THE EFFECT OF PACKAGING CHARACTERISTICS ON BRAND PREFERENCE FOR COSMETICS PRODUCTS IN ABIA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *The study analyzed packaging characteristics and their effects of brand preference for cosmetics products in Abia State of Nigeria. Packaging characteristics considered were packaging size, colour and shape. A sample size of 250 was purposively selected for the study. The samples were drawn from the five (5) major markets in Aba metropolis of the State. Data analysis was done with karl pearson correlation coefficient model. Findings showed that all the variables examined (size, colour, and shape) were positive and significant factors influencing brand preference for cosmetics products. The study concluded by recommending that adequate packaging strategies are to be formulated and implemented by manufacturing companies when they are designing packages for their products brands. Such packaging strategies must incorporate all the elements of packaging which include packaging colour, size and shape. Furthermore, marketing research that focuses on packaging sizes, colours, and shapes which will be desired by consumers should be regularly conducted to enable manufacturing companies to know the right packaging variables to utilize during the design of packets.*

KEYWORDS: Packaging Characteristics, Brand Preference, Cosmetics.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of most consumer products makes it imperative for such products to be properly packaged. Packaging plays an important role which includes protecting a product from any sort of damages, offering information about the brand, quality and how to use that product. Consumers are moved by attraction and the way a product is packaged affects its appeal.

Cosmetics are necessities and many cosmetics brands come in varying designs and packages. Most consumers buy cosmetics because of a given brand name, some buy cosmetics because of price, some buy cosmetics because of their friends' recommendations and others buy cosmetics because of packaging design. Increasingly, manufacturers are beginning to appreciate the importance of packaging and its role in stimulating sales. Rundh (2005) noted that packaging attracts consumer's attention to particular brand, enhances its image, and influences consumer's perceptions about product.

The packaging component of a product refers to any container in which it is offered for sale and on which information is communicated (Berkowitz et al, 1989). Packaging of consumer products is extremely important at the point of sale. It plays a major role when products are purchased. After

all, it is the first thing seen before making purchase choices and it is widely recognized that over 50% of purchasing decisions are made at the shelf, or point of purchase (Ferrell, 1987; Frontiers, 1996).

Shifts in product trends have also led to changes from normal, day to day product marketing to a focus on healthy product marketing, which subsequently impacts on consumers' behaviour. Blackman (2005) observed that the impact of the change is more apparent on consumer perception, tests and needs, including change on products that are being manufactured and their subsequent positioning. These changes have increased consumer awareness of and demand for products and information on the content of the products they purchase. Nowadays, one can easily find packaging information and tags on cosmetics brands such as ''Skin Lightening'' or ''Beauty fair'' which provide consumers with additional information about such products.

Knowing the pattern of consumer preferences across the population is a critical input for designing and developing innovative marketing strategies. It also uncovers the heterogeneity of consumer choices leading to efficient market segmentation strategies. However, forecasting consumer's preferences between brands is not an easy task.

Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the effect of packaging characteristics on brand preference for cosmetics products. Specifically, the aims are to;

(a) ascertain the effect of packaging size on brand preference for cosmetics;

(b) determine the effect of packaging colour on brand preference for cosmetics;

(c) ascertain the effect of packaging shape on brand preference for cosmetics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been carried out by various authors on the concept of packaging. Here, some of them are reviewed. Packaging has been variously defined. Panwar (2004) defined packaging as the act of containing, protecting and presenting the contents through the long chain of production, handling and transportation to their destinations in as good a state, as they were, at the time of production. Thus, a product's package secures the main contents of the product as it moves through its channel of distribution and while it is still in use. Packaging also does the job of prolonging the shelf life of a product, which is important to producers, middlemen, and final buyers (Gaafar and Ra'id, 2013).

