

INFLUENCE OF PACKAGING ON CONSUMER PURCHASE DECISION

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ABSTRACT: Packaging plays an important role in the marketing of not only company's offering but also corporate image. It is in consideration of this basic fact that good product packaging is advanced. It is a fact that most packages in the Nigerian market have been deceptive and labels do not carry sufficient information concerning the product content, usage and storage. This packaging defect is traceable to the fake products and the aggressive need for profit making on the part of manufacturers. One has discovered that packaging is an important marketing tool, which should not be overlooked since effective packaging produces fortune to the company. Through the review, one discovered that the success of most products especially the newly launched ones largely depend on the amount of packaging directed towards it. The Nigerian consumer has grown both in education and awareness. To this effect, manufacturers should emphasize on those aspects of packaging characteristics that attract the consumers in order to enhance the product choice. The benefit of product packaging touches both the consumer and the manufacturer. The consumer benefits in terms of after use benefits of the packaging and satisfaction derivable. The manufacturer benefits in terms of enhanced corporate image coupled with abundant product sales. Besides, packaging gives family semblance to products from the company's product line. In line with the observation of this work, it is hereby suggested that manufacturers give priority attention to their packaging. This is a surer way of selling not only their products but their unassailable corporate image. The author also recommends that government should strengthen its agencies charged with the protection of consumers' rights and by so doing government intervention will be noticeable.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Decision Making, Packaging, Sales, Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Packaging extends beyond the containers or wrapper covering the products to the after benefits built into the product. Traditionally, goods like foodstuffs are wrapped carefully in local leaves dried neatly intended for the preservation of the product. This method is intended to elicit purchase responses from the consumers.

In modern marketing, product packaging as an important marketing mix has been given consideration world-wide beginning with the first shipment of tea to the colonies. However, this consideration peaked in the 20th century with packaging regarded as a strategic marketing tool (Onah and Thomas, 1993).

Kotler (1988), defined packaging as the activities of designing and producing the containers or wrapper for a product. The container or wrapper is the package. Russ and Kirkpatrick (1982), simply identified packaging as the containers or wrappers that enclose products, a product may have several packages, the tube containing toothpaste is often in an outer box made of cardboard, both being packages. Toothpaste boxes will in turn be packed in cardboard cartons to facilitate shipping and handling. Packaging influence consumer attitudes toward a product which in turn affect their purchase decision. Buyer's impressions of a product formed at the point of purchase or during use are significantly influenced by package characteristics. Packaging of consumer products are extremely important at the point of sales.

Twedt (1968) argued that sales are enhanced by packages that are visible, informative and emotionally appealing. According to him, packages with high visibility tend to be easy to find when they are displayed on store shelves; with good informational value tell the consumer at a glance what the package contains; the emotional factor in packaging refers to the image that consumers perceive after viewing a product.

Thus, one may argue that there is the possibility that some first-time users of some consumer products are first attracted to their preferred brand by their packaging, and when they try the brand and find the taste to be good, and to their liking, they then begin to develop loyalty towards the brand.

Effective packaging involves more than simply putting products in containers and covering them with wrappers. Pride and Ferrel (1985) observed that product tampering recently has become a problem for marketers of many types of products, and several packaging techniques are being used to counter such activity. Fluids such as milk, orange juice and hair spray, need packages that preserve and protect them.

ROLES OF PACKAGING

As a strategic marketing tool, packaging performs the following roles as identified by Busch and Houston (1985).

Protecting the product

The most basic and original purpose of packaging is to protect the product in transport and in storage at the manufacturer, wholesaler, retailer and consumer levels. The product may be exposed to extremes of cold, heat or moisture during transportation and storage. It must be protected against being crushed, dropped or punctured during its physical handling.

Facilitate use of the product

Increasing the ease of opening and usefulness of the package is a major chance for marketers to differentiate their product from competitors. Resalable soft drink bottle, resalable syrup bottles, and tear tapes are package improvement designed to facilitate use.

Promoting the product

The extent to which the package protects and facilitates product use especially consumable increases the packages sales and promotional value. Improved packaging can be effective way to attract new customers.

According to Pilditch (2015) it was observed that 30 percent of the purchasers of cosmetic and toiletry products switched brands for a better package. Occasionally, a company uses packaging as a strategic value to promote its products to a specific market segment. Panadol tablets now come in new pack for extra vitality, potency and quick recovery; Chemiron comes in a well-designed pack having the picture of a healthy young woman on it. The package is one element of the firm's comprehensive strategy for marketing products.

