Chocolate Package Designs: Influence on Baby Boomers

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Packaging, which is often debated as the fifth 'P', is an important component of marketing. This study was conducted to examine the effects of two important packaging cues namely: 'Visual Cues' and 'Informational Cues' and how senior citizens subjectively evaluated the chocolates based on packages. The results proposed a model where two packaging cues (Visual and Informational) showed direct positive influence on consumers purchase decisions .However there were no significant differences in the opinion of the senior citizens across these cues. The results of the study emphasise the importance of chocolate package designs on consumers purchase behaviour.

Keywords: Consumer, Chocolate, Package, Product, Purchase

1. Introduction

Packaging is the science, art, and technology of enclosing or protecting products for distribution, storage, sale, and use. Packaging also refers to the process of design, evaluation, and production of packages. Packaging can be described as a coordinated system of preparing goods for transport, warehousing, logistics, sale, and end use. Packaging contains, protects, preserves, transports, informs, and sells (Soroka, 2002). Packaging is any container or wrapping in which the product is offered for sale and can consist of variety of materials such as glass, paper, metal or plastic, depending upon what is to be contained (Brassington & Petit, 2002). Packaging is defined as an extrinsic element of the product (Olson & Jacoby, 1972) - an attribute that is related to the product but does not form part of the physical product itself. Packaging is a structure prepared to contain a commercial food product, i.e. enabling it easier and safer to transport, protecting the product against contamination or loss, degradation or damage and maintaining a convenient way to dispose the product (Sacharow & Griffin, 1980).

As per Hine (1995), in a modern retail environment, a package is not just a container but a tool for delivering goods in a best condition for use. Keller (1993) identified packages as non-product-related but brand-related elements. But according to Richardson et al. (1994), packages are product-related but with extrinsic attributes. Similar to the statement by Richardson et al. (1994), Underwood (2003) explained packages as product-related attributes, but different from the previous two explanations. Underwood (2003) stated package as intrinsic or extrinsic attributes based on their features. He suggested that they are intrinsic when they are physical part of the content (e.g. toothpaste tube), and they are extrinsic when the information on the package (e.g., logo, picture) is taken into account. He further added that packaging is posited to influence the brand and self-identity via mediated (through exposure to mass-communication culture and mass media products) and lived in experience (interaction with the brand, typically resulting from purchase and usage). To summarize, a package can be identified as a designed-product served for use, which has to meet many requirements to satisfy the demands of the many stakeholders (e.g., manufacturer, distributor, retailer) and especially those of consumers/users.

Today product package is often debated as the fifth 'P' of marketing mix. Although advertising is a major sales promotion tool, packaging is even more critical. This is because, for other promotional tools, there is always the need for communication to persuade and attract the consumer. However, when packaging is properly done, the products can sell by themselves. Proper packaging is an easier, cheaper means of advertising and hence the huge amount of money spent on advertisement and promotional techniques can be redirected by ensuring that the right things are done during the product packaging itself. In order to perform the role effectively and to reap the right results and benefits to the manufacturer (increase in profit margins), a product's packaging must be attractive, informative, and clearly identify with the product. Packaging must also continuously communicate its real benefits and create awareness to ensure image and brand preference.

According to Doherty & Tranchell (2007), the world loves chocolates. They opined that nine out of ten people like chocolates and the tenth person always lies. In a bit of humour they even added that chocolate could make everyone smile even bankers. Packaging in chocolate industry is therefore critical. Today packages are designed to go with different occasions, demand to different social classes and differentiate between different brands. Based on the results from relevant previous research studies, it was found that there existed a relationship between food products packaging and consumer purchase behaviour.

2. Statement of Purpose

Marketing environment has become increasingly complex and competitive. Advertising is a highly effective means of communication. But reaching the entire target market with advertising for most products is generally not a feasible prospect.

