

Findings of A Study on the Importance of Packaging of Cosmetic Products in Consumer Buying Behavior

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Abstract

This study researched how the different elements of the packaging of cosmetic products impacted the buying behavior of the consumers of such products. The author attempted to establish relationships among different variables related to the packaging of cosmetic products which impact buying behavior. Data was collected via questionnaires sent to a non-probabilistic convenience sample of size 130. We publish our findings on the impact of various packaging elements like color, material, etc. on consumer choices. Using various approaches to packaging, companies try and communicate different messages to consumers. The research was designed, and findings tested comprehensively so that the conclusions drawn herein are accurate.

Introduction and Literature Review

In older times, packaging was the responsibility primarily of the production department in any company. The primary focus was on protection and logistical requirements. With technological advancements, marketing managers discovered that packaging can be a supplementary promotional tool not only for the product but also for the company. In self-service stores, customers are primarily drawn by the packaging of the products. Hence, packaging is often the silent salesman. According to **Quail (2005)** packaging serves multiple purposes like protection, content descriptions and specifications, theft deterrence, and promotion.

In the present-day competitive business environment, with an ever-increasing number of self-service stores and changing consumer lifestyles, the importance of packaging is growing. Beautiful packaging can stimulate compulsive buying. Good packaging can also help reduce promotional costs by creating lasting impressions or conveying important messages etc. Ever since the use of folding cartons became more widespread, the packaging industry has grown

steadily with a few periods here and there showing rapid expansion. A major revolution in merchandising came about when effective mass production techniques evolved, and individually sealed packages started replacing bulk merchandise. The most used packaging material includes corks, asbestos, rubber, plastic, paper, glass, etc. The primary role of packaging, however, continues to be to hold, protect, and transport goods from manufacturers to the end consumer. Packaging thus is considered adequate if it can keep the product intact and make it available to the end consumer in its original state, without a loss in quality and/or without any physical damage.

Kotler (1984) propagated a view that identified three levels of packaging. The first level was the primary level which contained the actual product. The second level involved the packaging to cover the primary containers. The third level or the tertiary packaging protects the primary and secondary packaging during transit. According to **Arowomole & Adeyemi (2004)**, packaging involves all activities involving the designing and producing of the container and/or wrapper for a product. Packaging is important not only for the manufacturer but also important for the consumer.

In recent times packaging has become very important in terms of its promotional utility. Companies have started giving equal emphasis to the protection and promotion functions of packaging. The increased focus on the promotional utility of packaging means that the job of product packaging now is entrusted to good product managers or specialists trained in the art of using packaging as a marketing tool. Most organizations have also started pushing marketing managers to develop packaging, which can be an optimal mix of protection and promotion. Besides, poor packaging can damage the profitability of a product and result in dissatisfaction among channel intermediaries.

In this study on the impact of product packaging on consumer choices, the cosmetic sector was chosen for several reasons. Cosmetic products can be regarded as aesthetic feelings-oriented products. One can easily understand why the visual aspects of products like package design can significantly impact consumer choices when considering cosmetic products. Aesthetic feelings are subjective, therefore, are more based on perceptions. Consumer perception is often more critical in assessing the value of cosmetic products. Moreover, the market for cosmetics is constantly developing, and the cult of beauty has played an important part in people's lives since ancient times.

Topoyan & Bulut (2008) found out that consumers expected more sophisticated packaging from better-known brands. Consumers are even willing to pay a premium for good packaging. Good package design also positively influenced consumer satisfaction levels. In the case of cosmetics, packaging and labeling empowered customers to better judge product quality and make informed choices.

Jesenky (2007) claims that even though the design and effect of packaging depended on product categories and target consumer groups, it was the most important factor in impulse buying. Kapferer [2008] found that a consumer spends very little time checking out the actual product. Consumers often glanced at the packaging of products and made purchasing decisions. Thus, appropriate packaging not only saves consumers' time, but also helped build their relationship with a brand.

Deliya & Parmar (2012) in their work concluded that good packaging attracts consumer attention, positively impacts customers' perception of the product, and enhances the brand's image.

Sharma (2008) in a study of the existing practices in product manufacturing units regarding branding, packaging, and labeling of new consumer products (like soaps, biscuits, noodles, and the like) in Nepal found that most of the consumer products, around 85 percent, used product labels as tags attached to the product or on a graphic wrapper. Most sampled manufacturing units were aware of the value that good packaging and labeling add to the product being sold.

