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ROLE OF PACKAGING CUES ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT
Packaging is an important element of modern lifestyle and branding process. Changing lifestyle and increasing self service has placed product package as a tool to stimulate impulse purchase and increase sales promotion. The present study identified chocolate packaging cues influencing buying decisions of young consumers in Kannur District, Kerala State, India. A Multiple cross sectional descriptive research with convenient sampling technique elicited data from 240 students. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Shapiro-Wilk test, Kruskal Wallis test, Mann-Whitney *U* tests were used to interpret the data. Inferential statistics showed that chocolate packaging had significant influence in purchase pattern of students. Males and females differed significantly with respect to variables named *'Ingredients' & 'Manufacturing unit's address'*. *'Quality', 'Material', 'Ingredients' & 'Manufacturing unit's address' were* significant across certain age groups of the respondents. *'Brand name', 'Material'* and *'Ingredients'* differed significantly across qualifications. However, it was concluded that the informational elements on packages positively influenced purchase decisions than visual elements as far as low involvement purchase categories (chocolates) were concerned.

KEYWORDS: Chocolates, Consumer Behaviour, Packaging, Purchase.

INTRODUCTION

Packaging is considered as an important component of marketing. Earlier packaging was regarded as a mere protective tool but today it is considered as an important component of marketing process. Nowadays packaging is often argued as the fifth 'P' of the marketing mix. It was Pilditch (1961) who was the first to propose packs as the 'silent salesman'. Richardson et al. (1994) identified packages as product related but with extrinsic properties. Lewis (1991) extended Pilditch's (1961) views, describing good packaging as far more than a salesman but a flag of recognition and a symbol of values. Underwood (2003) claimed that packages were having intrinsic or extrinsic attributes based on certain features they possess. Vazquez, Bruce and Studd (2003) further stated that today, the pack must come alive at the point of purchase, in order to represent the salesman. Doherty and Tranchell (2007) described that the world loved chocolate.They even mentioned that nine out of ten people liked chocolates and the tenth person always lied. They added that chocolate could make everyone smile even bankers. Patwardhan et al. (2010) opined that out of the many secondary factors affecting consumer's buying decisions of chocolates, packaging was found to be equally important. Packaging in the chocolate industry is therefore critical particularly when positioned to young consumers. Today packages are designed to appeal different occasions, demand to different social groups and even distinguish between different brands. Based on the results from previous research studies, this paper makes an attempt to identify the chocolate packaging cues influencing buying decisions of young consumers across three demographic variables namely sex, age and qualification.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Packaging plays an imperative role in marketing of any goods. Packaging communicates the marketing objective of a specific product to the consumer. As per Sonsino (1990), package design variables mainly constituted the following components: colour, typography, pictures, shape, size, and material. Sauvage (1996) examined the importance of shape in creating an image about the product and the brand. He also mentioned that the material of a package affected consumer thought process. He even identified that carefully chosen typography was important for readability. Underwood et al. (2001) noted that pictures on packages increased learning and were considered more vivacious stimuli than verbal explanations. Underwood (2003) even suggested that consumers linked meanings to the package colours in three different groups namely 'the physiological', 'the cultural', and 'the associational'. He also explained the significance of size of the package when considering the visibility of a package and the information it displayed. Rigaux (1982) explained that the combined effects of brand names and brand packaging increased consumers' perceptions of quality.

Simmons (1948) identified the importance of eye appeal, the attractiveness, and the stimulus to impulse buying which transparent wrapping films (Cellophane) could impart to consumer goods. The author suggested that if properly executed, prepackaging could revolutionize the marketing of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats etc. He suggested that this could lower handling cost, reduce waste and increase sales.

Bassin (1988) identified five key areas in packaging which gave value-added functions for consumer. The author suggested that packaging could add value through brand identification, serve as the advertisement at the point-of-sale, help the consumer transport the product, improve at-home storage, add value by providing task assistance etc. Gelperowic & Beharrell (1994) in their study investigated the product and packaging factors affecting purchase decisions by mother and child, with

special reference to healthy food products. It was perceived that in terms of a healthy food products, the packaging had to be nice-looking and appealing to children to make them eat it and to assure mothers that they would eat it; but in order to make the mother buy it in the first place, without any guilt feeling, the healthy aspect of the product was needed to be signaled on the pack. Hence, healthy food products had to be fun and attractive to appeal to children and had to show mothers their healthy aspect.

Dhar et al. (1996) explored the relative impact of package coupons on profit. The results suggested that, of the various package coupons, on-pack coupons lead to the highest impact on profits. Further, while peel-offs lead to a higher market share than in-packs, because in-packs stimulated repurchase among earlier buyers, they lead to higher profits than peel-offs; though only for stronger brands.