Fragmentation of the media has shown that it has become extremely difficult as well as expensive to reach and communicate with the potential customers forcing marketers to adopt more innovative means of reaching their target market. In contrast to advertising, which has limited reach, a product's packaging is something which every consumer's experience and which has strong potential to engage the majority of the target market. This makes packaging an extremely powerful and unique tool in the modern marketing environment. Apart from its benefits in terms of reach, some marketers believe that packaging is actually more influential than advertising in influencing consumers, as it has a direct impact on how they perceive and experience the product. For products with low advertising support, packaging takes on even more prominent role as the key vehicle for communicating the brand positioning. But despite the importance of packaging, there is limited marketing research currently available to the public in the area of packaging research. Most of the textbooks and literatures agree packaging playing a vital role in marketing, but there is little empirical research available investigating its impact on the marketing function and how best to leverage packaging in a marketing context particularly with regard to various low involvement and high impulse purchase product categories; where companies cannot invest too much in advertising. The present study examined the influence of packaging cues on senior citizens purchase behaviour for one such high impulse and hedonic product category namely: The Chocolates.

3.   Statement of Importance and Implication for Practice

Although earlier studies have shown an increase in the managerial focus towards packaging, a review of the marketing literature shows that only few theoretical contributions has been taken in the area of packaging and relatively fewer efforts to its impact on the marketing function such as consumer behaviour (Rettie & Brewer, 2000). Marketers often measure consumer brand perceptions and ignore the pack. But we see that consumers react to unbranded products were in packaging plays a vital role in reinforcing consumer perceptions (Underwood, 2003). Packaging helps to drive the way consumers' experience a product and this is believed to be true for chocolate packaging as well. Though earlier studies have been undertaken in chocolate consumption behaviour, there is hardly any marketing literature understanding chocolate packaging and its direct effect on purchase and final consumption. For chocolate consumers, the product is the package and its contents combined (Suraj & Raveendran, 2012). Today there are different categories of chocolate packages like ordinary packs, family packs, gift packs, festival packs etc. A layman who wishes to buy a chocolate from the market would always choose to buy a chocolate which has an eye catching package. Chocolate packaging thus has a hypnotizing effect on the customers mind (Patwardhan et al.,2010).Today researchers spend very little time and money researching the connections between packaging and the direct experience of the product. The situation is even grave when it comes to low involvement purchase categories like chocolates where researchers can't afford to spend too much money on packaging research (Giyahi, 2012).

The results of this study substantially contribute to the theoretical and practical understanding of consumer purchase decisions towards chocolates based on its package. A model which was developed based on the study indicated that when consumers decide to purchase a chocolate, he/she may retrieve the constructs (factors) and directly relate it to purchase intentions. From a practical standpoint the results of the study would provide managers with greater insights concerning the potential benefits and limitations associated with consumers purchase strategies. The research clarifies the confusing role of dual influence of 'Informational Cues' (Ampuero & Vila, 2006; Silayoi & Speece, 2007) and 'Visual Cues' (Ampuero & Vila, 2006).

4.   Literature Review and Related Constructs of the Study

Visual Cues (VC)
Colour: is the most important tool for emotional expression of a package (Hine, 1995) as it reflects an image for the product (Sauvage, 1996). Underwood (2003) opined that consumers associate meaning to the package colours in three different ways: "the physiological, the cultural, and the associational". The first one is described as universal and involuntary (e.g. the colour red speeding the pulse). The second one, cultural meaning for colours, occurs over long periods of time in different societies (e.g. the colour black relates to elegance in Europe. The third one, associational meaning, is developed through marketing efforts (e.g. the colour pink relates to the product with low calories). In addition, colour is considered as a tool for brand identification and visual distinction (Underwood, 2003). It is also considered as an important factor for legibility of the texts and comprehension of the images placed on the package.

