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INFLUENCE OF PACKAGING ELEMENTS ON THE PURCHASE DECISION-MAKING: A STUDY ON THE BAR SOAP USERS OF DHAKA CITY, BANGLADESH

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Abstract:

In this growing competitive market, packaging has become a vital part of the selling process for communication and branding. However, due to the changes in consumer's lifestyle and increasing self-service usage, the packaging is considered a salient salesman for tangible products. So, there is a gap to explore how different combination of packaging elements can impact the buying decision process of FMCG products. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the influence of different visual and verbal elements on the purchase decision-making of Dhaka city consumers in the context of bar soap. The quantitative research method was adopted using data obtained from 243 residents from three different areas of Dhaka city. Data were then analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with smartPLS version 3. The paper concludes that packaging color and background image are significantly related to soap users' purchase decision-making. However, font style, shape, printed information, and materials are found insignificant in this study. Based on these findings, important implications and guidance are provided for the marketers.

Keywords: packaging elements, purchase decision-making, Bangladesh, bar soap, structural equation modeling.

1. Introduction

With rapid urbanization and strong economic growth, a developing country like Bangladesh has a base of mid-to-high income consumers who have an increasing amount of disposable income to maintain their lives. The market of beauty and personal care is an ever-growing one that has fragmented and requires continuous branding and product innovation for brands to sustain (Ahmed et al. 2018). In this beauty and personal care market, one of the largest categories that are related to a low - involvement decision of consumers is bath care products. Three types of segments are currently noticed in Bangladesh's soap market- bar soaps, liquid soaps, and shower gels. Due to improved sanitation and hygiene related knowledge,

consumers (both value & premium segments) show the most significant preference for bath and shower products. The soap market's current scenario indicates that multiple local and international brands are competing for consumers' share of wallet, which has ultimately created a stagnant and fragmented market environment. Companies are now considering a comprehensive mixture of tools to break the clutter and keep their brands in the consideration set of consumers.

In this recent intensifying competitive environment and changing consumers' lifestyle patterns, growing interest has been seen in packaging design as a marketing communication tool (Kuvykaite, Dovaliene et al., 2009). The successful integration of packaging elements into an effective purchase decision model results in consumers' solution of vast product choices at the point-of-sales (Silayoi&Speece, 2004). According to Hassan, Leng et al. (2012), designing packaging elements innovatively helps the product stand out from competitors, catches the consumer's attention, and contributes to brand image and recognition. To influence consumers' purchase decision-making, producers and designers attempt to create efficient packaging by using elements such as form, size, color, graphics, material, and flavor (Smith & Taylor, 2004). Many authors divide the total packaging elements into two different parts. Some authors (Vila & Ampuero, 2007; Underwood, 2003) undertook two blocks of package elements: graphic elements (color, typography, shapes used, and images) and structural components (form, the size of the containers, and materials). Other authors Silayoi&Speece(2004; 2007), divide the package into two categories of elements: visual elements (graphics, color, shape, and size) and informational elements (information provided and technology). According to Olson and Jacoby (1972), packaging can be defined in a simple form as extrinsic elements of the product. In detail, it is the container for a product, encompassing the physical appearance of the container and including the design, color, shape, and labeling (Arens, 1996). The appealing color, vivid background picture, consumer-friendly package shape, quality-based materials, proper labeling on the package, etc. All these have a significant impact on the consumers' purchase decision-making. Therefore, FMCG companies mainly focus on the verbal and visual elements when designing adequate and attention-catching packaging products.

In Bangladesh, a significant difference exists between lower socio-economic classes and higher socio-economic classes regarding consumers' usage behavior. A substantial portion of consumers here prefer bar soap as their primary personal care product, using it for cleansing and bathing and a shampoo and deodorant (Ahmed et al. 2018). Dhaka city, the capital of Bangladesh with around two crores, considers bar soap as essential personal care products for their daily life (Dhaka, Bangladesh Metro Area Population 1950-2020, 2020). The residents of Dhaka city experience a hot, humid, and wet tropical climate. The annual average temperature of this city is 25 °C (77 °F); monthly means varies between 18 °C (64 °F) in January and 32 °C (90 °F) in May, raising more demand for bar soap to have a healthy and hygienic body. Thus, this study explores the importance of packaging elements in the buying decision-making of different bar soaps.

