

Packaging So Good, Product So Average: An Empirical Study of The Influence of Packaging on Consumer Buying Behaviour in India

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides empirical research on packaging role in consumer purchasing behaviour in the Indian market with specific references to discrepancies between appealing packaging and the quality of the product. Packaging in the current competitive retail world is acting as a silent sales man in that it creates the initial impressions, purchase expectations, and value of the product. The research makes use of survey-based quantitative design to examine the impact of visual appeal, packaging design and informational cues on quality perceptions and purchase decision among consumers. A structured questionnaire was used to sample 70 consumers who took part in the study and their data was analysed with the help of Pearson correlation, one-sample t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The results show that although the good packaging does not have a significant effect on the purchasing decision made on the basis of attraction alone, it has a substantial effect on the perception that holds customers about the quality and performance expectation of the product. Age differences on these perceptions were however seen to be statistically insignificant. The research paper points out the ethical and strategic implication of packaging-based marketing and proposes that the marketer needs to create a balance between the aesthetic and authentic value of products in order to maintain consumer trust in the long term.

Key Words: Packaging Design, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Visual Appeal, Brand Perception, Impulse Buying, Indian Consumers

INTRODUCTION

The modern competitive world of consumers has made packaging one of the most significant factors of the buying behaviour. Packaging is often described as the silent salesman and as packaging, it is important to entice consumer interest; establish brand values and brand differentiation among products on a crowded retail shelf. The suggestive title of Packaging So Good, Product So Average is a reality that is gradually becoming the trend in the Indian marketplace, where eye-catching packaging is capable of substantially affecting consumer purchasing behaviour to the point of making the quality of the product being somewhat irrelevant.

The growing retail market in India over the last few years combined with the growing disposable income and the opening up of the local market to foreign brand competition has enhanced the role of packaging as a marketing strategy. The new consumers are not just purchasing products based on their functional usefulness but also the emotional, aesthetic and symbolic meaning through packaging. This is usually influenced by the first impressions created by elements like colour, typography, shape, material, graphics and sustainability claims and thus has a profound impact on buying intentions, especially in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), cosmetics, food products and personal care segments.

As the impulse buying and limited shopping behaviour have increased, consumers often use packaging information instead of product analysis. Even though the actual quality, trust, and value performance of the product may be average, the beautiful packaging may lead to expectations of excellent quality, trust, and value. With various cultural inclinations, literacy levels and sensitivity to prices existing within the Indian context, packaging is an excellent channel of communication that helps in bridging the gap between the brands and the consumers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study will attempt to empirically examine the degree, to which packaging influences consumer buying behaviour in India. The preference and the attitude to purchase will help the research to understand whether the packaging is appealing to the consumer or the motivations are working and in certain instances the packaging is the culprit in the decision making of purchase at the expense of the product itself. The end of this study will have significant implications on marketers, manufacturers and policy makers in developing their packaging strategies that will be appealing and one that will capture the actual product value.

Uddin, Begum, and Rouf (2022) show that packaging is a decisive factor in consumer purchasing, especially during the point of purchase, where packaging colour and quality of material become the decisive factors. Their results support the perception of packaging as a strong communications device and branding. Likewise, Veeramangala and Anitha (2021) name packaging colour as the most significant visual feature in the FMCG purchases, which confirms the concept of packaging being a silent salesman in the retail settings. This argument is further reinforced as Hussain et al. (2023) demonstrate that the packaging colour, material, font style, and information printed greatly influence purchase intentions, even in the case when the overall product quality is perceived as average.

A number of researches indicate the significance of verbal and informational packaging aspects. Nutritional information and country of origin are identified as critical factors influencing consumer trust and purchase decisions by Adam and Ali (2014) and visual appeal is not as significant as clear labelling, environmentally friendly information, and utility in making purchase choices, particularly in cosmetics (Jhansi, Mol, and Divyashri, 2025). The same authors (Khandagale et al. 2015) also indicate that the effects of convenience and brand name are stronger than those of aesthetics.

The current research on sustainability is becoming more and more topical. Ilangasekara and Siriwardana (2022) and Nair, Mazgaonkar, and Shetye (2025) confirm that the willingness to pay, environmental responsibility, and consumer awareness play a significant role in influencing buying behaviour as a sustainable packaging. Banerjee (2024) and Oluwasanmi et al. (2024) also note that eco-friendliness, ecolabelling, and packaging material are also important predictors of purchase behaviour, but abstract environmental concern is not always a predictor that leads to buying behaviour.