The primary function of packaging as have been identified by many scholars is to protect the product against potential damage while transporting, storing, selling and exploiting a product (Gonzalez, Thorhsbury & Twede, 2007; Wells *et al.*, 2007) and to ensure the convenience during performance of these activities (Kuvykaite, et al., 2009). Sogn-Grundvag & Østli (2009) have indicated the importance of packaging in the case of grocery, when consumers buy unbranded products. Seeing that most consumers tend to touch products before purchasing, they treat product packaging as a tool for protecting consumers from contamination, for allowing them to touch products without restraint, without need to avoid smudging their hands (Gaafar and Ra'id, 2013).

Packaging serves as a marketing communication tool. It has become an increasingly aspect of marketing strategy. Packaging as a marketing communication tool was investigated by Gonzalez, Thorhsbury & Twede (2007), Smith & Taylor (2004), Underwood *et al.* (2001) and many other scholars. Gonzalez *et al.*, 2007 suggested that the package of a product may be the only means of communication between a product and the final consumer in the store. Consequently, as the role of packaging in marketing communications increases, it should be able to attract consumers' attention and transmit adequate value of a product to consumers in the short period of any sales contact (Kuvykaite, et al., 2009). Promoting products' contents is an important packaging objective, especially in self-service retailing. Today, packaging is functioning as a silent salesman which attracts the buyer's attention.

There are many characteristics or elements of packaging which drive consumers choice or preference for products. In a related study on the impact of packaging characteristics on consumer brand preference conducted by Hassan and Khan (2009), the following independent variables were considered as packaging characteristics; size of package, shape of package, safety of product, shelf life of product, convenience storage, convenience of use, extra use of package and package attractiveness. The findings of the study concluded that packaging characteristics have positive relationship with consumers brand preference in edible oils. Similarly, Kuvykaite et al. (2009) found out that packaging elements like visual (graphic, colour, size, form and material) and verbal (product information, procedure, country of origin and brand) have positive effect on consumer purchase decision.

Analysing the impact of graphics as a packaging attribute, Silayoi & Speece (2007) noted that different people respond to different packages in different ways, depending on their involvement (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999). Since an evaluation of attributes is less important in low involvement decision making, a highly noticeable factor such as graphics and colour becomes more important in choice of a low involvement product (Grossman and Wisenblit, 1999). On the other hand, the behaviour of consumers towards high involvement products is influenced less by image issues. For low involvement, there is a strong impact on consumer decision making from the development of the market through marketing communications, including image building (Kupiec and Revell, 2001). Many consumers today shop under higher levels of perceived time pressure, and tend to purchase fewer products than intended (Herrington and Capella, 1995; Silayoi and Speece, 2004). Products purchased during shopping excursions often appear to be chosen without prior planning and represent an impulse buying event (Hausman, 2000). A package that attracts consumers at the point of sale will help them make decisions quickly in-store. As the customer's eye movement tracks across a display of packages, different new packages can be noticed against the competitors.

Colour is another packaging attribute. Colours affect several aspects of human life. Each type of the colour spectrum exerts certain signals which in turn permeate through human neurological system, mental and psychological state. Some colours easily remind consumers of specific brands. In choosing packaging colour, Valentya et al (2014) opined that companies should decide on what colour combinations that can be used in order to stimulate consumers to respond positively to their brands. Consumer perceptions of an acceptable colour are associated with perceptions of other quality attributes, and also with satisfaction levels. Positive effect can be achieved by manipulating one or more packaging variables, including packaging colour, clear packs that allow viewing

81

product colour, incident light, and nomenclature and brand name appearance (Imram 1999; Silayoi & Speece 2007).

Silayoi & Speece (2007) identified size and shape as crucial dimension in packaging attributes. One way in which consumers appear to use these things according to Silayoi & Speece (2007) is as a simplifying visual heuristic to make volume judgments. Generally, they perceive more elongated packages to be larger, even when they frequently purchase these packages and have experience using them. Disconfirmation of package size after consumption may not lead consumers to revise their volume judgment sufficiently in the long term, especially if the discrepancy is not very large (Raghubir & Krishna, 1999).

