



# **WICK CANDLES** *Case Study*

Ellyse Brewster



**BRIEF** For Design 341: Create a product for a certain demographic, brand it, package it, and create a point of purchase display.

- CONTRIBUTIONS**
- Research
  - Candle making
  - Logo and Branding
  - Packaging
  - Marketing and Point of Purchase

**PROBLEM** My chosen demographic was the “hipster hiker”, a person about 18-30 years old. They have disposable income and like to purchase outdoors equipment and accessories for their explorations. They like to be outdoors, but are also tied to the aesthetic of nature and like to be part of a trend or movement. They likely post their hikes on Instagram or Facebook to share with their friends.



**SOLUTION** I wanted to create something that would be spread by a grassroots marketing, in the vein of the famous CLIF bar, and that college students could adopt. At the same time, it would be easy to transport and use in different locations, from the woods to the ocean, to the apartment. A hiker doesn't have much room in their pack, and similarly students often keep small apartments. I settled on a candle, since it can provide 'portable ambiance', and I'd noticed that people often leave behind candles at hot springs

and other nature spots. A candle that would not spill wax and would be easy to transport would reduce environmental impact and reduce littering. Similarly, creating a beeswax candle also gave another opportunity for supporting sustainability, in the form of helping honeybees. From here, I interviewed students to see which traits are most important to them, and kept my focus on these: Sustainability, Authenticity, and Quality.



**RESEARCH** Aside from interviewing students, I also looked at other products geared for the outdoors, point of purchase, and nature itself. From this I began to close in on the materials and packaging designs that would be best for the product. Wood is most closely associated with nature, but would not be suited for this kind of product. Glass is too easy to break. I drew on my own experiences geocaching to settle on small metal tins as a container for the candles. These tins are small enough to slip into a pocket or

bag easily, but are extremely durable. I also honed in on spaces millennials like to spend time in, noting combinations of wood and metal, the typography used, and the feeling create in these spaces. These observations became key when creating for the point of purchase display. Along the way, I took the candles I created hiking with me to see how bulky they felt, and how easy they were to use. Once I felt my product was sufficient, I created different flavors, and settled down to creating my branding.



**IDEATION** To find the best design for the brand, I focused primarily on the packaging of the candle. “Wick” was chosen as a name due to its simplicity and links with other simply named products, such as Clif and Kind bars. Wick clearly evoked a candle, without being obvious enough to turn off consumers. The brown packaging brings the natural element back to the metallic packaging, and is a tactile hold to help prevent the candle from slipping out of one’s grip. Ideating digitally allowed for several variations in short order, which I then showed to students to see which resonated

the most. I then took their feedback and incorporated it, which can be seen in the final product, where elements from different designs overlap. This feedback was vital for understanding the needs of consumers. The brown label kept the package natural feeling, which allowed the type to be more modern, clean and simplistic. Colored labels identified flavors from a distance and added visual interest to the designs, as well as creating a seal for the candle, which kept the contents fresh.



**MARKETING** One of the fundamental aspects of Wick as a brand was the use of grassroots marketing tactics by a guerilla force. Giving this power to consumers, rather than using television or magazine ads, enforces the authenticity of the brand. It grows organically and naturally based on the strength of its reputation with consumers. One way to promote this relationship was through the use of “freebies”, items freely given out by the company to consumers that could then be used to advertise the brand. Stickers were one of the methods used, as their oblique designs created a sense of exclusivity if the viewer understood the meaning. These stickers could go on water bottles, helmets,

laptops and other items, which are often looked at by other people aside from the owner. They could also be left in public, as in the above photographs, and be discovered by others in the know. This strategy is low cost and built on goodwill, promoting the brand, and not merely focusing on the hard sell. Encouraging purchasers to go out more promotes an active lifestyle, as opposed to most candles, which are sedentary objects. To continue this theme, I also created coasters that users could use to record hikes. These coasters then become collectables, a tangible artifact of an experience. This satisfies a need to share one’s life, and integrates well with social media.



## POINT OF PURCHASE

For a point of purchase, it was important to emphasize the authenticity and quality of the brand. Choosing to make use of upcycled materials, I made use of wood and metal to create a display table. The dynamic of the wood on metal, echoes the metal and organic nature of the product packaging. This is also a callback to the era of logging and mining in the wilderness, associated with an outdoors feel. Recycling materials also continues the theme of sustainability and authenticity that is a strong part of the brand. Point of purchase displays along these lines could be set up in coffeeshops and stores without looking cheap or out

of place. Photographing the display out in nature emphasizes the purpose of the brand, that these are products for an active life. Similarly, the point of purchase continues to emphasize interaction, letting the consumer take freebies to “spread the word”, and interact with the samples. Meanwhile, keeping pine branches and pinecones keeps the point of purchase looking more rugged than over modernized, keeping the delicate balance between the luxury nature of the product, and the authenticity and aesthetic the demographic prefers.

## OUTCOME AND REFLECTION

For this project, an analog approach worked well, and most of the elements were created with a mixture of digital application and physical production. This occasionally provided a challenge when equipment acted up, but overall worked well. Several items had to be carefully planned out--finishing the wood, for example, required long drying times. However, this worked well and gave me practice at managing several different aspects of a project. I was thrilled at the opportunity to work with upcycled materials and create a product that promoted sustainability and an active lifestyle. The feedback from my demographic was the most vital part of the project, and drove the concept from start to finish.

