing Mixit products as examples of healthy snack might help children to develop new tastes and preferences, or it could even bring inspiration to some parents; especially in terms of less familiar ingredients or combinations.

### **b. Encourage consumers to behave sustainably**

In the Sustainable food guide, Machell (2010) outlines key principles of promotion of and engagement in more sustainable behaviour. In bulk buying or use of reduced packaging among others are stated as examples of sustainable options (p. 7); both could be easily linked to the first recommendation concerning in-store availability. Furthermore, enabling children to contribute to food preparation may increase food waste awareness as well as broaden knowledge about limits of food resources (p. 10). This could be conveniently combined with the last suggestion dealing with nurseries and primary schools. On top of that, as most of Mixit products are plant-based, such values and objectives are clearly reflected by both dietetic trends of society (Dibb, 2014 and Eating well, 2014) and also by advice of worldwide institutions (WHO, 2003).

## **Conclusion**

The present paper identified different weaknesses of Mixit company. With reference to social psychological theories, it attempted to indicate various recommendations that could enhance Mixit service in terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability. Proposed strategies were distributed over three layers of Installation theory, which directly corresponded to recognized

shortcomings. Although Mixit stands for a proud prototype of sustainable, innovative and “with-consumer”, rather than “to-consumer” values, implementing those recommendations would definitely bring positive outcomes for the business, its consumers and also the environment.

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