The two-day ‘fast pack’ session was arranged to include a quorum of members always present: marketing, design, production, sales, and consumer research staff. Others individuals, who varied between projects, included factory line workers, design agencies, artwork specialists and external design agencies (as a ‘wild card’). The session was run by professional facilitators, alongside members of the packaging team.

The introduction began by defining the problem, outlining the product’s selling propositions. Choko’s proposition was primarily orientated around it being able to be spread both at room temperature and straight from the fridge, unlike competing products. The problem or ‘need’ was then summarized. The team then worked together to further refine the problem, define a ‘wish statement’ (a sentence summarizing what the team wished to achieve in an ideal scenario), and set the criteria (based on the statement) by which each concept would be judged.

The primary focus of the statement and criteria was on improving customer perceptions of the appearance of the packaging. Based on consumer research and feedback, the team believed there were two issues to address. First, the packaging was seen by consumers as “‘not table worthy’”, as it looked like “a lower grade margarine tub, communicating a lower level of quality than a jar…. consumers weren’t keen to put it on the table in front of guests, or have it out in the kitchen” [BA20]. Second, this “did not help differentiate the product on the shelf or give it any ‘shelf appeal’” [BA14].

The next stage involved gaining further insights through research, particularly:

1. Focus groups investigating perceptions of the current product and its packaging, as well as their needs.
2. Analysis of competing products and benchmarking (against the current packaging, based on the key criteria identified).
3. Undertaking a store shopping trip, to see the product in place, observe consumers, and their purchasing behaviour.
4. Talking to consumers about their perceptions.

From this, and the team’s basic immediate analysis, they refined the statement and criteria further. This ensured the two key focuses were correct, and enabled more specific KSF to be established. Other success factors included: fit with existing lines, ease of use, and cost constraints.
The idea generation stage began with brainstorming as many ideas as the team could in a two hour session, with the output of just over 100 ideas. The focus was on ‘what the product could be?’, and thinking of ideas which could fundamentally change it. This involved asking design analogy questions, such as ‘why don’t people put it on the table?’, and ‘how do they use the product?’ More fundamental questions were also considered, which could potentially result in larger changes, such as ‘why do consumers use a knife and is it necessary?’

Throughout this process, the group kept in mind the key features and essence of the brand. When a point was reached at which ideas were no longer coming forth, other techniques were used to assist the brainstorming session. Their aim was “trying to create a lot of ideas to come up with one good one” [BA14], with the emphasis on creativity, and stretching people to come up with ‘crazy ideas’. It was seen to be key not to judge ideas too early; therefore, no ideas were ruled out.

The next stage was to develop and review concepts, described as a “one hour purging session” [BA14]. A democratic ‘blind’ voting system was used, evaluating each idea against the key criteria. The aim was to reduce the number of ideas to ten. In this project, six ideas remained focused on redesigning the tub, and an additional two remained based on a ‘squeezeable’ format (one being a tube, and the other a ‘doy’ pack).

The latter two concepts originated from the team asking (in concept development), ‘why do consumers use a knife and is it necessary?’ This resulted in the idea of a fun and easy to pour squeezable pack which, with minimal effort, would allow the spread to be put onto toast or bread. Whilst these two concepts did not meet all of the original criteria, they were not ruled out, as the team believed they warranted further investigation. The marketing team considered them relevant to their business, and potentially able to extend the share of the brand. Furthermore, the team’s initial analysis revealed that the firm had existing production experience of doy packs within another SBU, lowering “the implications of utilising this potential new format” [BA14].
The following process then ensued:

- The team broke down into smaller sub-teams, to develop ‘winning ideas’. Each took a couple of ideas: naming them, establishing their form, and developing a visual of the design (using a designer in each team). The group then discussed its potential and evaluated usability.
- The teams then regrouped, and the developed concepts were presented, reviewed, rated and ranked.
- The sub-groups re-formed to develop the concepts further, based on the reviews, positive points highlighted, and concerns expressed.
- Following the re-work, these were then presented again.
- Finally, the reworked concepts were each rated, ranked, and discussed. From this, five ideas were selected to go through to implementation (typically in projects 1-3, ideas would be selected).

With respect to the ‘squeezy’ packs, the doy pack remained. This pack was discussed with production personnel, and others with relevant knowledge. From this brief analysis, the team decided that it would be worth progressing. This signified the end of the ‘Fast Pack’ process.

