

Product Packaging: A Consumer's Perspective

Dr. Viplaw Kishore Pandey
Himgiri Zee University, Dehradun

Mohd. Firoz
Research Scholar
Department of Management, Himgiri Zee University, Dehradun

Abstract

The study was conducted to determine which elements of product packaging are the most significant from consumer's point of view. Consumer product packaging can serve a critical role in the consumption experience, but marketing and packaging science researchers focus primarily on pre and post-consumption aspects of consumer product containers. Exhaustive research into packing ergonomics, logistics, safety, sustainability and promotional features are common across marketing and packaging disciplines. In addition to an undervalued role in product satisfaction, functional isolation between marketing and packaging scientists limits packaging's overall impact on the bottom line. This paper seeks to discuss the need to understand consumer perspective in order to correctly determine the element of product packing and to achieve the desired position in the minds of consumers.

The objective of this study is to determine elements of packaging from consumer's perspective. The purpose of this research is to examine the essential factors, which are driving the success of a brand. According to the finding of the research study, it has been observed that the packaging is the most important factor and powerful factor, which influences consumer's perspective. The packaging elements like its color, packaging material, design of wrapper and innovation are more important factors from consumer's perspective.

Keywords: Packaging, Package Quality, Perception, Purchase decision.

Introduction

Packaging can serve an important role in the product consumption experience, but consumer product companies and researchers often focus on packaging's impact on product promotions, distribution and a range of pre-consumption and cost-based functions. Marketing and packaging literature often stratify the two disciplines in a way that may not accurately reflect the consumer experience. Packaging research often falls under two categories, each in conceptually isolated disciplines.

Industrial technology research, often published in packaging-specific journals tends to focus on how physical package characteristics affect:

- distribution efficiency
- shrinkage (i.e., product theft)
- cost of materials
- usage.

Azzi et al. 3 propose a package design research framework that assigns consumer experience considerations a relatively minor role as compared to ergonomics, logistics, safety, sustainability and communication. According to Rundh (2005) package appeals consumer's attentiveness towards a certain brand, increases its image, and stimulates consumer's perceptions about product. Furthermore, packaging conveys distinctive value to products (Underwood, 2003; Silayoi, & Speece, 2007), packaging works as an instrument for differentiation, and helps

consumers to decide the product from wide range of parallel products, packaging also stimulates customer's buying behavior (Wells, Farley & Armstrong, 2007).

Literature Review

Packaging:

Packaging has become itself a sales promotion tool for the organizations. The consumer's buying behavior also stimulated by the packaging quality, color, wrapper, and other characteristics of packaging. Packaging is a whole package that becomes an ultimate selling proposition, which stimulates impulse buying behavior. Packaging increases sales and market share and reduces market and promotional costs.

Packaging acts multidimensional functions. It offers knowledge about the product and organization, a technique to communicate with consumers and safeguard to the quality of product (Silayoi & Speece, 2007). According to Rita Kuvykaite1 (2009) the study reveals the self-service and changing consumers' lifestyle having the ultimate effect on consumer choice. Increase in impulse buying behavior labeling is also communicating to the customer. Ulrich R Orth et al. (2007) says package design is an integral part of projecting a brand image, which is sometimes designed to convey images of high quality, while at other times signaling affordable prices. Abrams, E. (2010) says in "Brand Identity meets Economics of Scales," "The carton, jar or tube propped on that stores shelf provides the first impression of a brand's product to a consumer, and the brand and product packaging is critical the success of both." Arens (2007) says packaging is the container for a product – encompassing the physical appearance of the container including the design, color, shape, labeling and material used.

Effect of Product Packaging in consumer Buying Decision:

Baker (2007) said it is worthwhile for retailer to understand factors within the retail setting that trigger a consumer's impulsive reactions. Retailers can help customer to find the right products through focused Merchandising, intelligent store design and layout and other visual merchandising, intelligent store design and layout and other visual merchandising practices, such as product displays, packaging and signage. Brewer (2006) found that customers learn colors associations from current brands in the market, which lead them to prefer certain colors for various product categories. Using color as a cue on packaging can be a potentially strong association, especially when it is unique to a particular brand. However, people in different cultures are exposed to different color association and develop color preferences based on their own culture's associations. Furthermore, Brewer (2006) found that informational elements tend to be less important than visual in low involvement product decisions: "so graphics and color become critical".