The previous studies show a good amount of works has been conducted on the packaging. Several studies have been conducted to know the influence of packaging elements on purchase intention (Purwaningsih et al, 2019; Benachenhou, Guerricha et al., 2017); buying decision behavior (Imiru, 2017; Barber & Almanza, 2006); buying behavior (Ashaduzzaman& Mahbub, 2016); consumer liking and purchase

intention (Kim, Lopetchara et al., 2013). Moreover, some papers focus on the impact of one element of packaging. For example, Kauppinen and Räisänen, (2014) explored the effect of packaging color on consumer attention and product perception. There are many works found on the impact of packaging strategy on a single product. For example- Lunardo and Guerinet, (2007) analyzed the influence of labeling on wine consumption and its authenticity; Gomez et al. (2015) focused on packaging of immediately consumed milk; Aday and Yener, (2014) worked with glass packaging. However, no work is still found regarding the influence of packaging elements on buying decision-making of bar soap. All this previous literature introduces new research regarding the packaging of bar soap.

Therefore, this study's broad objective is to explore the influence of different packaging elements on purchase decision-making among the consumers of Dhaka city in the context of low-involvement goods bar soap. The specific objectives of this study are:

- To determine the different visual and verbal elements of packaging in the context of bar soap.
- To identify the observed variables of visual and verbal aspects of packaging.
- To uncover the influence of these packaging elements on the purchase decision-making of bar soap.

This article is structured as follows- at first, it reviews different kinds of literature related to the packaging elements, buying decision-making, buying intention, etc. Next, a research framework is developed, and hypotheses are formulated to justify the framework. After that, the research methodology and data analysis techniques are discussed. Then the findings of the study are discussed and summarized. The article concludes with showing the limitations and scope of future research and practical implication for Asian businesses in the final section.

2. Theoretical Background of the Study

2.1 Purchase Decision-making

According to Lysonski et al. (1996), purchase decision-making is a mental orientation of consumers characterized as an approach to make product choices. This approach deals with two types of direction in decision-making, namely cognitive and affective exposure (Sporles and Kendall, 1986). Several studies show that lots of factors can influence consumer purchase decision-making. Consumers consider several dimensions, including the amount of information to be collected, the amount of time to be spent, the number of brands to be considered, the amount of money to be paid, etc. According to the consumer behaviorism model, the purchase decision is a part of consumer purchase behavior that consists of five stages: needs recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Moreover, consumers' purchase decision-making is also influenced by the types of products and level of involvement.

2.2 Packaging Elements

The packaging elements act as a set of marketing strategy formulation components to capture a high customer share. In various studies related to packaging, features are used to understand their combined effect on consumers' purchasing decision-making. The significance of packaging in marketing

communication increases, which was investigated in several previous works (Butkeviciene et al. 2008; Gonzalez, Thorhsbury et al., 2007; Vila & Ampuero 2007; Nancarrow, Wright & et al., 1998; Prendergast & Pitt, 1996; Smith & Taylor, 2004; Underwood et al. 2001; Silayoi&Speece, 2004; Underwood, 2003; Vazquez, Bruce et al., 2003; Ampuero& Vila, 2006). According to Smith & Taylor (2004), efficient package creation requires producers and designers to consider six variables: form, size, color, graphics, material, and flavor. While Kotler& Keller (2006) identified six different packaging elements including- size, form, material, color, text, and brand, another three authors, namely Vila & Ampuero, (2007) and Underwood, (2003) classified the packaging elements in two blocks- graphic elements (color, typography, shapes used, and images) and structural elements (form, size of the containers, and materials). Similarly, a classification process was undertaken by Silayoi&Speece(2004), where two categories were developed, including visual elements (graphics, color, shape, and size) and informational elements (information provided and technology) with the mediating role of time pressure and involvement level. While the visual aspects positively influence buying decisions in the low involvement situation, informational elements play a significant role in higher involvement decision making. In another study, packaging can be identified as a holistic design where the aspects of packaging are considered holistic components to create a brand identity (Orth and Malkewitz, 2006). Some of the most relevant articles on packaging elements are summarized below:

Table 1

Review of related literature

Author (s)	Year	Lists of variables		Country	Main outcomes of the study
		Independent variable (s)	Dependent Variable		
Purwaningsih et al.	2019	Graphics, size/shape, product information, and technology.	Purchase intention	Indonesia	Packaging color and shape are the most significant indicator of purchase intention.
Banerjee &Kedia	2018	Color, materials, Wrapper design, Innovation & practicality, Font style, labeling, background information and pricing.	Purchase decision	India	All the elements of packaging have effect on purchase decision making.
Imiru	2017	Color, image, materials, innovation, font size and printed information	Buying decision behavior	Ethiopia	All the elements except color, materials have positive influence.
Benachenhou, Guerricha et al.	2017	Marketing innovation, visual and verbal elements	Purchase intention	Tlemcen city	All these three elements directly affect consumer' purchase intention.
Ashaduzzaman & Mahbub	2016	Color, image, font style, design of wrapper, printed	Buying behavior	Bangladesh	All the elements are significant in buying

		information, innovation.			behavior of detergent powder.
Hussain et al.	2015	Color, design, materials, size and labeling	Purchase behavior	Pakistan	All the elements are significantly important.
Zekiri&Hasani	2015	Label, color, quality, design, printed information, language, brand image, innovation & practicality, price.	Buying behavior	Macedonia	All the elements are positively correlated with buying process.
Raheem, Vishnu et al.	2014	Color, material, design of wrapper and innovation	Buying behavior	Pakistan	All the elements are positively associated in buying behavior
Kim, Lopetchara et al.	2013	Labels and brand name	Consumer liking & purchase intention	North Carolina	Declared fat content and brand influenced overall liking and purchase intent for chocolate milk to differing degrees.
Hassan, Leng et al.	2012	Information, graphics, color, shape, size, and materials.	Purchase decision	Malaysia	Shape and information on the package have a positive influence.
Kuvykaite, Dovaliene et al.	2009	Verbal and visual elements	Purchase decision	Kėdainiai city	Verbal elements are more important than visual aspects in decision-making.
Barber & Almanza	2006	Shape, color, label design, and information	Purchase decision	The State of Connecticut	Labeling is considered an integral part of buying decision-making.
Silayoi& Speece	2004	Graphic, color, size, shape, information, and technology.	Purchase decision	Thailand	Visual elements are more significant for the low-involvement product, while informational details are for high-involvement products.

Thus, based on the previous literature, six elements of packaging are identified for conducting this study. These are visual elements-color, size, packaging materials as per Kuvykaite et al. (2009); font style, background image (Ashaduzzaman & Mahbub, 2016); and informational element –product information as per the study of Silayoi&Speece (2004).

2.2.1 Visual Elements - Packaging color

Packaging color is classified as one of the non-verbal elements that maximize customer recalls at the sale points, making purchase decisions quickly at the shop

(Herrington and Capella, 1995). The selection and combination of colors are crucial for packaging decisions as it is usually vivid and memorable to customers for brand selection. A potentially strong association can be built between products and color as a cue when it is unique to a particular brand (Silayoi&Speece, 2004). Moreover, to gain considerable attention at the point of sales (POS), packaging color is one of the most critical factors that can break through the clutter of competitive products and messages (Garber, Burke et al., 2000).

2.2.2 Visual Elements- Size

Packaging size has some sort of influence on the purchase decision-making of the customer. The packaging shape discussion always involves convenient use and carry by customers (Silayoi&Speece, 2004). To have a competitive edge over other brands, shape innovation is a powerful weapon that builds an image in the consumer mindset by offering the brand a unique identity. Moreover, bringing changes in product packaging changes create differentiation (Sherwood, 1999) and ensures significant profits at the sales register (Prince, 1994). Uniqueness, fanciness, elongated and straightness- these all are the dimensions of packaging shape that significantly contribute to the purchase decision-making (Hasan, Leng et al., 2012).

2.2.3 Visual Elements- Packaging materials

Packaging as one of the essential visual elements is recognized in the study of (Kuvykaite et al., 2009; Silayoi&Speece, 2004, 2007). However, packaging materials and technical methods vary across product categories (Ashaduzzaman & Mahbub, 2016). Several studies reveal that consumers prefer packages that is environmentally friendly ((Prendergast & Pitt, 1996), reused, and recycled more easily (Rundh, 2005). In terms of convenience, consumers demand package that is easy-open, easy-store, easy-carry, and non-breakability (Ashaduzzaman&Mahbub, 2016), shopability, reliability and portability (Ahmed, Ahmed et al., 2005).