Communication role

When packaging is viewed as a marketing communication tool, it begins to involve many complexes in marketing issues. The package becomes an integral part of the product itself and can have a significant effect on consumer perception of functions quality, value and attitudes towards the brand.

In this over-communicated society, nothing is more important than communication, and packaging must play a key role in developing the right communication at the right time and under the right circumstances. Customers continue to place increasing value on their time, and shopping time will become more of a premium. Packaging which delivers the quickest and most informative message and makes shopping easier will rapidly win favour with customers.

Shafer (2017) further holds that packaging therefore should:

- Provide adequate information to assist consumers in making purchase decision.
- Protect consumers from abuses (such as fraud deceit).
- Protect consumers from their own buying motives.
- Protect consumers from their own views of appropriate buying priorities.

BASIC CONSIDERATION FOR PACKAGING DESIGN

In designing an effective package that better fulfil its roles, some basic considerations are necessary for manufacturers according to Shafer (2017).

Construction: The size, shape and material utilized in the package design can have a significant effect on consumer perceptions of quality and value, as well as functional use of the product. Technical advances occur every day in this field and specialists should be consulted as much as possible. According to Peter and Olson (2000), package size can influence not only which brands consumers choose, but also how much of a product they use on particular occasions. In general, consumers believe that large package sizes offer lower unit costs and as such, may be willing to use their contents more freely than from smaller packages. Consumers may also use the contents of smaller package more sparingly to avoid the hassle of a trip to the store in order to get more of the product in the short term.

Cost: The package cost is generally considered a component of the total product cost and is often times viewed as an opportunity for cost reduction. In many situations, however, an improved package which enhances the total value of the product as perceived by the consumer, can create major breakthrough in market penetration of market share. The result is that a more costly package actually reduces the total product cost through economies of scale. Manufacturers should avoid looking at package cost in a vacuum. It should be considered as an integral part of the product and look for ways of enhancing its value as well as reducing its cost.

Visual Impact: Colour, graphics and shapes are utilized to create visual impact and offer great opportunities for creativity. Industrial designers and graphics specialist continuously lack trends in colour and shapes and they can help ensure that packaging is in tune with contemporary preferences and communicates the appropriate signals. Consumers can distinguish between colours better than anything else in the world of sensory perception in the market.

In addition to the nature of package itself, it has been argued that package colours have an important impact on consumers' affect, cognition and behaviour. This impact is just more than just attracting attention by using eye-catching colours (like tide's orange) (Peter & Olson, 2000). For instance, the colour of the Ritz cracker box was changed to a deeper red trimmed with a thin gold band. This change was made to appeal to young, affluent consumers.

It has also been reported that consumer perceptions of products may change with a change in package colour. For example, when designers at Benin Corporation changed the background blue on barrelhead sugar-free root beer cans from blue to beige, consumers reported that the product tasted more like old-fashioned root beer-even though the beverage remained the same. The colour of the package of Fayrouz drink (product of Nigeria Breweries Plc.) has projected the image of the product very high and has contributed immensely on the consumer preference for the product.

Copy: The copy on the package should be considered the same as advertising copy and must focus on selling the concept, the product and the brand. It must communicate to the consumer. Brand identification and label information are aspects of copy on the package. Brand identification in many cases simplifies purchase for the consumer and makes the loyalty development process possible. As we previously noted, brand names such as Crest, Coke, Fanta may well be discriminative stimuli for consumers.

Label information includes use instructions, contents list of ingredients or raw materials, warnings for use and care of the products, and the like. For some products this information can strongly influence purchase. For example, consumers often carefully examine label information on over-the-counter drugs such as cough medicines. Health-conscious consumers often consult package information to determine the nutritional value, sugar content, and calories built into the products before they buy.

Retail Display Maintenance: Retailers are always trying to reduce labour costs in their stores, and packaging can play an important role in helping or hindering this effort. In this respect, the obvious caution is to check the stores, involve the retailer and test concepts in the store

before finalizing ones designs such that brand name must be included on every side of the package likely to be displayed.

Retail Security: Shoplifting seems to be increasing at much faster rate now than before. Retailers are desperately to reduce the cost of this problem, with some taking the extreme of locking their merchandise up in cases and behind glass doors thereby going against consumer shopping habits and is not exactly innovative merchandising. Techniques such as packaging small products on a card or sealing the inner contents to prevent removal of parts may help.