Gonzalez (2007) said that primary function of packaging is to protect the product against potential damage while transporting, storing, selling and exploiting a product. Gonzalez mentioned that consequently the role of package in marketing communications increases: it must attract consumer's attention and transmit adequate value of product to a consumer in the short period right in the place of sale. Therefore, there is a necessity to explore the package and its element in more details, in order to understand which of these elements are the most important for a consumer purchase decision.

Hill (2005) said as individual preferences become more complex and diverse, packaging becomes the major means of product branding, packaging also provides the more permanent impression of product brand to the customer.

What is Quality:

Table 1. Shows a number of researchers' definitions on the quality concept:

Authors	Year	Knowledge concept
Parasurman	1990	Quality is defined as the interaction between the customer and the service provider, since the customer sees the service quality through comparing his expectations of this service with the actual performance.
Dade	1994 P.3	Or it's the characteristics and specifications of a product or a service that generates the ability to fill explicit and implied needs Quality is reaching the gap between the consumers' expectations for the product's quality and their realization of the actual performance of that product. (Parasurman, et.al)
Tenner	1995	defines it as an essential working strategy largely understood in the consumers' expectations in and outside whether these expectations are explicit or implied
Evans	1997	sees quality as the mark for using any product or service that has to meet the consumers' expectations
Heazer & render	2001	Many researchers addressed the concept of quality defined quality as the overall characteristics of a product (service or a ware) that shows and reflect the product's capacity to fulfill explicit and implied needs
Muhammed Ashioni	2005	Quality is the constant development of the product the meet up with the consumer needs with the least costs (Basics on total quality control & total quality management
Hoffman, Bateson	2011, p:4	Quality is a standard of correspondence between the actual performance of the service with the customers' expectations or the difference between the customers' expectations and their realization of the service's actual performance.

Quality is defined as a zero error rate, i.e. the ability to produce a perfect product on the first try (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Crosby defines quality as the producer's ability to meet expectations (Crosby, 1979 quoted in Parasuraman et al., 1985). This definition of quality is the core of the definition contained in the ISO 9001 standard (cf. ČSN EN ISO 9001, 2010). As far as the customer's (consumer's) point of view is concerned, quality can be defined as the quality perceived upon the basis of the consumer's decision on the overall excellence or superiority of the product (Zeithaml, 1988). All definitions mentioned above apply to the quality of a product, which is consistent with the focus of the research into the food stuffs industry. Widespread approach of Nenadál's team understands quality as a degree to which satisfaction is met, measured by a set of inherent signs (Nenadál et al., 2002). Customer satisfaction can be defined in different ways - as a comparison of previously held expectations with perceived product or service performance (Homburg et al., 2005, Anderson et al., 1994). Alternatively, customer satisfaction can be defined and measured as consumer ratings of specific attributes (Gómez et al., 2004). With respect to the focus of the paper on company's product quality, we have defined customer satisfaction as a reflection of this quality. It is an easier view of satisfaction because sales policy, company's marketing and price policy were committed, although they can be considered as factors affecting customer satisfaction and business profit (Zeithaml, 2000). So we did not proceed in accordance with satisfaction - profit chain (satisfaction → share of wallet → revenue profit) (Cooil et al., 2007, cf. Anderson, Mittal, 2000), but we have focused on the product and its impact on customer satisfaction, and consequently the profit of the company. Of course, we also understand the relationship of product quality and customer satisfaction over the

long term, i.e. that should a satisfied customer influence profitability positively (through the purchase of a quality product), he or she must be attracted and held, which is consistent with findings of Anderson and Mittal (Anderson, Mittal, 2000) or Cooil (Cooil et al, 2007).