2.2.4 Visual element- Font style

The pattern of writing on the package that can grab customer attention is called font style (Ashaduzzaman&Mahbub, 2016). It is one of the topmost attention-drawing visual elements that can play a significant role in consumer purchase decision-making ((Kuvykaite et al., 2009). The up-gradation of I.T. technology has supported this feature. Several authors stressed the importance of proper positioning of this element (Rettie& Brewer, 2000). This non-verbal element can influence buying behavior as the verbal elements (Butkeviciene et al., 2008). Today's successful companies have specialists who are an expert in mind-blowing font style to catch consumers' attention.

2.2.5 Visual elements: Background image

According to the author Ashaduzzaman & Mahbub (2016), the usage of the character or picture of celebrities, or cartoon or other images used in the packaging are called background images. In low-involvement products, evaluation of attributes is considered less critical for which graphical works like background image are essential (Grossman and Wisenblit, 1999). A product with solid graphic design in its package can attract consumers at the point-of-sale when they are under time pressure, leading them to impulse buying (Herrington and Capella, 1995; Hausman, 2000). While verbal elements (printed information) transmit the information which affects the consumer's cognitive orientation, Visual elements (image and picture) of the package transmit the information which affects the consumer's emotions (Silayoi&Speece, 2004).

2.2.6 Informational or verbal elements- Printed information

Packaging as the primary vehicle for communication with the consumer provides details about the product at the point of sales, including the nutritional value, added ingredients, country of origin, the producer, and best before date. Informational elements of the package play a vital role in decision-making (Silayoi&Speece, 2004, 2007; Rita, 2009; Kuvykaite et al., 2009). As an essential component of an overall marketing mix, printed information on the package supports advertising claims, establishes brand identity, enhances name recognition, and optimizes shelf space allocations (Deliya and Parmar, 2012). Informational elements are increasingly becoming more important to consumers as they influence choice sets and create product credibility by reducing uncertainty (Silayoi&Speece, 2004). In purchasing FMCG products, consumers consider printed information in evaluating products and changing purchase decisions (Ashaduzzaman&Mahbub, 2016). Today's health and nutrition-conscious consumers pay more attention to labeling information as they use it extensively during purchase time and using the time (Coulson, 2000).

3. Conceptual Model and Hypotheses Formulation

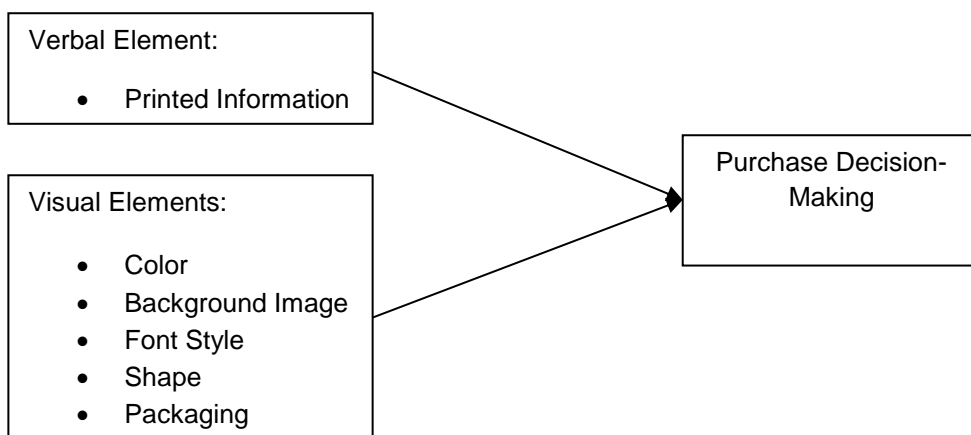


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual framework for the Study

H₁=The packaging color has a positive influence on making purchase decisions of bar soap.

H₂= The packaging background image has a positive influence on making a purchase decision of bar soap.

H₃ = The packaging font style has a positive influence on making a purchase decision of bar soap.

H₄ = The packaging shape has a positive influence on making a purchase decision of bar soap.