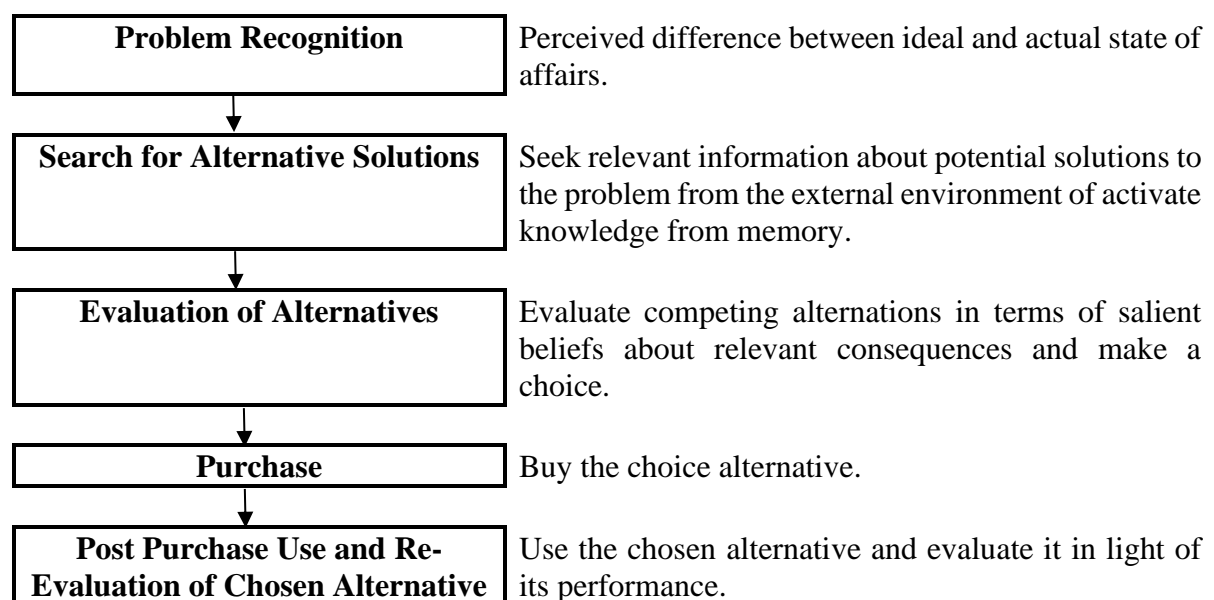
Warehousing and Shipping: The cubic size and shape of the package should be designed to optimize handling. If a single unit is impractical to handle, a component package or master pack should be designed for ease of handling and with a quality of product appropriate for consumer ordering convenience.

Government and Legal Consideration: A variety of government agencies may have an interest in a company's packaging depending on the contents and distribution. In Nigeria, the National Drug Enforcement Agency (NDLEA), the Nigerian Standard Organization Control (NSO), National Food and Drug Administration Control (NAFDAC), the Task Force on Counterfeit and Fake Drugs (TFCFD), and the Consumer Protection Association of Nigeria (CPAN) are all saddled with food and drug products.

In the United States, the Consumer Product Safety Commission is concerned with package safety, plastic bags for examples, and the Federal Trade Commission may be interested in the advertising message contained in the copy. Some local government also have regulations.

Packaging designed for international marketing involves all of this basic consideration but adds a totally new dimension to the task. Specialists should be consulted on issues such as shipping procedures, retail environment, legal and cultural differences in each country.

Figure 1.1: Consumer Purchase Decision Process



Source: Peter and Olson (2000)

According to Peter and Olson (2000) in treating consumer decision making as problem solving, we assume consumers have goal (desired consequences or value in a means-end chain) that they seek to achieve or satisfy. A consumer perceives a “problem” because the desired consequences have not been attained (“I am hungry, I need a reliable car, I want to loose weight”). Consumers make decisions about which behaviours to perform to achieve their goals and thus “solve the problem”. In this sense, then, consumer decision-making is a goal directed, problem-solving process.

As the opening example illustrates, consumer problem solving is actually a continuous stream of interactions among environmental factors, cognitive and affective processes, and behavioural actions. This stream can be divided into separate stages and sub-processes to simply analyse and facilitate understanding.