Product Quality

According to Stephen Page (1995) product is anything offering to consumer which either solve problem or provide benefit including any "add-ons" e.g. guarantees. In many cases, product will be the most important element in the marketing mix; it lies at the care of successful marketing. Page stated that the future of a product must match closely as possible the benefit that consumers are seeking. Getting the quality of product requires an understanding of what consumers expect. This means that not only that of quality must do what is claimed for it and stand up well in comparison with rivals, but it also comes in that the consumers consider being the right colour, weight and packaging size. Basic quality features product may be extended by the variety of the so called so "ad dozes (added features). in the case of durables these may take the form of aftermarket support example extended guarantees repair and maintain services. Product are the focal point by which companies seek to satisfy consumers need. The term product can mean many things to many people. Most people, when they consider marketing of a product tends to think of fast moving consumer good (FMCGS) such as powder or chocolate bars. In fact, the term product can mean many things; product therefore is any tangible or intangible item that satisfies a need.

Consumer Perception

Consumers use different variables to determine the quality of a product. These quality lies in the eyes of the consumers in question. What may be seemed to be of high quality to one consumer may be inferior to another. Even though many consumers uses price as an indicator of product quality (Kotler 2001), there are doubts in consumers mind whether there is a relationship between price, value and product quality and further price itself is a strong indicator of product quality in the absence of any information.

It is clear that, consumers evaluate directly attribute by physical cues such as taste, smell and size. Others use variable such as place of origin, type of distribution channel, price, packaging the manufacturer and among others. Perception plays an important role in life of the consumer. Our environment including business environment is littered with numerous stimuli trying to attract our attention. The quality of our perception depends on the way we process and interpret the stimuli or the information reaching our senses. Perception is the process, by which an individual select, organizes and interpret information inputs to create meaningful picture of the world. When we interpret a situation or events we are then in position to respond. (Kotler, 1997).

Perception, according to Gregory et al (1995), is a set of process by which an individual becomes aware of and interpret information about the environment. If everyone perceived everything the way, things would be a lot simpler, of course, the reverse is true. Moreover, people often assume that, reality is objective that, we all perceive the same things in the same way.

According to Markin (1995), perception is concerned with the way in which we select and recognize sensory data presented by our environment. In other words perception may be defined as a complex process by which people select, organized and interpret sensory stimuli into meaningful picture of the world. Markin Continues that, a number of stimuli constantly reaching consumers sensory organs from the environment they select certain stimuli to which they attend, they organized these stimuli so that they become understandable, but their interpretation of sensory stimuli involves more than just receiving and processing information by attitudes and beliefs and their

past learning as is by the character of the stimuli themselves and understanding of perception process is important to the producer or the manufacturer. This is because consumers decision to purchase a product will be influenced to a large extent by the attribute which the successful marketer is able to give or lend to the product through advertising, packing, Manufacturing, Country of origin and other promotional techniques which in a way determined product quality.

Courtland L, Bovver and John J. Thrill (1992, P 153) have the view about perception; before consumers can buy a product, they must be aware that it exist. This is a process that starts with being exposed to the stimuli that represent a particular product, attending to these stimuli and interpreting them to form an overall perception of the object. The Steps involve exposure, attention and interpretation.

As we have already stated, packaging plays a major role in communicating brand personality by means of several structural and graphic elements. So, this article aims to discover how consumer perceptions vary according to product packaging strategies. To do this, the role that packaging plays in positioning strategy will be studied.

The proposal recently developed by Blankson and Kalafatis (2001) has been selected, because it is based on consumer perceptions. However, of the eight positions strategies defined by these two authors, the second option “extraordinary service” has been eliminated as it refers to the particular case of service positioning, in which packaging does not play a significant part. The seven remaining positioning strategies have been studied in depth to see what kind of packaging best represents them:

- positioning based on status, for the upper classes;
- positioning based on accessibility/economic price;
- positioning based on safety;
- positioning based on elegance/sobriety;
- positioning based on the country of origin/patriotism;
- positioning based on excellence/high price; and
- positioning based on noble principles/for the middle classes.

