Redesigning Cambell's Microwavable Bowl Soup

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to address a flawed object and assess its cultural context. The flawed object being addressed is Cambell's Microwavable Mini Soup. Through many interactions with this product it has been observed that opening the soup results in spillage because of its pull tab lid. The proposed solution in this paper is to replace the lid with one that screws on, preventing soup from spilling and making it easier to open. The bowl portion of the product will be replaced with glass allowing consumers to be able to reuse or recycle the bowl. The redesign of the product will allow it to fully accomplish its cultural value of convenience.

Minor inconveniences happen everyday that gradually push our limits and stretch our patience thinner. Object flaws are one of these inconveniences that create obstacles that make daily life much more complicated and annoying. It was stated by Don Koberg and Jim Bagnall that "to help recognize problems we must view them as 'situations in need of improvement'" (2003). I will be addressing the problem of a flawed object created by Cambell's that is supposed to be an easy meal but instead is a hassle. I have proposed a solution to improve Cambell's flawed design and redesigned the product to create a sustainable and convenient food option.

Description of the Object

The flawed object that I am addressing in this paper is Cambell's Microwavable Mini Soups. The mini soups are 7 ounces, 2 1/2 inches tall, 3 5/12 inches wide, and come in a four pack. The four pack of soup costs about $5.29 at grocery stores. The container that each soup is in is made of plastic and is covered in a plastic label. The top has a plastic cover with four holes for use in microwaving and underneath that cover is an aluminum pull tab seal. The four pack of mini soups are packaged in a cardboard holder.

Description of the Flaw

To open Cambell's Microwavable Mini Soup there is an aluminum top that has a pull tab. Upon pulling this pull tab the contents of the soup starts to spill out. The force of opening it results in spilled soup every time. I have tested various speeds of opening the soup and holding the

container but each time without fail, soup is spilled. The pull tab lids are also difficult to open and often break right off leaving you to need a can opener to take off the top. This is annoying because most of the consumers that are buying these mini soups are buying them for convenience. This may be to take them to work or school where there usually isn't a can opener readily available or to quickly enjoy at home. With the flawed design it is no longer a convenient and easy food option.

Proposed Solution

My solution to Cambell's flawed product is to ditch the archaic tin pull tab lid for a simpler screw on lid and to replace the bowl component with a glass container. The screw on the lid will be easier to open and not need as much force. This will help to prevent the previous problem of spillage. The lid will have grooves on the sides that allows the user to be able to grip it. Replacing the pull tab lid with a screw on lid will fix the flawed design. Switching to a glass container will allow Cambells' Mini Soups to be able to be reused and recycled. The consumer will have the option to reuse the container themselves or they can return it to Cambell's to be reused by the company. This promotes sustainability by both the consumer and the company. To interest consumers to return their glass containers Cambell's can offer them a coupon for their next purchase. A lot of food in our grocery stores is packaged in single use materials. Multi use materials are important for reducing waste in landfills and for conserving the amount of energy used to manufacture products. By designing Cambell's product in multi use containers it will be much more sustainable and cost effective. My proposed solution to Cambell's flawed Microwavable Mini Soup's will be convenient to use, easy to open, mess free, and sustainable.

Campbell's Microwavable Soup in Cultural Context

Cambell's is a staple in many American families' homes. It has a wide range of consumers but one main factor that ties them all together is the need for a convenient meal. Convenience is an ideal in American society and daily life. Cambell's Microwavable Mini Soups is an object that reflects this. With life being so fast paced most people don't have the time to make a meal everyday, let alone three times a day. Cambell's mini soups are conveniently packaged in a microwavable bowl which makes them ready to heat and serve. Microwavable food options allow for an easy meal that requires little preparation and time which is perfect for a society that values convenience.

Conclusion

Cambell's Microwavable Mini Soup is supposed to be a quick and easy meal but because of its flawed design it is more of a hassle than convenient. The soup is designed with a pull tab lid which upon opening causes soup to spill out of the bowl. This leaves you with a mess to clean up and less soup. The pull tab lids also tend to be difficult to open and the tab often breaks right off. This takes away the whole convenience factor of these microwavable bowls of soup. I have proposed a redesign of these soups that are easy to open, mess free, and sustainable. The redesign includes a recyclable reusable glass container, screw on lid with grip, and a program to return the glass containers back to cambell's to be reused by the company.

Figure 1: The front of the four pack of soups

Figure 2: A mini cup soup with plastic lid off, revealing the pull tab lid

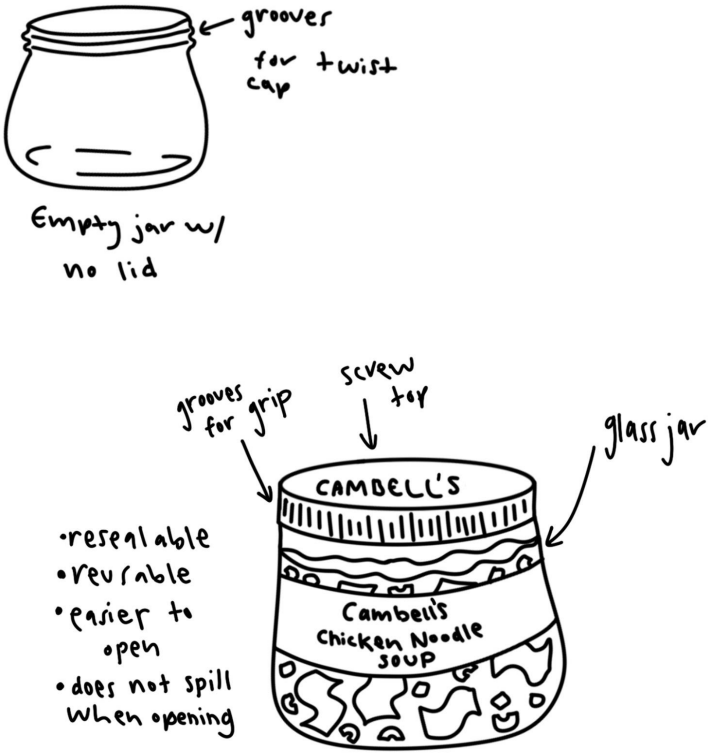

Figure 3: Sketch of the proposed glass container and screw on lid

References

Koberg, D., & Bagnall, J. (2003). The Design Process is a Problem-Solving Journey. In *The Universal Traveler: A soft-systems guide to creativity, problem-solving, and the process of reaching goals*. essay, Axzo Press.