Other studies project the packaging effects to behavioural outcomes. Chandrasekhar, Das and Gupta (2024) associate packaging design and colour psychology to impulse buying, whereas Orabueze et al. (2025) demonstrate that the packaging supports habitual buying but not the long

term brand loyalty. According to Unukpo et al. (2025) and Tinonetsana and Penceliah (2017), convenience goods require functional and integrated packaging components.

In general, the literature invariably proves that packaging, in terms of visual, verbal, functional, and sustainable aspects, is an imperative marketing tool that significantly shapes buying behaviour among consumers in products, market and culture.

RESEARCH GAP

Although previous research has investigated how packaging impacts on consumer behaviour, there is empirical deficiency on the dislocation between the appeal of packaging and the actual product quality in the Indian setting. The majority of the previous studies focus on the positive implications of attractive packaging without mentioning circumstances in which packaging induces the development of illusions. It is quite evident that the research has a significant knowledge gap in the Indian consumer in terms of how their judgment of the product is after the purchase when the packaging falls short of expectation and how this influences their trust, intention to repurchase, and loyalty towards the brand. This paper fills this gap by empirically examining whether the average performance of products can be countered by the superior packaging in terms of consumer buying behaviour in India.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the relationship between attractive packaging, packaging design, and consumers' tendency to purchase products based on visual appeal.
2. To examine whether attractive packaging shapes consumers' perceptions of product quality, performance expectations, and their belief that packaging can mask average product quality.
3. To examine whether consumers' perceptions of product quality formed through attractive packaging differ significantly across age groups, reflecting a possible mismatch between packaging appeal and actual product performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive and analytical research design** to examine the impact of packaging on consumer buying behaviour.

Nature of the Study

The research is **quantitative and empirical**, relying on primary data collected through a structured survey.

Population of the Study

The population consisted of **Indian consumers** who regularly purchase packaged consumer goods.

Sample Size

A total of **70 respondents** were selected for the study.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling method was used to collect data from respondents.

Data Collection Method

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on Likert-scale statements.

Secondary data were sourced from journals, books, and published research articles.

Variables Studied

- Independent Variables: Attractive packaging, packaging design
- Dependent Variables: Consumer buying behaviour, perceived product quality

Statistical Tools Used

- Pearson Correlation
- One-Sample t-Test
- One-Way ANOVA

Software Used

Data analysis was conducted using **SPSS**.

Scope of the Study

The study is limited to consumer perceptions within the Indian market and focuses primarily on packaging-related factors.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

H₀₁ (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant relationship between attractive packaging, packaging design, and consumers' tendency to purchase products based on packaging appeal.

H₁₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):

There is a significant relationship between attractive packaging, packaging design, and consumers' tendency to purchase products based on packaging appeal.

Correlations				
		Attractive packaging catches my attention while shopping.	Packaging design influences my decision to buy a product.	I often buy products mainly because their packaging looks appealing.
Attractive packaging catches my attention while shopping.	Pearson Correlation	1	-.029	.005
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.812	.965
	N	70	70	70
Packaging design influences my decision to buy a product.	Pearson Correlation	-.029	1	-.037
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.812		.760
	N	70	70	70
I often buy products mainly because their packaging looks appealing.	Pearson Correlation	.005	-.037	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.965	.760	
	N	70	70	70

The correlation study was intended to determine the relationship between three variables concerning packaging which include attractive packaging that appeals to the consumer, packaging design which influences the purchasing related decisions and purchase decision which is majorly made on the basis of attractive packaging. The value of Pearson correlation of all variables is extremely low ($r = -0.029$, $r = 0.005$, $r = -0.037$) and its value is close to zero that indicates that there is no significant relationship between them. Moreover, the statistics ($p = 0.812$, $p = 0.965$, $p = 0.760$) of all the values are more than the standard level of significance (0.05) and this indicates that the relations were not statistically significant. This means that attractive packaging and packaging design are not closely related to the purchasing behaviour of the consumers in the present study based on the visual appeal.

H₀₂ (Null Hypothesis):

Attractive packaging does not significantly influence consumers' perceptions of product quality, performance expectations, or their belief that packaging can conceal average product quality.

H₁₂ (Alternative Hypothesis):

Attractive packaging significantly influences consumers' perceptions of product quality, performance expectations, and their belief that packaging can conceal average product quality.