Different packaging sizes potentially appeal to consumers with somewhat different involvement. For example, for some low involvement food products, such as generics, low price is made possible through cost savings created by reduced packaging and promotional expenses. Since generics are usually packaged in large sizes, this directly caters to the needs of consumers from larger households, who are more likely to be specifically looking for good deals. They find the low price of the generics, in larger packaging, is an attractive offer with excellent value for money (Prendergast and Marr, 1997). In addition, this could imply that when product quality is hard to determine, the effect of packaging size is stronger. Thus, elongating the shape, within acceptable bounds, should result in consumers thinking of the package as a better value for money and result in larger sales generally. However, many other aspects of packaging could also conceivably affect perceived volume, such as aspects of package shape, colour, material, and aesthetic appeal. As yet, though, there is little research available on any of these other aspects.

Traditionally, rational consumers aim at maximizing the total utility which a particular packaging size of a product offers. Thus, the early Utility theorists like Jevons (1871), Wolras (1874) and Marshall (1890) postulated that the total utility of a given basket/package size of products depend on the quantities of individual size.

If there are packet sizes in the bundle with quantities x_1, x_2 ……. x_n, the total utility is thus;

$$U = f (x_1, x_2 ….. x_n)$$

In the traditional utility theory/model, it is assumed that total utility is additive.

Thus: $U = U_1 (x_1) + U_2 (x_2) + ……. + U_n (x_n)$

In essence, the theoretical underpinning of the cardinal utility theory with respect to consumers' preference vis-à-vis packaging size is that rational consumers usually disposed towards buying products with package sizes that maximize their total utility per naira or kobo spent.
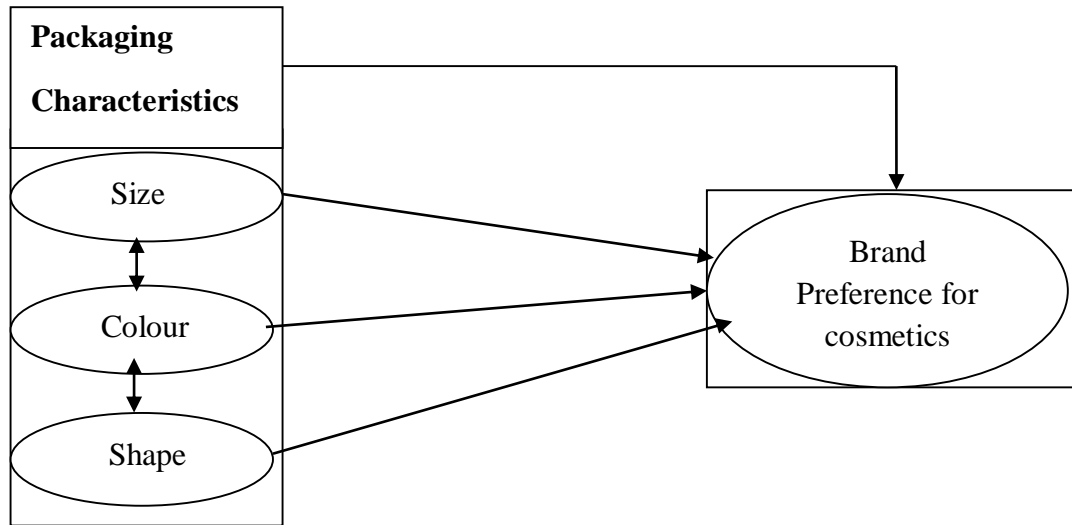
Conceptual Framework

Fig 1: Conceptual framework (Developed by the researchers)

METHODOLOGY

A correlation type of enquiry has been employed by the researchers to establish how packaging characteristics associate with brand preference for cosmetics. The study was carried out in Aba metropolis of Abia State, Nigeria. Aba is the commercial nerve of Abia State and is fondly called "the Japan of Africa". Aba houses several well-known markets including Ariaria International market. Aba has an estimated population of 1,277,300 according to Wikipedia. Aba is the industrial center of Abia State, with textile manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, soap, plastics, cement, footwear, and cosmetics. The study was limited to cosmetics users in the state.