The development of the action plan took approximately two weeks. The key stakeholders remained involved, to ensure that the plan was comprehensive in setting out what had to be done. The plan particularly focused on consumer research, results reporting, safety, materials, volume and capacity, design activities and prototyping, and artwork. This was set out in a Gantt chart, using an internal software package to ensure all aspects were accounted for. The team worked closely with suppliers to establish timescales, costs, and any other relevant issues. At this stage, buyers within the confectionery division became involved, as it would be their responsibility to keep costs to a minimum.

In stage five, the team worked with an external design agency to further refine the concepts and develop computer generated photorealistic images. The team also investigated filling, packing, and how to make the packaging tamper evident. The key questions considered were: ‘Can we make it? Can we produce it? Can we sell it? What will the costs be?’

At this stage, suppliers became involved in the project. A few existing suppliers were
asked to examine how to make the concept work, investigating feasibility, cost, and cost efficiency. For the PTC team, managing supplier involvement was a difficult and important task. A particular challenge was “…ensuring costs were kept to a reasonable level, which is of critical importance to the buyers… and will also be an aim for the supplier…. [whilst] not allowing efficiency to dominate decision-making” [BA14]. The danger being that: “The essence of the brand or concept becomes removed or demoted as a priority” [BA16].

The sixth stage oversaw the actualization of the product through prototyping. Working with suppliers and agencies, the team developed real physical mock-ups of the concepts. The tubs were made of wooden blocks, and the ‘doy packs’ based on another pack in use elsewhere in the firm, with a wooden pouring spout added. Consumer feedback was then gathered. Later in this stage, the team also undertook work to gain a fuller understanding of the concept, which involved further examination of weight, materials, costs, and form of the packaging (e.g. making and moulding). A number of other factors were investigated, including:

- Standards and certification
- Quality and quality assurance
- Assessments
- Supplier audits
- Traceability
- Production line equipment implications and machinery requirements

Examining these considerations was possible now that the packaging format was better understood. The results enabled the feasibility of the five concepts to be assessed. None of the selected ideas were particularly radical: evaluations were therefore primarily cost focused. The head of design [BA14] noted, “if packaging changes would result in higher costs, the team would require relatively convincing results from consumer research [indicating a willingness to pay a premium or likely market share increases], in order for the changes to be considered”.

The next step was to fully test the prototypes with consumers. Focusing on the two products that were launched, both were made into physical prototypes. The tub was made using a solid plastic block, moulded into the shape of the proposed pack on a prototyping machine, which was then sprayed in the appropriate colour, and labels were applied. The pouch was made using the company’s existing production equipment, for the making of ‘doy packs’, with a rapid prototype spout hand sealed
on. These were tested in two stages:

1. Concepts were shown to consumers in three focus groups, with discussion facilitated by trained external facilitators.

2. Quantitative research to prove the concept was undertaken: again handled by an external agency in a testing facility. The testing was monadic, randomised, with consumer scoring and ratings. This was performed with just over 100 people.

Through this process, the five ideas were rounded down to two. The decision was largely based on responses of consumers and feasibility. Whilst the latter was largely cost focused, it was noted that the “concepts would not be discounted purely on cost”, and if the team had “really believed in a concept we would have looked at trying to resolve the cost” [BA14]. However, in this case, the greatest enthusiasm was reserved for the chosen concepts.

Alongside testing, marketing communications plans were also developed in greater detail. These were for a launch using magazines, in store promotions, and other media. The brand was relatively small; thus the campaign used less expensive media.

Having established the concepts to be launched, at this point buyers and the packaging team worked jointly to contact suppliers. Their discussions focused on establishing feasibility and cost. The tub was investigated by two suppliers. During their work, the first supplier removed all proposed curves on the lid, due to cost and manufacturing issues. Whilst the cost was acceptable, the design team were not satisfied, as this removed some defining aspects of the pack. Therefore a second supplier was involved. This supplier again raised issues with regards to the flowing line on the top of the lid, due to costs, production implications, and materials implications. Discussions were held between the packaging team, buyers, brand and marketing teams. Eventually it was decided that the cost of this top flowing line would be “too much to bear” [BA17], although this was a “great disappointment to the [packaging] team” the buyers drove this decision making process. Only the line on the bottom of the lid was retained. This supplier was selected as the preferred one.