H₅ = The packaging materials have a positive influence on making the purchase decision of bar soap.

H₆=The information on the package has a positive influence on making a purchase decision of bar soap.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Sampling design and data collection

In this study, the target population consists of Bangladeshi people who are using bar soap. So individual users of bar soap are the unit of analysis. Three places, including the Shahbag area, Hazaribag, and Matijheel area, have been selected purposively for collecting data. The participants of this survey include 243 bar soap users from these three different places of Dhaka city. A quantitative survey method has been undertaken to conduct the research, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Data were collected from the users across Dhaka city using the online convenience sampling method to test the hypothesis. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements regarding their purchase decision-making of bar soap. A total of 243 respondents filled up the questionnaire online from September to October 2020. After the careful screening of the returned answers, 32 questionnaires were excluded due to the incomplete information, and 211 responses were retained for subsequent statistical analysis. The sample consists of 44.5% male and 55.5% female respondents from Shahbag, Hazaribag, and Mathijheel area in Dhaka city.

4.2 Measurement Instrument

In this study, the independent variables consist of verbal and visual elements of packaging, whereas the dependent variable is the purchase decision-making of consumers. The scale items for measuring packaging elements were adopted from different previous studies. The latent constructs and their observed variables are shown in table 2.

The survey questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first section of the questionnaire includes respondents' demographic information about gender, age, marital status, education level, and occupation. The second section contains questions related to this study, such as whether the respondent notices bar soap packs when purchasing, whether they prefer an aesthetic color combination on the package, and so on. The final section includes questions related to the packaging elements and purchase decision-making, respectively. A five-point Likert scale indicates the respondent's level of agreement or disagreement regarding the statements. To pre-test the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted on 12 respondents. Their feedback was incorporated to improve the questionnaire before distributing it to the actual sample.

Table 2

Constructs and list of measured variables

Constructs	Measured Variables	Study Source
Packaging Color (PC)	Attention-catching body-color Attractive combination of fonts color	Ashaduzzaman&Mahbub (2016)
Background Image (BI)	Relevant image, logo on the package Celebrity picture on the package	
Font Style (FS)	Attractive pattern of writing Appealing graphic design on the package	
Packaging Shape (PS)	Unique package shape More elongated package shape	Hassan et al. (2012)
Packaging Materials (PM)	Easy- to- open High-quality material Environment- friendly package	
Printed Information (PI)	Manufacturer information Country-of-origin information Quality of information	
Purchase Decision-Making (PDM)	The user considers the packaging of soap while making a purchase decision. Users will recommend others about the soap that has an appealing package design	Schlegelmilch, Bohlen et al., (1996).

4.3 Analysis of Data

For analyzing the data collected through an online questionnaire, SmartPLS software version 3 was used. The quantitative data were analyzed by using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the hypotheses developed for this study. Descriptive statistics were adopted to provide a narrative view of the total study. Moreover, multicollinearity among the independent variables can be detected by using collinearity statistics. Apart from this, the scale items' reliability and validity were established by using the score of composite reliability (C.R.).

5. Results and Interpretations

5.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 3

Demographic profile of sample

Item	Description	Frequency	percentage
Gender	Male	94	44.5
	Female	117	55.5
Age (Years)	16-25	125	59.2
	26-35	52	24.6
	36-45	17	8.1
	46-55	10	4.7
	55-65	7	3.4
Marital Status	Single	32	15.2
	Married	179	84.8
Education level	Graduate	118	55.9
	High school/College	1	.5
	Post-graduate and above	56	26.5
	Undergraduate	36	17.1
Occupation		4	
	Entrepreneur	10	1.9
	Govt. official	27	4.7
	Professional	148	12.8
	Student	22	70.1
	unemployed		10.4

5.2 Ranking of Mean and S.D. scores

This study's primary analysis is actually done by using mean and standard deviation values of all independent variables. Rankings were assigned based on the calculated values of mean scores.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of packaging elements

Packaging Elements	Mean	SD	Rank
Packaging color	3.72	1.07	3
Background image	3.19	1.25	6
Font style	3.52	1.11	5
Packaging shape	3.55	1.14	4
Packaging Materials	3.94	1.13	2
Printed information	4.21	1.06	1