Cosmetics are products that are used by virtually every individual even those in the rural areas. Therefore, the study population covered every individual cosmetics user in Aba metropolis of Abia State, Nigeria. Nowadays, cosmetics have become a necessity particularly among the female population. It is sold at virtually every retail outlet within the metropolis. Samples for the study were purposively selected. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are taken by the researcher, based upon a variety of criteria which may include specialist knowledge of the researcher issue, or capacity and willingness to participate in the research. The samples were drawn from the five (5) major markets in Aba metropolis. The markets are; Cemetery market, new market, Ariaria international market, Eke-akpara market and Ehere market. A total of 250 consumers were drawn from the market, 50 from each market. The consumers were chosen and questioned on packaging features like size, colour and design. Selected cosmetics brands formed the object of the study. These cosmetics brand included Nivea, Peauclair, Sivoclair, Cocoa-Butter, Carowhite, Miss Caroline, Beauty Fair, Fair Lady, Silver lime, and Erato skin Litener. The object used to capture consumers' responses was the questionnaire which was designed and distributed to the consumers

by hand, and at the points of their purchase of cosmetics products. The questionnaire used for actual study was pilot tested before hand. The importance of this pilot study was to find out if the questionnaire covered all the intended dimensions of the research. It also assisted the researchers in eliminating questions that were ambiguous and further determined whether the spaces allocated for answers were adequate. In response to this, modification and adjustment were made as necessary.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected for the study were analyzed based on the stated objectives of the study. Pearson moment correlation was used to analyze the data. This depended on the normality of the distribution. All analyses were done through the use of the SPSS software package Version 16.

Model Specification

The model for the pearson moment correlation coefficient used for data analysis is stated below;

(i) Correlation between packaging size and brand preference for cosmetics is given as;

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}} \quad \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots(i)$$

Where r_{xy} = correlation coefficient between variables x and y

x = Packaging size (1=large, 0=small);

y = Brand preference (1=yes, 0=No preference);

n = Sample size

(ii) Correlation between packaging colour and brand preference for cosmetics is given as;

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}} \quad \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots(ii)$$

Where r_{xy} = correlation coefficient between variables x and y

x = Packaging colour (1=Bright, 0=Dull);

y = Brand preference (1=yes, 0=No preference);

n = Sample size

(iii) Correlation between packaging shape and brand preference for cosmetics is given as;

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n(\sum xy) - (\sum x)(\sum y)}{\sqrt{}}$$

84

$$[n\sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n\sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2] \quad \dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots\dots(iii)$$

Where rxy = correlation coefficient between variables x and y

x = Packaging shape (1=Attractive, 0=Ugly);

y = Brand preference (1=yes, 0=No preference);

n = Sample size

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

OBJECTIVE 1: To ascertain the effect of packaging size on brand preference for cosmetics.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation Table showing the effect of packaging size on brand preference for cosmetics

Correlations

		Brand preference	Packaging size
Brand	Pearson Correlation	1	.821[**]
Preference	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	245	245
Packaging	Pearson Correlation	.821[**]	1
Size	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	245	245

Source: Survey data, 2015

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The Pearson Correlation result in Table 1 contains the degree of association between packaging size and Brand preference for cosmetics. From the result, he Pearson correlation coefficient, r, value of 0.821 was positive and statistically significant at ($p < 0.000$). This indicates that changes in the packaging size of cosmetics brands will result in changes in preference for such brands. Thus, packaging size and brand preference are correlated positively. Consumers' preference for brands in terms of packaging sizes is often determined by their purchase/shopping time. Consumers who make less frequent trips to retail shops or those who have limited shopping times because of their career or social engagements are observed to always have preference for bigger

pack sizes of their brands, while others who have more shopping time but restricted budgets may have preference for smaller pack sizes. Also, large full nest families are inclined to have preference for large pack sizes, while for empty nest families of older couples living alone, the reverse is the case.