Picture: MacInnis & Price (1987) stated that a consumer viewing a product picture on a package was more likely to spontaneously imagine aspects of how a product looked, tasted, felt, smelt, or sounded like than they would with a picture less package. The imaging of the individual brand, according to them, then lead to fewer brands being evaluated, improving the brand's likelihood of purchase (MacInnis & Price, 1987). Underwood et al. (2001), on the other side, stated that the positive impact of package pictures is primarily to increase attention to a brand, rather than increase the likelihood of the brand to be chosen. According to them, pictures were extremely vivid stimuli and incorporating visual imagery on a package enhanced the product's accessibility to consumers (Underwood et al., 2001), which did not seem to be synonymous to brand choice. Alternatively, Fitzgerald & Russo (2001) opined that a picture's capacity to serve as a framework for interpreting a package's informational components, since pictures, according to them, were likely to be processed prior to other components of a package (Fitzgerald & Russo , 2001). Therefore, on one side, a picture could reinforce the informational, for example verbal, stimuli .On the other side, if a package was carelessly designed, the two components could contradict and in that case,

Fitzgerald & Russo's (2001) statement implied that the intended informational stimuli would be hampered. According to Underwood et al. (2001) the picture could also be a source of information to a consumer. Pictorial content conveyed a concrete information that directed to be more influential in the decision making process than more abstract verbal information (Underwood et al., 2001). A picture could actually show how the product looked like or how it could be served, while verbal information could only describe it (Underwood et al., 2001). Moreover, in categories where product knowledge was low, the product picture proved to be highly diagnostic (Underwood et al., 2001), as it revealed the unknown product in a way that stimulated consumers imagination. Also if little variance existed in price and perceived quality among brands, a product picture was exceedingly important (Underwood et al., 2001).

Informational Cues (IC)

The second type of packaging elements, are the nutritional informational elements: information provided by the package and technologies used in the package. One of packages' functions is to communicate product information, which can assist consumers in making their decisions carefully (Silayoi & Speece, 2007), and it seems evident that written, verbal information has a great capacity to do this. However, written information on a package can also create confusion by conveying either too much information or mislead through inaccurate information (Silayoi & Speece, 2007) in some cases. Further, in a study by Silayoi and Speece (2007), consumers were found to use explicit product information to assess healthiness, and also many other aspects of quality. Yet, consumers were more likely to read the label to check that the product information was consistent with their needs if the package made it seem that the product was worth investigating (Silayoi & Speece, 2007). This suggested that informational elements were relevant only if the graphical elements had performed well.

Nutritional Information, nutritional claims and ingredients form part of most packages. Keller et al. (1997) examined the effects of nutrition claims (e.g., "99% fat free;" "low in calories") on the front of packages, nutrition value information presented in the nutrition facts panel, and consumers motivation to process nutrition information on consumers product-related judgments in a between-subjects experiment. A frozen dinner with a chicken-based product was chosen as the package. Results showed that: nutritional claims that were not consistent with nutrition value information (supplied in a nutrition facts panel) had a stronger negative effect on consumer evaluations of manufacturers' credibility than claims that were consistent, or when no claims were made. Higher level of nutrition value (suggested in a nutrition facts panel of the context of total package information) resulted in a more favorable attitude towards the product, purchase intensions and product nutrition attitude. Consumers levels of motivation to process moderated the effect of nutrition value on nutrition and product evaluations. For consumers with higher level of motivation, nutrition and product evaluations were more favorable for a product that was higher in nutrition value and less favorable for a product that was lower in nutrition value than for consumers with lower levels of motivation.

Compared to packages on which no claims were made, packaging with nutritional claims resulted in less favorable nutrition and product evaluations for consumers with lower motivation than for those with higher motivation. Prathiraja & Ariyawardana (2003) identified the market (objects, objectives, occasions and occupants) for nutritional labeling in Sri Lanka and the factors that influenced the consumer willingness-to-pay for nutritional labeling. Results projected that nutritional label played an important role in providing the relevant nutrition information to Sri Lankan consumers. Inclusion of a nutritional label on food items was believed to be an important packaging decision for the Sri Lankan food processors as well. Singla (2010) examined the usage and understanding of food and nutritional labels among Indian consumers. The results portrayed that food labels were read by the consumers for brand comparisons and not for consulting nutritional information. Difficult terminology, small font size and inability to understand nutritional labels were the major problems encountered by the consumers. Television, friends, magazines are commonly used for assessing nutritional information. Labels were considered more consumers friendly when benchmarks regarding serving size were provided. Income level, size of household, number of children and age did not play a role in the usage of nutritional labels by the consumers. Consumers with special dietary needs used nutritional labels regularly.