Schoormans & Robben (1997) investigated the effect of the degree of deviation of coffee packages on consumers' attention and categorization. Findings suggested that the more a package redesign deviated from the existing package design in a product category, the more product attention was induced. An inverted U shaped relationship existed between the discrepancy of new product packages in a product category with the existing package and the evaluation of the product. Further the authors conveyed that a trade-off has to be made by manufacturers and package designers between the ability of modified packages to draw attention and to avoid negative package evaluations of such packages. Moderate package deviations of modified packages looked to give the best trade-off with regard to drawing attention and creating favorable consumer evaluations of a well-established brand.

Mccracken & Mackln (1998) identified the association between brand names and accompanying visuals (pictures) on consumer packaged goods. It was seen that when visuals were associated with a brand name, then memory for the brand increased. It was also found that memory was greater for brand names that were prior-associated in consumers' memory than for family and novel brand names. Further it was found that packaged goods having visual cues that reinforced the respective brand names stimulated greater memory for the brand names than packaged goods having name-unassociated visual cues and/or no visual cues. Attribute-associated visual cues facilitated greater memory than attribute-unassociated visual cues .The findings were in congruence with associative network theory.

Nancarrow et al. (1998) illustrated how an understanding of consumer models, psychological processes and the appropriate use of marketing research techniques could help in the design of food packaging and label copy to provide a company with a competitive advantage. The authors highlighted that an understanding of the consumer was central to the success of a pack design.

Underwood & Ozanne (1998) proposed a normative framework to direct the design of effective communication in product packaging. The authors suggested that a set of norms (i.e. the norm of truthfulness, the norm of sincerity, the norm of comprehensibility and the norm of legitimacy) could direct the complex task of designing good product packaging. The key finding from this study was a recurring theme of duplicity in relationships between consumers' and packaging.

Rettie & Brewer (2000) described the concept of brain laterality in processing the information (visual & verbal) under conditions of fast perception with respect to product packages. The authors explored the relationship between the positioning of copy (verbal) and pictures on different sides of a pack, and the recall of those elements. The results showed that to maximize recall, words should be on the right-hand sides of packs, pictures should be on the left. The results confirmed the asymmetry of perception of elements of packaging.

Bone & France (2001) examined how the graphical component of the package influenced consumer beliefs even when the verbal component of the package provided accurate product attribute information. The results showed that the graphical component of the label could significantly influence attribute beliefs and purchase intentions even when the verbal component of the package was held constant and provided accurate product attribute information.

Calclch & Blair (2001) examined the perceptual task involved in consumers' acquisition of product information from packages. The study related the time needed to acquire package information with a perceptual skill called disembedding. Authors concluded that when disembedding skill correlated with acquisition time, there were substantial differences among consumers in the length of time needed to acquire package information. The results also showed that acquisition time varied across types of information in a manner consistent with their perceptual accessibility, and that acquisition time did not vary across product categories with equally complex information displays. Price was acquired fastest, protein next fastest, iron third and servings per package slowest.

Gutierrez (2001) provided a comprehensive packaging design overview to the design consultant and product manager. He also discussed the package design research tools, classified into ocular and verbal tests, necessary to clearly understand consumer needs and wants. The author opined that the elements of a good package design involved more than the surface aesthetics of the package. It was influenced by the entire marketing program like package-product combination, the corporate symbol, the distribution and pricing policy and the promotional effort. He opined that a package designer must aim for the following goals: to attract the buyer, to communicate message to the buyer, to create desire for the product, to sell the product.

Underwood et al. (2001) explained a theoretical framework for understanding the communicative effects of product imagery (picture) on attention to the brand or package. The results showed that packaging pictures increased shoppers' attention to the brand. The result showed that packaging pictures were useful for private label brands and /or less tire national brands whose strategic objectives were to improve consumers' perceptions of the brand. Picture significantly improved

attention to the low familiarity brands, especially those providing high level of experimental benefits.

Hill & Tilley (2002) explored the breakfast cereal market and the perception of packaging from the perspective of a child. The research project outlined the use of packaging as a marketing communication tool and explored how children processed this information. Taking the child perspective of packaging, the research findings had challenged the perceptions of manufacturers and adults. Children were more aware and skeptical of all forms of marketing communication than adults. From the findings the authors concluded that there were some apparent inconsistencies between manufacturers and children's views and the findings also portrayed that adults were underestimating on how aware children were as consumers in today's society.