Alice Louw (2006) carried out an experimental study among two groups of university graduates aged between 20 to 30 years to gauge the impact that packaging had on consumers. The first group was first asked to rank water bottles on overall appeal and then handed over questionnaires to rate the same bottles. For the second group, the process was reversed. They were first asked to rate the water bottles via questionnaires and then rank these on overall appeal. The questions included both functional (like the ease of drinking, size, etc.) and non-functional (like color, quality, etc.) attributes. In the case of ranks, both groups came out with a clear winner and a clear loser. However, for the questionnaire part, there were variances among the worst-performing water bottles. This experimental study shows that packaging does play an important role in influencing consumer choices.

Studies on the impact of packaging on buying behavior have also been studied from emotive perspectives like environment-friendly packaging. One such study was carried out by **John Th Gersen (2000)** and published in the journal of consumer policy. The respondents in this study were Danish consumers. The study found that most of the respondents had developed personal norms about choosing environment-friendly packaging and that these personal norms were significant predictors of their inclination towards choosing products with environment-friendly packaging.

Bridge & Morgan (2007) studied perceptions and buying behavior towards baby products. The respondents were parents and guardians of children below five years of age who used baby products. The study concluded that the respondents adopted similar choices and strategies when arriving at purchasing decisions. Reliability and performance were important factors in decision-making. Proper packaging played an important role in conveying the appropriate message about the reliability and performance of the baby care products.

Prathiraja & Ariyawardana (2003) studied the impact of labels carrying nutritional value of food products on the buying behavior of consumers. The study showed that health-conscious buyers are more impacted by nutritional labels. Most respondents were willing to pay additional value for the food products which carried nutritional information compared to those that did not carry any labeling on the nutritional facts. Among those willing to pay extra, a larger section belonged to the age group of 36 to 50 years. Most of those paying extra on nutritional labels have had tertiary education and belonged to households with less than 4 members

Ulrich R. Orth (2009) studied how package design can be used as a resource in creating brand identity. A thorough review of this literature revealed that it is difficult to provide general guidelines for a holistic approach to package design in terms of shape, size, finish, the use of colors, impressions, etc. The researchers collected data in four stages. First, a list of strategically relevant brand impressions for the product was determined. Second, based on appropriate package design elements, two-sample designs, one real and another representative, were selected for review. Third, professionals with experience in the advertising and design industries rated the selected designs on the pre-identified design elements.

Colors not only attract but also help in setting a mood. No wonder package colors will influence consumer buying behavior and choices. One example, commonly used in this regard is the use of colors in Apple's advertisements. In these advertisements, a bright background color is used to give a fun feel, and black and white contrast is used for focusing attention.

The primary purpose of packaging is to protect the product therein. Hence, the packaging material used for any product must be chosen in a way that offers protection from various elements which can be detrimental to the product. Thereby, subpar packaging or the perception thereof can hurt product sales. Soda glass, sulfated glass, neutral glass, and borosilicate glass are among the commonly used packaging material for cosmetic products.

Font styles used in packaging, like colors, grab attention and influence buying behavior. The advent of IT has allowed the use of various kinds of fonts that can be optimally customized given the package dimensions, product features, etc. Companies have started hiring specialists in this regard.

As far as recent trend is concerned, companies must have a correct understanding of consumers and their buying behavior. As we all know that today's public become very aware and educated.

In summary, product packaging does its bit in attracting consumers. Packaging helps in identifying the brand and has a deep impact on consumer buying behavior. The review of the literature allowed us to narrow down the following features of packaging as the more important ones in influencing buying behavior.

- The use of colors in packaging.
- The quality perception of the package
- The kind of material used for packaging.
- Wrapper design.
- Information is carried on the packaging.
- The fonts that are used for printing relevant information.
- The use of pictures, images, and graphics.

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are

- To identify packaging features that influence consumer choices when it comes to cosmetic products.
- To identify the factors that attract consumers to buy cosmetic products.

Scope of the Study

This research work tends to study the importance of packaging cosmetic products in consumer buying behavior. It will outline the various roles packaging plays in attracting and selling off cosmetic products.