Packaging and Buying Influence (PBI)

As the package is a critical factor in the decision making process in communicating to the customers, the package standing on the shelf affects the consumer decision process and package design ensures that consumer response are favourable (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). Consumer intention to purchase depends on the degree to which consumers expect that the product can satisfy their expectations about its use (Kupiec & Revell, 2001). But when they have not thought about the product before entering the store, this intention to purchase is determined by what is communicated at the point of purchase. How they perceive the subjective entity of products, as presented through communication elements in the package, influences choice and is the key to success for many food products marketing strategies. Thus the package becomes a critical factor in the consumer decision making process because it communicates to consumers at the time they are actually deciding in store and finally trigger purchase decisions.

5. Hypotheses Of The Study

Influence of Visual Cues

Aesthetic response can be defined as an experience (i.e., visual, emotional) that occurs in reaction to a specific stimulus (Berlyne, 1974; Veryzer, 1998). This sensory stimulation can encourage viewers to imagine how a product looks or feels when in use. Visual attributes such as colour, style and shape can arouse consumer emotion, communicate values and convey

meaning to both users and viewers. If consumers perceive positive aesthetic experience from a product, they are more likely to further examine and potentially purchase that product (Eckman, Damhorst & Kadolph, 1990; Morganosky, 1984).Hence it is hypothesized that:

H₁: Visual Cues of Chocolate Packages Have Direct Positive Effect on Purchase Decisions of Chocolates.

Influence of Informational Cues

It is assumed that when consumers initially encounter a newly launched product, important information is communicated by the Information given on product packages. In this case, consumers may even infer about the missing information by drawing a connection between available pieces of information, one of which is 'Informational Cues'. Upon facing a newly launched chocolate brand, consumer's cognitive responses will incline towards informational contents. These positive responses will develop in favourable evaluations towards the brand. Thus 'Informational Cues' which is relevant to consumers' ability to produce output is one likely source of consumers' influence on purchase decisions. Hence it is hypothesized that:

H₂: Informational Cues Of Chocolate Packages Have Direct Positive Effect On Purchase Decisions Of Chocolates.

6.   Research Methodology

Descriptive research (Malhotra, 2004) was used in the study. The researcher elicited responses senior citizens of Kannur district, Kerala, India. A total of 100 responses were collected. 58% of the respondents were females. Respondents were at an average age of 62 years. Prior to final data collection, a pre-test was conducted amidst 20 respondents to refine and validate the questions included. Final data collection was done in public libraries, households, clubs etc. The questionnaire captured consumers behaviour with respect to chocolate packages on first purchase. Respondents were asked to imagine as if they were purchasing a chocolate for the first time, a chocolate which they hadn't tasted before, sighted before but probably may have heard before. It could even had been a new brand pitched in the market. Respondents were even asked to imagine as if they were purchasing a chocolate bar or chocolate boxes (family packs, special packs, festival packs) but not single toffees (e.g. 50 paise éclairs), assorted chocolates, candies and chewing gums. 4 communicative components (independent variables) of chocolate packages were used in the study and arranged on a 5 point Likert's scale. Respondents were asked to mark their responses with regard to the influence of all the communicative components of chocolate packages in a typical situation/scenario as mentioned Multi item measures were used to get the data on the constructs considered. The variables used in the section were borrowed from the works of (Underwood et al.,2001; MacInnis & Price,1987; Sehrawet & Kundu,2007; Imram,1995; Keller et al.,1997; Hill & Tilley ,2002; Sonsino,1990; Rokka & Uusitalo,2008; Suraj & Raveendran ,2012;Ampeoro & Vila,2006 and Silayoi & Speece,2004). Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) which was initially performed (to understand the nature of the facets) on four independent variables revealed that the original variables were clustered around two subscales (factors): Visual Cues (VC) and Informational Cues (IC).The convergent validity of the evolved constructs after EFA were confirmed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using SPSS AMOS 20 software. The convergent validity was assessed by checking the loading of each observed indicators on their underlying latent construct. Loadings greater than 0.2 were retained as given by the specifications of (Anderson et al., 1987). Later, full structural model testing was performed to test two specific hypotheses as described earlier using Structural Equation Modelling (using SPSS AMOS 20 software).Here, Packaging and Buying Influence (PBI) was designated as the dependent variable and the two factors (evolved after EFA) were designated as the independent variables.