OBJECTIVE 2: To determine the effect of packaging colour on brand preference for cosmetics

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Table showing the effect of packaging colour on brand preference for cosmetics

Correlations

		Brand Preference	Packaging colour
Brand	Pearson Correlation	1	.648[**]
Preference	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	245	245
Packaging	Pearson Correlation	.648[**]	1
Colour	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	245	245

Source: Survey data, 2015

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation Table 2 shows the degree of association between packaging colour and brand preference for cosmetics. The result shows that the two variables (packaging colour and brand preference) are moderately and positively correlated (r= .648). Furthermore, there exists a statistically significant (p<0.000) relationship between the two variables. Thus, the positive and significant relationship between packaging colour and brand preference for cosmetics indicates that an increase in packaging colour can bring a corresponding increase in brand preference for cosmetics.

Colours have been observed to affect several aspects of human life. Each type of the colour spectrum sends certain signals which in turn permeate through human neurological system, mental and psychological state. Some consumers naturally admire some colours which also affects their preferences for certain brands. Valentya et al (2014) have suggested that companies should decide on what colour combinations that can be used in order to arouse consumers to respond positively to their brands especially when choosing packaging colours. Silayoi & Speece (2007) concluded that consumers' perceptions of an acceptable colour are associated with perceptions of other

quality attributes, and with satisfaction levels. Companies by manipulating the colour spectrum can achieve some positive effects which may include the preference for their brands.

OBJECTIVE 3: To ascertain the effect of packaging shape on brand preference for cosmetics

Table 3: Pearson Correlation Table showing the effect of packaging shape on brand preference for cosmetics

Correlations

		Brand Preference	Packaging Shape
Brand	Pearson Correlation	1	.675**
Preference	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	245	245
Packaging	Pearson Correlation	.675**	1
Shape	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	245	245

Source: Survey data, 2015

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In Table 4 is the Pearson Correlation result showing the degree of association between packaging shape and brand preference for cosmetics. The correlation coefficient, r, between the two variables is 0.675 indicating a perfect positive correlation. Moreover, such relationship was statistically significant at ($p< 0.000$). This indicates that changes in packaging shape are moderately correlated with changes in brand preference. As packaging shape becomes more attractive, preference for such brands increases. Thus, the shape of any cosmetic package plays a very strategic role in the consumers' preference for any given branded product. Packaging shape is the final physical structure and outlook of the product.

CONCLUSION

Packaging attributes have been found to play significant roles in the preference and adoption of branded products like cosmetics. Particular packaging characteristics analyzed in this study were packaging size, packaging colour, and packaging shape. Findings showed that there is a strong association in the eyes of the consumers for larger pack sizes and economy, but there are very clear

restrictions as per how large a pack should be, such as weight, ease, and convenience of carrying home, usage, shelf life, ease of pouring out, scooping from a large container, etc.

It was also observed that the colour of the package plays a role in brand preference. Consumers, especially the female ones naturally love colours and are often attracted to cosmetics brands that are colourful and attractive. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Daliya & Parmar (2012) which showed a moderate positive relationship between packaging colour and consumers' buying behaviour.

It was finally revealed that changes in packaging shape are moderately correlated with changes in brand preference. As companies make their packaging shapes to become more attractive, consumers' preferences for such brands tend to increase. Strategically, having a special kind of shape for any cosmetic package can have a significant impact on preferences for such products. Packaging shape becomes the final physical structure and outlook of the product and a source of appeal for consumers. Often times, we observe that most quality products in the market fail mostly because of poor packaging – packaging size, colour and shape/design.

As a recommendation, manufacturing firms should know that market targeting, brand positioning and brand adoption cannot be effectively achieved if such brand are not properly packaged. Packaging plays a vital role in promotion and product positioning. Thus, adequate packaging strategies need to be formulated and implemented when designing packages for products. Such packaging strategies must incorporate all the elements of packaging which include packaging colour, size and shape. Marketing research that focuses on the packaging sizes, colours, and shapes that can be desired by consumers can be conducted to enable firms know the right packaging variables to utilize during the design of packets.

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