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Looking good: Customers melt over the unique ice cream-shaped bath products that Benjamin and Lisa Nisanoff sell.

FIRST PACKAGE DEAL PROPEL YOUR PRODUCT OFF SHELVES WITH THE PERFECT PACKAGING.

BY NICHOLE L. TORRES

Selling decadence is the order of the day for Me! Bath, a Los Angeles-based bath product manufacturer that started in 2002. But it's not peddling just ordinary bath beads—founders Benjamin and Lisa Nisanoff sell indulgence with their Me! Bath Ice Cream and Me! Shower Sherbet. The husband-and-wife team has not only created cute product names, but also has

developed distinct packaging shaped like scoops of ice cream. The company's signature product, Me! Bath Ice Cream, is flying off shelves.

Benjamin, 35, and Lisa, 32, discovered their perfect marketing niche while selling bath ice cream at street fairs. Initially they tried to make each unit a perfect sphere, but creating them by hand gave them the look of ice cream scoops. "The idea is [that] the product looks like something you would want to eat," says Benjamin. "It [evokes] all those sensory experiences."

Transferring packaging that works from one product category to another is a great way to innovate, says JoAnne Hines, founder of Packaging Diva, a packaging consulting company. For market research, walk down the aisles of retail stores and look at product pack-

Photo: Robert Galt/Photo

aging in your category as well as others. But don't design a carbon copy of your competition, says Hines. "You may be able to take some positive attributes, but you don't want to be a 'me too' or look-alike product, because you'd lose your own branding." She cites the salad dressings that now come in pump bottles as an example of a crossover packaging success.

As unique as the packaging is, you will still have to meet various regulations—especially if you manufacture food or cosmetic products, which are regulated by the FDA. A good packaging vendor can help you follow the rules. If your packaging is truly unique, start with a small order because you may want to make changes.

After the Nisanoffs developed their packaging, they received mixed reactions from vendors at trade shows—some ice cream packaging manufacturers would only package food. But Benjamin and Lisa were able to find vendors who embraced their unique idea. Today, their line includes Me! Ice Cream Sandwich, a pumice stone that looks like a treat, and Me! Body Icing, a specialty body lotion. With annual sales upwards of \$3 million, their treats are available at Ritz Carlton and Four Seasons spas as well as in high-end boutiques like Kitson and Planet Blue. "The first thing that grabs the customer's eye is the packaging," says Benjamin. "Once he or she picks up the product, half the sale is done."