  Overall reliability statistics which was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for 6 variables were found to be 0.94 which was considered to be 'very strong' (Malhotra, 2004). Reliability/internal consistency of the multi-item scales of each of the constructs were also tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient measures. The minimum acceptable reliability for primary research should be in the range of 0.50 to 0.60 (Nunnally, 1967).The details of the reliability statistics for the dependent and independent constructs are as shown in Table 1:

Table 1 *Summary of Reliability Measurement*

Sr.No	Dimensions*	Variables*	Nature	Number of items	Alpha values
1.	Visual Cues (VC)	Colour (Co) & Picture (Pi)	Independent	2	0.80
2.	Informational Cues (IC)	Nutritional Info. (NI) & Nutritional Claim (NC)	Independent	2	0.84
3.	Packaging and Buying Influence (PBI)	Chocolate packaging is important (1) & Chocolate packaging influence buying (2)	Dependent	2	0.87

Source: Survey Data

*The full structural modelling that follows in Figure 1 used the codes given under 'Dimensions' and 'Variables' of Table 1

7. Results

The two independent factors followed two hypotheses formulated in the study. Figure 1 shows the overall result and Table 2 shows the structural results needed for testing the hypotheses.

Table 2 *Recommended Benchmark For Model Fit Indices*

Fit Index	Recommended value
Absolute Fit Measures	
χ^2	The lower, the better
χ^2/df	≤ 3
GFI	≥ 0.90
Incremental Fit Measure	
RMSEA	≤ 0.06 or 0.08
TLI	≥ 0.95 or 0.90
CFI	≥ 0.95 or 0.90

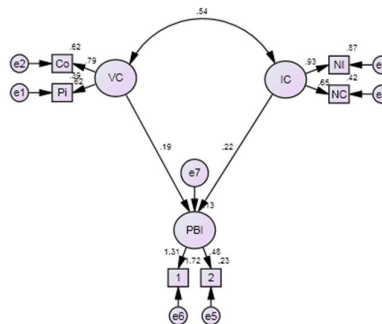**Source**: Hu & Bentler (1999)

Figure 1 *Chocolate Packaging Cues and Buying Influence*
Full Structural Modelling

In order to examine the simultaneous effect of the two independent constructs, their relationships were estimated by structural equation modelling. The fit of the structural model was estimated by various indices as shown in Table 2, and the results demonstrated a good fit. For models with good fit, most empirical analyses suggested the ratio of χ^2 normalised to degree of freedom (χ^2/df) should not exceed 3 (Hair et al., 2012). According to Hair et al. (2012), researchers should report at least one incremental index and one absolute index, in addition to the chi-square value; at least one of the indices should be badness-of-fit index. For the badness-of-fit index, RMSEA was chosen as it often provided consistent results across different estimation approach (Sugawara & MacCallum ,1993). Following this guideline, other than chi-square and normed χ^2/df value, model fit for the present study was examined using multiple indices which included Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and a badness-of-fit index, Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Following common practice, acceptable model fit is indicated by value greater than .90 for GFI, CFI, TLI and a value of less than 0.08 for RMSEA. However, a cut-off value close to .95 for TLI, CFI; and a cut-off value close to .06 for RMSEA were needed to support a relatively good fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Same as many other SEM researchers, the more stringent criteria proposed by Hu & Bentler (1999) for approximate fit indices were adopted in the present study too.

After examining the above mentioned fit indices, it was observed that the overall model fit for structural model was reasonably good. The full structural model fit ($\chi^2 = 5.356$, $\chi^2/df = 0.893$, GFI = .957, TLI = 0.970, CFI = 0.933, RMSEA = 0.038) demonstrated adequate fit in the first estimation itself. Hence the structural model was used as the benchmark for hypotheses testing. When the squared multiple correlations (R^2) were examined, it was reported that 49% of the variance associated with Packaging & Buying Influence (PBI) was accounted by its two predictors: VC & IC.

