Effect of packaging on Perfume purchase decision of consumers

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Abstract

Like any other cosmetics and personal grooming items, the purchase decision for perfumes is also a complex one. Consumers take into account factors such as brand image, price, fragrance, and of course package of the product. This study was conducted to understand how the elements of packaging viz. Shape, color, and material of the perfume container. Further role of gender on preference also studied. The results obtained from the study showed that men prefer cubical or cuboid shape of containers over cylindrical whereas women preferred cylindrical containers over cuboid and cubical containers. When it comes to color of the container men preferred black containers over blue and red containers whereas women preferred red over blue and black containers. Similarly with regard to type of material no difference in terms preference in case of both gender. Implications for practice also discussed.

Keywords: Perfume Purchase decision, Packaging, Package color, Package shape, Package material

Introduction

Throughout the world consumer market is growing at rapid pace. The number of players in each product category is increasing steadily. Firms are facing a challenge to differentiate themselves from the competition. In order to get the competitive advantage, every player in the industry tries to invent something new. One of the marketing tools that helps the firms to differentiate from competition and has become popular is packaging. Product packaging and brand innovativeness found to be major contributors to consumer evaluations of perceived quality, loyalty and word-of-mouth intentions (Jamal and Tsesmetz, 2012). Packaging is considered very seriously these days as it can influence purchase decision of the consumer. Earlier, packaging was seen only as means of protecting the product from damage, but the function of package has evolved over a period of time. In the marketing of wide variety of consumer goods, packaging and packaging design have become dominant factors and they have a significant role in communicating the consumer about the benefits of the product. Interestingly product packaging is connected to other variables of the marketing mix (Rundh, 2009). While designing a new package the critical input would be consumer preferences and consumer buying behavior. Developments in technology or material don’t hamper the importance of consumer’s choices and desires as the important elements that drive the marketing process. Consumers are the key actors in planning and implementing packages. Hence the key issue for packaging design is to understand the consumer (Stewart 2004).

Hence it becomes necessary to examine what attracts consumers in different package designs; second, to identify the important factors in package design that help companies to attract consumers and to make their products as preferred choice of consumers.
It is said that consumers nowadays buy perfume not only for making them smell good, but also to keep their bottle as a collection. This research aimed at answering following questions: Can a perfume package boost the sales of the perfume? Does the packaging style hamper the purchase even though people like the fragrance? Can the favorite color of people influence them to purchase by triggering impulsivity? Or is it just a myth that packaging might influence the purchase decision of a perfume and it is only fragrance that matters the most?

**Review of Literature**

Many players in cosmetics and fragrance industry rely up on the importance of fragrance in beauty product branding and as the best way to carry out branding. Success of a brand lies in complete sensory connection which is achieved through cues viz. visual, aroma and tactile elements. In the past, many research works has been done to understand the relationship between the fragrance, perfume branding and customers’ psychology. Hamid et al. (2013) have studied the factors influencing purchase of perfumes and reported that customers are willing to spend more if the perfume bottle is attractive. Mc Ewen (2004) asserts that perfume brands connect with customer emotion. Patti et al (2012) strongly believe that sensory connections are vital for fragrance branding. In creating a brand, elements like packaging, colour tones, callout ingredients and storytelling are vital. Study carried out by Chang and Lin (2010) revealed that color also guides consumers to recognize corporate brands and, corporate brand recognition and image improves purchase and profit. Bloch (1995) has developed a model that explains the relationship between product aesthetics and customer response. According to Lesot et al., (2010) shape features play a major role in the perception of designed object and they also studied the impact of emotional design on products’ shape and discussed its implementation in perfume packaging. Precisely speaking, packaging serves key roles and functions in enhancing marketing. Silayoi and Speece (2007) presented the important packaging elements that will exert influence on consumers' buying decision which are visual and informational elements; the visual elements relate to graphics and color and size or shape of packaging and informational elements pertains to information about the product and the technologies used in the package.

Currently, perfume industries rely on gender based representation of perfumes. This results into disharmony between the perception of fragrance and perfume in reality. Further Anna Lindquist (2012) found that gender of human did not affect the preference and hence commercial gender categorization of perfumes like masculine and feminine are less important to consumers. Thus, representing the fragrance along with the gender preferences through visual attributes remains a challenging issue in the perfume branding. So, efforts are required to design perfume bottle in such a way that it provides a harmony between color tones used, shape of the perfume bottle and the fragrance which give consumer a pleasant experience when it comes to selecting perfumes.

