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Design Essay

Most New Yorkers know the classic staples of what makes our city so unique. The blend of cultures interacting helps make this a reality. If you're on your way to work or school and don't have time to make breakfast for yourself, your handy bodega or corner store has your back. A standard bacon egg and cheese or bagel and a coffee, but what if you aren't craving a bitter coffee and want something sweeter? A sweet, and quite frankly large, AriZona Green Tea will do the trick, and for only 99 cents!



AriZona Tea has long been a staple of New York City and it represents who we are and the trends that make us. Seven and a half in length by 3 inches in diameter, this drink usually sells for 99 cents a can, easily a go to for someone on a budget. The Vultaggio family, who owns 100% of the company, is credited with designing the Green Tea and other numerous flavours by being inspired by Don Vultaggio's mother's South Western home and a childrens coloring book (Eater and Event-Architecture magazines respectively). The owner, Don Vultaggio is the main designer for this specific flavour. The Green Tea Ginseng can was one of the original flavors made in 1996 and to this day has stood the test of time. The bottle is 23 fluid ounces, or as one fan describes it, "being a bladder-shattering 23.5 ounces." Before the company started, Vultaggio noted that Snapple had a monopoly in the drink industry and challenged them. Competing with

other drinks and teas available in convenience stores and gas stations, Snapple and Lipton are two of AriZona's biggest competitions.



The can itself uses the color of green as the background color. Decorating it is a cherry blossom branch overlapping the brand name. The Green Tea flavour uses Asian cultural objects in the design, including what seems to be Chinese characters and has even been criticized for the appropriation and racism the company has done. Its use of the Pueblo culture and design in some of their other flavors have also caused controversy for the company. The fonts used resemble handwritten fonts using brush strokes.

To set them apart from other tea companies, AriZona had to create a well designed campaign for their tea. They took inspiration from their homes and are even playing into the nostalgia trend for their main demographic which is people who grew up in the 1990's and 2000's. In Kepes' *Language of Vision* reading, they talk about methods for creating a dynamic iconography and this can be applied to AriZona's branding. Although the company doesn't advertise on billboards or commercials, they have been around long enough that their products do all the marketing for them. "Visual advertising...has the eye as its customer. To satisfy this customer, it must be vital as a visual experience and it must offer comfort to the eye."(Kepes, *Language of Vision*). The designs for the company are all cohesive and stick to their original branding, disproving Beatrice Warde's *Crystal Goblet* belief that certain designs should be clear and easy to look at. The design of the 90's goes against her claim that "the type that, through any arbitrary warping of

design or excess of “color”, gets in the way of the mental picture to be conveyed, is bad type.” (Warde, *Crystal Goblet*).

They recently came out with plastic bottles that you can cap and store for a later time. So instead of the big 24oz cans that you have to finish in one sitting you get to preserve your drink for another time. This helps establish the popularity of the brand, as canned drinks usually aren't as popular as bottled. Redesigning a popular product to be more inclusive and to get new consumers is a point to Herbert Bayer's philosophy in *On Typography*. He says that “Typography is a service art, not a fine art...typographers envisioned possibilities of deeper visual experiences from a new exploitation of the typographic material itself.” (Bayer, *On Typography*). ““Why would customers buy me? They're comfortable with Snapple,””(Peterson-Withorn, Forbes) Vultaggio says is every designer's internal monologue. This is a question they have to figure out, and with the help of his sons, Wesley and Vultaggios' they are known to ask their demographic directly what they want to see in AriZona, quite literally by hanging around bodegas, basketball courts, and skate parks which many of their customers frequent. “Over many nights at that and other bodegas, outside apartment buildings and near basketball courts, Don, John, and I learned that young people chose their iced teas based on which one looked the coolest. And that even if they were wildly thirsty, they wouldn't decide what to drink until they checked out what was on offer in the cooler.” John Caplan writes for Inc dot com. This is one of the ways AriZona has continued to stay relevant and make “nearly \$1 billion in sales from its core line” in 2014 (Backman, *Quartz news*).

Iced tea is as American as you can get, it is a part of American culture and so Vultaggio capitalized on it and AriZona is definitely doing something right because since the release of Ginseng, it has been the brand's most popular flavours. “Its large size and cheap price point have made it easy to share among friends”(Larkin, Thrillist). Being affordable and important to your consumers is something many companies should look to do.

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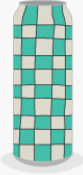


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Tea

Drink	Arizona Iced Tea 	GT's 	Pure Leaf Iced Tea 
US sales rank	#1	#2	#3
Size	20 oz.	8 oz.	18.5 oz.
Sugar per drink	52.5 grams	4 grams	42 grams

SOURCES: Caffeineinformer.com/sugar-in-drinks; Euromonitor BUSINESS INSIDER