According to jugger (2008) brand purchases are being made or broken in the “final five seconds” is a brand is not adequately supported with media advertising, packaging must plays a greater role in the brand’s marketing. jugger (2008) said the “right” packaging solution is different for each brand. When is important is that it works when placed next to the competition on the shelf. Jugger (2008)said the average British marketers contains 25,000 items and the average shopping basket just 39 items .what this illustrates- is that today’s consumer have to scrutinize through a vast amount of products to chose what they want – and not surprisingly they end up ignoring most of what they pass. Lockshin (2008) said never underestimate the importance of purchasing marketers often measure consumer brand perceptions and ignore the pack. Yet we know form the way that consumer from the way that consumers react to unbranded products that packaging plays a huge role in reinforcing consumer perceptions. Packaging helps to direct the way consumer experience a product. Yet, we spend little time researching the connection between packaging and the direct experience of the product. Mann (2007) also mentioned that the amount and type of information available to the customer through the product label and package on nay product is the functions of three factors such as government regulation, independent labeling

institute and business policy. Rundh (2007) says unlike advertising exposure which can be relatively brief packaging continues to build brand values during the extending usage of product and can drive brand equity and loyalty Rundh (2007) said in a standard supermarket, the typical shopper passes about 300 brands per minute. This translates into less than one-tenth of a second for a single product to get attention of the customer and spark purchase.

According to Smith (2006), there are six variables that must be taken into consideration by producers and designers when creating efficient package: form, size, color, graphics, material and flavor. Neelamegham-S, Marketing in India (1994) Manisha Desai states that product as well as its promotion and distribution, depends on packaging which is to be given due importance. They also emphasized that packaging is essential for sales promotion as well as for safe delivery of products. Pillai and Bagawathi, R.S.N, Modern marketing (1978), have discussed that packaging is a significant activity pertaining to the promotion of sales and it also protects the product and make it attractive. They have depicted a picture of identification and convenience of the product. They have also discussed packaging as an activity which is concerned with protection, economy and promotional aspect.

Paine Frank (2003) Packaging India, took up a study on the packaging as the principal tool of marketing. He has emphasized that packaging may be considered as contract of the sale of all goods. But he has not touched the packaging as a strategy for sales promotion. Porter Glenn (1999) Journal of Design History has discussed that packaging is a silent salesman. He has not touched the promotional aspect of packaging. Page Peter (2007), Popular Plastic and Packaging, has revealed that without packaging many products cannot reach consumers in sound condition. He also emphasized popularity of plastic as an attractive device. Banerji Sujit (1999-2000), Packaging India, The author states that demographics in terms of total increase in consumer base, changes in demographic profile, family structures and consumption baskets will be key determinants to packaging development in newer markets. Pflaum C. William (1997), Indian Institute of Packaging, The author states that better packaging produces better quality of life. He also said that packaging is a key strategy for coping with the future marketing. He has discussed better quality of life through better packaging.

Griffin. Jr. Roger (1972), Principles of package development, the author states that packaging recognized as an essential function by industry throughout the world is reflected by the formation of various industrial and technical societies relating to its various aspects. But he has not touched the packaging as a strategy for sales promotion. From the consumer perspective, packaging also plays a major role when products are purchased: packaging is crucial, given that it is the first thing that the public sees before making the final decision to buy (Vidales Giovannetti, 1995). This function has increased with the arrival and popularisation of self-service sales systems which have caused packaging to move to the foreground in attracting attention and causing a purchase. Prior to this, it had remained behind the counter and only the sales attendant came between the consumer and the product (Cervera Fantoni, 2003). According to Sonsino (1990), self-service has transferred the role of informing the customer from the sales assistant to advertising and to packaging. This is why packaging has been called the “silent salesman”, as it informs us of the qualities and benefits that we are going to obtain if we consume a certain product (Vidales Giovannetti, 1995).

In the current self-service economy, packaging provides manufacturers with the last opportunity to persuade possible buyers before brand selection (McDaniel and Baker, 1977). Therefore, all the packaging elements, including texts, colours, structure, images and people/personalities have to be combined to provide the consumer with visual sales negotiation when purchasing and using the product (McNeal and Ji, 2003). This becomes even more crucial when the data contributed by Clive Nancarrow et al. (1998) is taken into consideration: nine out of ten purchasers, at least occasionally, buy on impulse (Welles, 1986) and unplanned food shopping articles can account for up to 51 per cent of purchases (Phillips and Bradshaw, 1993).