According to Literatures reviewed package plays following roles: attracting consumers’ attention towards a specific brand, enhancing its image, and influencing consumers’ perceptions about the brand. Package also imparts unique value to products, acts as a tool for differentiation, which in turn helps consumers to choose the product from wide range of similar products there by, stimulates customers buying behavior. As package performs an important role in marketing communications and could be treated as one of the most influential factor in consumers’ purchase of package, its elements and their impact on consumers buying behavior has become an issue of relevance issue. Smith & Taylor (2004) suggests six variables that must be taken into account...
when creating efficient package: form, size, colour, graphics, material and flavour. At the same
time, Kotler (2003) distinguishes six elements that according to him must be evaluated while
making packaging decisions: size, form, material, colour, text and brand. Vila & Ampuero (2007)
and Underwood (2003) classified packaging elements in to two blocks: graphic elements (colour,
typography, shapes used, and images) and structural elements (form, size of the containers, and
materials). Silayoi & Speece, (2004) reclassified these two blocks as visual and informational
elements. Visual elements affects consumer’s emotions, while verbal elements affect consumer’s
cognitive orientation. Study carried out by Kuvykaite & Navickiene (2009) revealed that the
impact of package elements on consumers purchase decisions can be stronger, necessitating more
detail analysis of its elements of package and its impact on consumer behavior.

Research objectives

- To determine the effects of package colors on consumer purchase decisions
- To examine the impact of product package material on consumer purchase decisions
- To ascertain the contribution of package shape on influencing consumer purchase decisions

Research Methodology

In this study a descriptive research design was employed to understand the effect of color, shape
and material of packaging on consumer purchase intention. Through a questionnaire with visual
cues a survey was conducted. The respondents were post graduate students of business school
where the author is affiliated. Out of 240 students approached for the survey 231 has responded.
After scrutiny 21 responses were found to incomplete, resulting in valid responses subjected to
analysis as 210. The gender breakup of the sample was 92 women and 118 men. The respondents
belonged to the age group of 20-30.

A closed-ended questionnaire was used to collect the data (Refer Annexure -1) It consisted of 18
questions focusing on: package colors; package materials; package shape and two questions related
to respondents’ demographics. The research questions consisted of perfume containers as visual
cues and respondents were asked to rate every container on how likely they were to purchase each
bottle had they been to a retail outlet. A Likert scale was used for each constituent part ranging
from 1 to 5 (1 as the lowest ranking and 5 the highest ranking). For the visual cues three colors,
two packaging materials and three shapes were considered. After including all possible
combinations (3*2*3) we came up with 18 such visual cues. A pre-testing of the research
questionnaire was done on 20 respondents who presumably resembled the characteristic features
of the intended research participants. The rationale behind pretesting was to uncover the flaws of
the questionnaires so that befitting adjustments could be made. This helped the researchers as they
managed to remove unnecessary and irrelevant questions and improve on questionnaire wording
to avoid ambiguity and making sure that the questionnaire solicits for reliable and valid
information. The containers thus were coded as follows:-
The collected data was analysed using SPSS v24 software package.

**Analysis and Results**

How do people decide which perfume they want to buy? Do people while buying perfume, just like FMCG products, prefers cylindrical perfume because of elongation bias? Are people indifferent to the shapes of packaging while buying perfumes as they are only concerned about the fragrance? Does gender influence the choice with regard to shape of container? To answer these questions, HYPOTHESES 1 & 2 were tested using one-way anova test taking the preference ratings as dependent variables and shape (cylindrical, cubical and rectangle) as independent variables while controlling the color and material.

*Hypothesis 1: There is no difference in the mean preference of different shapes among men*
A main effect of shape was found for preference, F (2,351) = 49.356, P<.000. Post hoc tests revealed that preference was significantly higher for cubical (4.2, p = .000) and cuboid containers (3.7, p = .000) comparing to cylindrical containers (2.6). There was no significant difference in preference between the cubical and cuboid containers (p =0.644). Thus results indicate that men prefer cubical container followed by cuboid.

Hypothesis 2: There is difference in the mean preference of different shapes among women
A main effect of shape was found for preference, F (2,273) =93.809, P<.000. Post hoc tests revealed that preference was significantly higher for cylindrical (3.9, p = .000) and to cuboid containers (3.9, p =.000) comparing to cubical containers (2.3). There was no significant difference in preference between the cylindrical and cuboid containers (p =0.876). Thus results indicate that women prefer cylindrical container followed by cuboid.
The mean plot depicts that the mean value of preference for cylindrical shaped containers for females was higher than that of males, with the mean ratings of males being very low. A probable reason could be that cylindrical perfume bottles appear to be feminine.