Independent variable

1. Packaging color
2. Background image
3. Packaging material
4. Font size
5. Design of wrapper
6. Printed information
7. Innovation

Dependent variable

1. Consumer buying behavior

Research Methodology

The current study is based on primary data collected from 130 respondents from a non-probabilistic convenience sample. A well-structured questionnaire was designed to collect the information from the respondents. The questionnaire was designed to study the importance of packaging cosmetics products in consumer buying behavior. Likert five-point scales were used for obtaining responses. The response has been collected online by preparing the questionnaire in google forms and sending it to respondents through WhatsApp, email, and Instagram.

The purpose of the research and the questions were explained to the respondents. Care was taken not to use leading questions, avoid personal biases, and avoid distortions while recording the responses.

Office 365 licensed via an academic license was used for the basic data analysis and data representation. Cronbach's alpha was determined for the reliability of the study findings using a trial version of IBM's SPSS 19 statistical package.

The Cronbach's alpha for the study was 0.837 thereby making the findings highly acceptable or highly reliable

Data summary and findings

This section summarizes the findings relative to the questions in the questionnaire. The entire section is divided into two sections in keeping with the two objectives of the study.

The number of attributes associated with each question was quite large for a more comprehensive study. Hence, we have abstained from tables and graphic representations of data. A reader interested in the data can contact the authors via email.

Part A: Findings on packaging features that influence consumer choices when it comes to cosmetic products

Q1. How are these characteristics of cosmetic packaging important to you?

- Packaging color
- Packaging from an unbreakable material
- Expensive looking packages
- Packaging that simplifies a product usage
- Packaging size
- Possibility of packaging recycling
- The packaging includes a thorough description of the product composition and its use
- Also, product accessories are included in the packaging
- Unconventional original design

Findings

The responses on the most important factors of packaging influencing the consumer choice when buying cosmetic products are:

- Packaging that simplifies a product usage: First rank with a score of **3.68**
- The packaging includes a thorough description of product composition and its use: Second rank with a score of **3.63**
- Unconventional original design: Second rank with a score of **3.63**
- Packaging size: Third rank with a score of **3.57**

Part B: Findings on the factors that attract consumers to buy cosmetic products.

Q1. Rank all the deciding factors, according to you, when buying a cosmetic product.

- Product size
- Brand
- Product review
- Product design
- Recommendations of friends, family...
- Advertisement
- Product size
- Special size [anti allergic, without parabens, eco-product]
- Product quality

Findings

The responses show that the most important elements attracting customers to buy cosmetic products are:

- Brand: First rank with a score of **3.63**
- Product review: First rank with a score of **3.63**
- Product size: First rank with a score of **3.63**
- Product quality: Second rank with a score of **3.61**
- Special size [anti allergic, without parabens, eco-product]: Third rank with a score of **3.56**

Q2. Mark your priorities for packaging

- Protective
- Eco friendly
- Attractive
- Others

Findings

The responses indicate that the most important priorities of customers or respondents towards packaging are:

- Eco-friendly: First rank with a score of **3.83**
- Protective: Second rank with a score of **3.80**
- Attractive: Third rank with a score of **3.76**

Q3. From these features, tick the one which you think is appropriate

- Attractive colors
- Quality of packaging
- Materials used for packaging
- Designing of the wrapper
- Information is given on the packaging
- Transparency
- Uniqueness

Findings

The responses indicate that the most important factors which the respondents think are appropriate are:

- Information is given on the packaging: First rank with a score of **4.48**
- Quality of packaging: Second rank with a score of **4.36**
- Uniqueness: Second rank with a score of **4.36**
- Transparency: Third rank with a score of **4.25**

Conclusions

The majority of the respondents think that the most important characteristic of packaging is packaging that simplifies product usage [for example pump]. Also, the respondents ranked the packaging including a thorough description of product composition and its use and

unconventional, original design as the second most important characteristics of packaging. Packaging size is another characteristic that the respondents prefer.

The respondents preferred brand, product size, and product review as the most important elements attracting them to buy cosmetic products. Product quality has been ranked as the second preferred element attracting the respondents to buy cosmetic products. Another element attracting customers to buy cosmetic products is special size [anti-allergic, without parabens, eco-product]

The respondents have preferred eco-friendly as their most important priority towards packaging. The respondents have preferred protective as the 2nd important priority towards packaging. Attractiveness is another important priority that the respondents prefer in packaging. Information given on the packaging is the most important feature preferred by the respondents. Uniqueness and quality of packaging are other important feature which is ranked 2nd by the respondents. Transparency is another feature that is preferred by the respondents.

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