In the case of the doy pack, the company had existing suppliers simplifying the process. A buyer approached one of these suppliers, who put together a proposal and established the cost. Only minor modifications would be required to the standard
pouch. However, for the design team, there were compromises made which affected the appearance of the design. The top originally featured a flowing line, but this added significant additional cost, due to extra material usage. Hence, after lengthy discussions with buyers and the supplier, the designers had to compromise on this aspect of the packaging. Ultimately, the buyers had the greatest influence on this decision, as it was their responsibility to ensure the product’s profitability. Whilst this aspect of the design was compromised, BA14 commented that in his experience, “a key role of the design team is to try to challenge suppliers and push them to keep various aspects of concepts… this is a common issue as suppliers will try to keep costs down”.

The seventh stage was that of implementation. The team “knew from the research that we had two winning concepts, and that consumers responded well to these” [BA20]. The final steps were taken to ensure that the concept could be made, it would work, and to set up production. Neither concept was radical; therefore, there were no significant issues. At this point, “the factory and suppliers became fully engaged in the project. Normally changes would be made to the production line…. including filling, logistics, pallets for the product, and production line speed… however in this project there was a pre-existing need to change the out of date production line equipment, so the procurement and setting up of packaging equipment was done alongside the other equipment required” [BA18].

Finally, the products were launched, primarily onto the Turkish market, but also to others. The marketing campaign was based on the already established plan and budget, to communicate the changes to the product and the introduction of the new pouch. The two packs ultimately launched can be seen in Figures 8.4.12 & 8.4.13. The first was the tub format: similar to the original tub, but communicating a higher level of quality. It featured a flowing line on both the lid and the main tub, designed to reflect the flow of chocolate. Figure 8.4.13 shows the new ‘doy pack’.

Figure 8.4.12: Concept one, a curved tub made of plastic - designed to communicate flowing chocolate
8.4.6 Summary of Case Findings

The first two projects examined the integration of packaging within NPD. In Project H, the lack of a holistic approach to product and packaging development was evident, with the format set by the project manager, and little other consideration made: ultimately resulting in issues later on. In project I, the packaging was considered relatively integrally, but the design level of its consideration resulted in technical problems.

The project manager’s relatively low level of packaging knowledge was a key cause of these issues, as he believed that putting chocolates in a box was a simple task. Project J, meanwhile, indicated a design level packaging focus within the firm. Developing a new format was not a core part of the project; however the uncovering of a viable opportunity for format change highlighted this focus to be an error.
8.5. PART4- Case Study: CrispChips (Pepsi Co.)

8.5.1. Background

This case study explores a division of the second largest international food and drinks organisation in the world. The products produced by the company, and their development, were managed by regional strategic business units and R&D centres. This case examines the company’s European R&D and Engineering division, particularly focusing on snack foods. This R&D centre handled the development of two types of products: CrispChips snackfoods and Quaker Oats.

The importance of packaging to the division was seen to be increasing, partly as a result of some new types of products being produced which had different packaging needs, but particularly because of increased emphasis on the environment and sustainability. The packaging team worked within the technology centre, and had an overview, although it did not generally “get involved in NPD on a day-to-day basis” [BB21]. The team was called in to work on particular projects as required. The onsite packaging team worked with a number of specialist suppliers. The majority produced specialist extruded laminated bags with glued seals; the format used to package most of their products.

8.5.2 The Cases

The research revealed that the NPD process used varied depending on the type of product being developed, with there being two main types of project:

1. New product ranges, or significant new lines
2. Product line extensions

The latter included minor changes, such as new flavours, which required “significantly less development”; and packaging changes were generally confined to “graphics, artwork, and pack copy” [BB21].

This case study focuses on four NPD projects:

K. A new product line branded ‘Rainbows’
L. A special limited edition line with new flavours, within the existing range of CrispChips crisps
M. A new type of packaging for premium crisps in large bags
N. Development of a new material for packaging crisps and snack foods
Project A focuses on the development of a new line of crisps under a new brand name, and also a new technology, thereby falling into the first category of projects. Project B focuses on a line extension. The final two projects focus on packaging developments. In the case of the latter two, neither was launched, although one remains a future option for the division.

8.5.3 Project K: The development of ‘Rainbows’ Crisps, using a new technology

Project K involved developing a new line of premium ‘natural’ style potato crisps for the UK market, launched in Summer 2009. The product utilized a new technology already in use in another region of the organisation’s operations. This project focused on applying it to the UK market. This new line was launched under a new brand name, ‘Rainbows’, pictured in Figure 8.5.1.

Figure 8.5.1: Picture of ‘Rainbows’ Crisps

Initially, four new technologies were investigated within the project, each already utilised elsewhere in the company’s worldwide operations. The NPD process consisted of nine stages, summarized in Figure 8.5.2. Figure 8.5.3 breaks this down further into key constituent activities, and identifies packaging activities.