Tests of Hypotheses

The proposed hypotheses listed earlier in the paper were examined by looking at the significance, signs, and the magnitude of the estimated coefficients using one-tailed distribution (Hair et al., 2012). Hypothesized paths with non-significant z-statistics was not supported as such findings had no substantive interpretation attach to it .The size of effect of a particular exogenous on its endogenous constructs was determined by examining the respective absolute magnitude of the standardized path coefficients (Hair et al., 2012). The details of hypotheses testing are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 *Hypotheses Testing Standardized Regression Weights*

Sr. No	Path			Estimate	*p*	Remarks
H₁	PBI	<---	VC	.189	.228	Non Significant
H₂	PBI	<---	IC	.217	.197	Non Significant

Source: Survey Data

It was observed (Table 3) that 'Visual Cues' had direct positive effect (β=.189) in buying influence of chocolates i.e. when senior citizens associations with 'Visual Cues' were high, the tendency to buy chocolates was also high. This supported the first hypothesis. However the result was insignificant (p>.05) i.e. there was no much significant difference in opinion of the respondents as far as the first hypothesis was considered. Similarly it was seen that 'Informational Cues' had direct positive effect (β=.217) in buying influence of chocolates i.e. when senior citizens associations with 'Informational Cues' were high, the tendency to buy chocolates was also high. This supported the second hypothesis. However it was seen that the result was insignificant (p >.05) here too i.e. there was no much significant difference in opinion of the respondents as far as second hypothesis was considered. The interpretation concerning the size of effect of the standardized path coefficients for the present study was based on Kline's (2005) recommendations. Accordingly, standardized path coefficients with absolute values less than .10 indicated a small effect; value around .30 indicated a medium effect; and those values greater than .50 indicated a large effect (Kline 2005). The details of the hypotheses testing indicated that 'Informational Cues' (β=.217) had larger influence as compared to 'Visual Cues'' (β=.187) on respondents purchase decision of chocolates based on packages.

8.   Conclusion and Implication for Further Research

This study was conducted to examine the effects of two important packaging cues namely: 'Visual Cues' and 'Informational Cues' and how students subjectively evaluated the chocolates based on packages. In general this study allowed analysis of direct influence of the packaging cues on purchase decisions. Therefore the direct effects of these cue, i.e. Visual and Informational were tested. The results proposed a model where two packaging cues (Visual and Informational) showed direct positive and significant influence on senior citizens purchase decisions. Further it was observed that there was no much significant difference in opinion of the respondents as far as the two hypotheses were considered. Results supported the findings of (Silayoi & Speece, 2004; Silayoi & Speece, 2007, Ampuero & Vila, 2006; Rundh, 2005) mentioning the influence of visual and informational elements of product packages.

Like any research, there were some limitations in this study too. Future research should continue to test and refine the relationships of the present study and the variables that moderate them. Firstly, it is clear that future research is required to yield a more complete understanding of the phenomenon surrounding purchase influence for the purpose of reaffirmation of the findings of the present study. This study was attempted to outline major variables that logically and theoretically impacted the linkages in purchase decisions scenarios in Kerala. However data should be collected from the nation as a whole and even from third world countries and determine if the same result of purchase decisions could be observed. Secondly, the two cues studies here (i.e. Visual Cues & Informational Cues) are themselves a simplified abstraction. Other potentially important cues were excluded from the present study. Notable is the product attributes which could play a very important role in forming consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. Further, as chocolate is a type of product which is consumed irrespective of age groups, the study could even be extended to all age groups. Such an extended study would throw more light in understanding the significant differences across several demographic variables. The study can also be raveled in understanding the purchase mechanisms across young consumers of urban and rural areas. The study could even be extended to diverse products/brands and even on unbranded chocolates and the consumer behavior patterns can be interpreted with different methods of analysis such as discriminant analysis, cluster analysis and so on.

9.   References

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