Behaeghel (1991) and Peters (1994) go a step further. They consider that packaging could be the most important communication medium for the following reasons:

- it reaches almost all buyers in the category;
- it is present at the crucial moment when the decision to buy is made; and
- buyers are actively involved with packaging as they examine it to obtain the information they need.

In this situation, it is essential to communicate the right brand and product values on packaging and to achieve a suitable aesthetic and visual level (Nancarrow et al., 1998). Similarly, McNeal and Ji (2003) underline that the peculiarity of packaging as a marketing element lies in the fact that it often accompanies the use or consumption of products and, therefore, the possibility of transmitting brand values and product characteristics increases. With regard to this aspect, Deasy (2000) points out that the characteristics of a product – its positioning – are permanently transmitted over seven stages:

1. point of sale;
2. transporting the product home;
3. home storage;
4. opening;
5. serving the product for consumption;
6. reclosing or putting away; and
7. disposal

Purchase Decision

Consumer decision-making can be defined as a mental orientation characterizing a consumer's approach to making choice (Lysonski et al., 1996). This approach deals with cognitive and affective orientations in the process of decision-making. Four main packaging elements potentially affect consumer purchase decisions, which can be separated into two categories: visual and informational elements. The visual elements consist of graphics and size/shape of packaging, and relate more to the affective side of decision-making. Informational elements relate to information provided and technologies used in the package, and are more likely to address the cognitive side of decisions.

Most FMCG are low involvement products. In low involvement, "consumers do not search extensively for information about the brands, evaluate their characteristics, and make a weighty decision on which brand to buy" (Kotler et al., 1996, p. 225). One reason for this is low risk (Chaudhuri, 2000; Mitchell, 1999), i.e. these products are simply not very important. The lack of substantial evaluation often results in the inability to distinguish much difference among leading brands (McWilliam, 1997). A common result is relatively weak "habit" brand loyalty. Thus, when consumers find a brand which meets their standards, they tend to stay "satisfied" with it, especially, if they are constantly reminded of the brand. But they are not very committed, and substitute easily when it is not available. Such habit loyalty is fairly common in the West, e.g. IGD (2002a) notes that about one-third of women shoppers, and slightly fewer men, buy food products through habit. It is also quite common in Thailand and more

broadly in Asia (Speece, 1998, 2003). Survey data from Thailand indicate that packaging plays a strong role in reminding consumers about the brand (Silayoi et al., 2003), i.e. it helps to reinforce habit loyalty.

Some observers, though, note that not all consumers view grocery shopping as a low involvement activity. Beharrell and Denison (1995) show a range of involvement among European consumers. Those with higher involvement tend to be more strongly brand loyal, including willingness to postpone purchase or go to another store if the brand is not available. In Thailand, about 20-40 percent of consumers for most FMCG show this level of loyalty, and will postpone or search rather than simply switch to a substitute (Speece, 1998, 2003). Schlossberg (2008) suggest that the most effective means of attracting attention to a product is by focusing attention on product brand through the use of an appropriate color, size, language, and picture while increasing product availability. Sinclair (2007) says the consumer's decision making processes is not rational in the sense that it is objective and consistent; neither does it follow any pre-determined rational, statistical economic patterns.

According Smith (2006), there are six variables that must be taken into consideration by producers and designers when creating efficient package: form, size, color, graphics, material and flavor. Young (2008) said the most attractive or popular design is not necessarily be the most effective one at the point of sale, because it may get lost in shelf clutter and/or fail to communicate key messages (and a point of difference) quickly and clearly. According to Young (2008), when labeling messages are positioned on either side of the main visual, it pulls viewers in two different directions, and often results in some messages getting lost outside of the primary viewing flow.

Conclusion

This paper studied the packaging research and emphasizes on physical container characteristics and marketing research that focuses on communication aspects of packaging of product, quality of product by focusing on the shared goals of purchase decision on the basis of consumer perception.

According to this study, it is concluded that most consumers like the product quality after they purchased their desired packaged product. Based on those facts, researchers cannot say there is a equal relationship between good package and good product quality, but there is a positive thinking in the minds of consumers. As such, consumers are becoming more demanding in respect of packaging of product, its quality, their perception and decisions for buying a particular product.

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