In order to understand the preference for the color of the container amongst different gender, Hypotheses 3 & 4 was tested using one way Anova. The results are given below

Hypothesis 3: There is a difference in the mean preference for color of the container among men
A main effect of color was found for preference, $F(2, 351) = 59.681, P < .000$. Post hoc tests revealed that preference was significantly higher for black color ($4.211, p = .000$) and to blue color ($3.203, p = .000$) comparing to red color. There was no significant difference in preference between the blue and red color containers ($p = 0.052$). Thus results indicate that men prefer black colour container followed by blue.

Hypothesis 4: There is a difference in the mean preference for color of the container among women
A main effect of color was found for preference, $F(2,273) = 23.122$, $P<.00$. Post hoc tests revealed that preference was significantly higher for blue color ($3.3, p = .000$) and red color ($3.0, p = .000$) comparing to black color. There was no significant difference in preference between the black and red color containers ($p = .171$). Thus results indicate that women prefer blue colour container followed by red.

In order to understand impact of type of container material on preference another one way ANOVA test was carried out with the following hypothesis

$H5$: Type of container material influences preference

Results indicate that preference is not influenced by type of container material $F(1,418) = 3.073$, $P>0.05$

A comparison of preference data for all the 18 combinations based on gender yielded interesting results.
The plot above shows how the preference for different perfume containers differs depending on the gender of respondents. Starting from the left most of the graph, the ratings given by both in terms of how likely they are to buy Square/cubicle blue glass bottle (SBG) is very close. Depicting that this combination is preferred by both i.e. it is unisexual. Similarly there is not much difference between the preferences of rectangular black glass bottle for both. Moving on to cylindrical bottles we observe that there is a sharp decrease in the preference of men for the three combinations of cylindrical bottles while for women it is high, thereby proving the femininity associated with the shape. If we observe the cylindrical metal bottles, we observe the same pattern, consider CRM i.e. cylindrical red metal, there is a sharp increase in preference of women and a sharp decrease in the preference of men, same is the case with cylindrical black metal and cylindrical blue metal. (CBKM & CBM). Also, rectangular bottles are perceived to be unisex, be it any combination, rectangular red or rectangular black (any material). Preference of men and women lies very close in case of rectangular shape. It can also be said that blue and red colors are liked by both the genders. Considering squared red and squared blue bottles, both men and women preferred such bottles but the ratings of women were higher than those of men. Another interesting point, square black glass and square black metal, both show a sharp increase in the preference of males and a sharp decline in the preference of females, thus showing masculinity associated with this combination.

**Implication for Practice**

People are becoming more and more demanding; packaging has gradually shown its important role in serving consumer by providing information and delivering function. With its different functionality to ease and to communicate with consumers, there is no doubt about the increasingly important role of packaging as a strategic tool to attract consumer’s attention and their perception of the product quality. From our research study we find that cylindrical perfume bottles appear important for women, consistent with findings from industry documents that suggest women place
more importance on cylindrical and oval shaped bottles. Also, women find black squared bottles quite unappealing so this combination should be reserved for perfume bottles meant for men as men have given quite a high rating to this combination. On the other hand, both men and women find rectangular bottles, irrespective of the color, elegant and attractive as they gave similar ratings for rectangular bottles. While women find cylindrical bottles appealing, men find such bottles quite feminine thereby suggesting marketers not to use such bottles for men’s perfume. Considering squared red and squared blue bottles, both men and women preferred such bottles but the ratings of women were higher than those of men suggesting that women have positive reactions to cool hues like red, blue, and pink. Men preferred black bottles the most suggesting masculinity associated with this color. About the material, both metal and glass may be used for perfume bottles as not much importance is given to this factor.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it's certainly vital to make sure the colors used in a brand's packaging are perfectly aligned with brand and the message the brand needs to convey. When it comes to packaging, color is clearly one of the most important characteristics to be taken into account. 85% of consumers attribute color as a primary reason for purchasing behavior (Hemphil, 1996). A beauty brand is often instantly recognizable by its color, so it is necessary to choose the right one. The color becomes the brand, and there are many cases of this in personal care. A consumer can walk to the perfume aisle and know where their favorite brand from distance. The right color can provide much more than brand identity as marketers can induce impulsivity thereby increasing the purchase. Talking about the shape of packaging, like color, shape is also an important design attribute. A package’s shape contributes to its brand’s personality, meaning its human characteristics. Studies show that females identify with curved lines while males are more attracted to straight lines. However, the connotations with fragrance packaging shapes are more complicated. The results of our research conveyed that women are more inclined towards cylindrical bottles while men prefer more of masculine, squared bottles while both have similar feelings for rectangular bottles which depict elegance. Thus, shape is also a very important aspect which should be taken into consideration by the marketers.

References

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