Figure 1.1 above identifies five stages or sub processes. The first stage involves problem recognition, in the opening example, Ugochi’s plan to host a dinner party made her aware of a problem she needed a set of dishes for 10 people. The next state of the problem-solving process involves searching for alternative solutions. (Ugochi called and visited stores, talked to salespeople, and discussed the purchase with her mother-in-law). At the next stage, alternatives are evaluated and the most desirable action is chosen. Ugochi evaluated dishes during her search based on the flower on it, colour and size of the plate. In the end she decided formed a behavioural intention to buy the ceramic type at the factory cutlet. In the next stage, purchase, the choice/intention is carried out. Ugochi ordered for the dishes and then returned a few days later to pay for them and pick them up. Finally, the purchased product is used, and the consumer may re-evaluate the wisdom of the decision.

Another example can be given with Bassey who wants to lose weight, which made him to be aware of a problem, he needed a very active drug for that. The next stage involves searching for alternative solutions. Bassey visited pharmaceutical stores, talked to salespeople and discussed with pharmacists. At the next stage, alternatives are evaluated and the most desirable action is taken. Bassey evaluated the drugs as he considers the functions, the contents, the expiry date, the side-effect, the dosage, etc, as explained on the package as he found then during his search. In the end he decided-formed a behavioural intention to buy the one that carries better and needed information on the package. In the next stage, purchase, the choice intention is carried out (i.e., the drug is ordered and paid for). Finally, as the purchased product (drug) is used, the consumer may re-evaluate the wisdom of the decision.

In many instances, however, the satisfaction to be derived from a product is dependent upon its packaging and consumers are very receptive to both technical and aesthetic improvement in pack design. An example is when the United Kingdom joined the sardine market that was made Scandinavian and Portuguese imports. As a group, however sardine eaten became increasingly frustrated by the difficulties associated with opening the pack, as the tag frequently broke when the key was turned facing them with almost impossible task of opening the tin with an ordinary tin-opener. In order to avoid this problem, the Scandinavians innovated aluminium lids for the tins while the Portuguese soldered the lid to the body, leaving a line of weakness which opened easily.

The United Kingdom packer's loss a big share of the market owing to the fact that consumers respond enthusiastically to the new pack by the Scandinavians and the Portuguese while they (U.K) could not duplicate the improved containers therefore, case of opening is clearly a significant consumer plus. Looking at the practical examples one can understand that packaging has really influenced their buying decisions.

Conclusion

Every business venture whether big or small owes some duty to itself and the consumer if it must remaining business. The quality of a product is first seen in the quality of its package. The best way to succeed is for manufacturing companies to discover that packaging is an important marketing tool and its influence on consumer purchase decisions is overwhelming. Acceptability of product by consumers brings about business success. For a product to be accepted in the market place, that product must be of good quality and that quality first of all is seen in the packaging of the product before the actual product use. In this respect therefore, manufacturers are admonished to ensure that the desired packaging meets the information needs of consumers, should protect and preserve the products, should be visible and emotionally appealing, also should provide some after use or benefit and should be able to meet the family size of the consumer.

Manufacturers should not lose sight of the fact that consumers are educated and so enlightened. They can only choose the products that meet their demand, for this reason, certain basic aesthetic features of packaging should be emphasized. Consumers naturally prefer packaging whose colour is attractive to that which is dull. In terms of graphics, the diagrams, illustrations and language should be clearer and simpler to interpret.

Suggestions

The idea behind marketing philosophy is consumer satisfaction. The consumer expects some degree of satisfaction in every packaging activity. Based on that the following suggestions are made:

1. Various literatures show that some manufacturers hastily package products in order to reduce packaging costs and maximize profits. Since packaging cost can be very enormous on total production cost, one has to suggest that the government should give some support services to manufacturers through lowering of taxes, import licenses, etc, so that fear of eroded profit could be minimized and greater ethical responsibility achieved.
2. To offer service and prosper, manufacturers must increasingly pay attention to the changing needs of the consumers through effective packaging. This can be done through proper marketing audit in terms of packaging, as its influence on consumer is enormous. This is because majority of consumers these days are educated and so enlightened.
3. It is clear that government intervention in business especially packaging programmes is very low. In order to protect consumers from deceitful and uniformed purchase, it is suggested that government should strengthen its agencies to effectively monitor and control the activities of manufacturers in Nigeria.

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