One-Sample Statistics						
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean		
Good packaging makes me believe the product is of high quality.	70	3.4143	1.13563	.13573		
Packaging creates expectations about the product's performance.	70	3.4429	1.11167	.13287		
Attractive packaging can hide average product quality.	70	3.4143	1.02848	.12293		
One-Sample Test						
	Test Value = 3					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Good packaging makes me believe the product is of high quality.	3.052	69	.003	.41429	.1435	.6851
Packaging creates expectations about the product's performance.	3.333	69	.001	.44286	.1778	.7079
Attractive packaging can hide average product quality.	3.370	69	.001	.41429	.1691	.6595

The test value that was used in establishing the effect of attractive packaging on the perception of the consumers towards the quality of the products was 3 to ascertain the effect of attractive packaging on the consumption of the product. The mean score of all three statements that good packaging is high quality ($M = 3.41$), good packaging creates performance expectancies ($M = 3.44$), and good packaging covers mediocre quality of product ($M = 3.41$) is greater than the neutral

figure. The t-values ($t = 3.052, 3.333$ and 3.370) are statistically significant and the p-values are $0.003, 0.001,$ and 0.001 respectively, none of them is equal to the significant level of 0.05 . It proves that the respondents are in strong agreement that attractive packaging influences their product quality and expectations positively and may even deceive them that the product was average during the purchase.

H₀₃ (Null Hypothesis):

There is no significant difference among age groups in consumers’ belief that good packaging indicates high product quality.

H₁₃ (Alternative Hypothesis):

There is a significant difference among age groups in consumers’ belief that good packaging indicates high product quality.

ANOVA					
Good packaging makes me believe the product is of high quality.					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.476	4	2.369	1.937	.115
Within Groups	79.509	65	1.223		
Total	88.986	69			

It was applied to the one-way ANOVA to find out whether or not there is a variation in the perceptions of quality of the product based on attractive packaging depending on the age group. Being analysed, the between-group variance ($F = 1.937$) is not significant since the p-value (Sig. = 0.115) exceeds the conventional level of significance which is 0.05 . It implies that the difference in the age of the consumers does not significantly lead to the difference in the beliefs of the consumers that good packaging implies high quality of the product. That is, it appears that the implications of packaging appeal on perceptions are quite universalized in terms of age groups, and the issue of perceived incompatibility of the packaging appeal with the actual product performance does not have any strong influence on the perceptions associated with satisfaction when it is viewed in the context of the age-groups.

CONCLUSION

The current research paper discussed how attractive packaging and packaging design can affect consumer purchasing behaviour, perception of product quality and how these perceptions are related to age in the Indian market. The results give a valuable understanding of a complicated and even contradictory role of packaging in consumer decision-making.

The outcomes of the correlation analysis that is associated with the Hypothesis H₀ one indicate that there is no statistically significant relationship between attractive packaging and packaging design and the tendency of consumers to buy products simply because they are attractive. The values of Pearson correlation between the variables were very low and near to zero and all the values of significance were more than the standard level of 0.05 . This shows that despite the

assumption of popular marketing, the seeming attractive packaging in itself is not a strong determinant on the actual purchase behaviour. Apparently, consumers seem to depend on other aspects in their decision-making processes other than the aesthetics of the packaging.

But the results connected with Hypothesis H 0 2 are rather opposing. As the one-sample t-test results have shown, attractive packaging has a major impact on consumers perceptions of quality of product, their expectations of product performance, and the conviction that a packaging can mask the quality of an average product. All the tested statements that had mean values were significantly more than the neutral test value and the corresponding p-values were well under 0.05. This implies that although the consumers might not buy the products with the attractiveness of the packaging, appealing packaging generates high expectations and quality assumptions in the pre-purchase stage.

Moreover, the discussion of Hypothesis H 0 3 in one-way ANOVA proves that consumer attitude to packaging as quality predictor of the product does not significantly vary across the age groups. The non-significant F-value-value states that the effect of packaging appeal on the quality perception is rather homogenous across the age groups.

In general, the paper finds that packaging is very strong perceptual and psychological and not direct behavioural in purchase decisions. A beautiful package influences the expectations and the perceived quality but does not guarantee buying on its own, which makes the difference between the process of forming the perception and buying behaviour evident.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results, a balanced marketing approach should be chosen by marketers and involve visual attractiveness, as well as authentic product features and clear information. Although, attractive packaging is effective in creating consumer perceptions and expectations, excessive use of packaging and lack of product performance could cause consumer dissatisfaction and depleted consumer trust after the purchase. To promote credibility of the brand in the long term, manufacturers should make sure that the packaging would be fairly representative of the quality of the products. Clearer standards of labelling should be promoted by policymakers and consumer protection agencies to minimize the misleading practice of packaging. The research can be further expanded by future studies by considering additional variables such as post-purchase satisfaction, repeat buying behaviour, and product-category-specific analysis in order to understand more about the packaging induced consumer psychology.

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