Wakefield et al. (2002) scrutinized secondary data and concluded that cigarette pack design was an important communication device for cigarette brands and acted as an advertising medium. Results showed that tobacco companies viewed cigarette packaging as an integral component of marketing strategy and a vehicle for (a) creating significant in-store presence at the point of purchase, and (b) communicating brand image. Market testing results indicated that such imagery was so strong as to influence smoker's taste ratings of the same cigarettes when packaged differently. Documents also revealed the careful balancing act that companies had employed in using pack design and color to communicate the impression of lower tar or milder cigarettes, while preserving perceived taste and satisfaction. The authors further added that systematic and extensive research was carried out by tobacco companies to ensure that cigarette packaging appealed to selected target groups, including young adults and women.

Underwood (2003) proposed that packaging was posited to influence the brand and self identity via mediated (through exposure to mass-communication culture and mass media products) and lived in experience (interaction with the brand, typically resulting from purchase and usage).

Lo¨fgren (2005) argued that packaging was more than physical boxes, bottles, jars, and cans that protected the goods they contain. Moreover, because products contained both tangible elements (goods) and intangible elements (service), the paper suggested that the consumption of physical goods and services cannot be separated; rather, it should be integrated into a process with two major steps – the 'first and second moments of truth'.

Clement (2007) in his article described the impact of visual attention on consumers' in store buying behaviour. The article pointed out the advantages of a human behaviour model (self-organising criticality system) to describe the in-store purchase and demonstrated through an eye-track experiment how visual impact from packaging design influenced buying behaviour and revealed phases in the decision process. The experiment also showed an extended decision process where visual attention at the point of sale was a key factor for the post-purchase phase.

Sehrawet & Kundu (2007) in their study compared the buying behaviour of rural and urban consumers with special reference to packaging. The study showed that rural and urban consumers varied significantly on various aspects of packaging. Rural people felt that packaging was more helpful in buying than their urban counterparts, and they had stronger opinions that better packages usually contained better products.

Silayoi & Speece (2007) discussed the role of packaging elements using a conjoint approach among consumers for packaged food products in Thailand. Results indicated that packaging technology which conveyed a message of convenience and ease of use in this study played the most important role in consumers likelihood to buy.

Lo¨fgren et al. (2008) explored a better understanding of how customers evaluated different aspects of the package in the first and second moments of truth. Results showed that there were significant differences for the impacts of customer satisfaction on loyalty in the first moment of truth compared to the second moment of truth.

Hubert et al. (2009) investigated the neural correlates associated with different retail brand frames. The authors assumed that the integration of emotions and memories associated with the image and reputation of a retail brand could influence consumers' perception of a product packaging. The results revealed that some persons showed a stronger susceptibility to retail brand information than others, in the sense that they changed their opinion about product packages when they had to evaluate them together with a retail brand. On the individual level the authors observed that the subject with the highest susceptibility to framing information also showed the strongest cortical activation. There were significant activations in regions of the medial prefrontal cortex, particularly in the ventromedial part of the prefrontal cortex.

Gofman et al. (2010) suggested a Rule Developing Experimentation (RDE) design that allowed the application of conjoint analysis to understand consumers' preferences of shampoo packages. The author claimed that the technique (RDE) enabled consumer segmentation based on mindset, rather than on traditional factors like purchase behaviour or demographics. Analysis of participants in the shampoo RDE process revealed segments of varying size accordingly labeled as health oriented, function and image and visual based on their reaction to different attribute alternatives. An optimum, package was developed from the RDE experiment for different segments.

Venter et al. (2011) explored a sample of South African consumers' perceptions of food packaging and how these perceptions were formed through the perceptual process. Findings indicated that participants mainly perceived food packaging based on its functional and physical attributes through unprompted awareness. In this regard, information attributes of packaging were crucial, as participants considered certain information as being important either for their health or for deciding whether to choose the product. It was also clear that appearance attributes played a key role in attracting the attention of participants. Participants interpreted the visual stimuli communicated to them through the packaging in the final step of the perceptual process, namely comprehension. Negative associations with packaging mostly entailed

associations with poor quality in the case of certain types of packaging, especially carton boxes, as well as some concerns about handling difficulties and environmental issues.

An eye-catching packaging for the chocolates forces consumers to buy the chocolates. Even though the few may not approve it expressively, such good packages unquestionably improve the cerebral image of the product. Packaging tends to augment the value and worth of the chocolate and can even mirror the quality of the contents inside the package (Giyahi, 2012). Suraj & Raveendran (2012) examined a situation confronting the child and the parent's interactions at the point of purchase of chocolates using an Elaboration Likelihood Model approach. The article mentioned the significance of packaging cues; pester power and the time pressure in bifurcation of the persuasive process into central and peripheral routes. The 'central route' was found to process information due to high package relevance, high personal motivation and high cognitive communication of the child resulting in the purchase of the chocolate. In the 'peripheral route', the child or the parent had low personal interests and low product involvement. The end result was a 'purchase' or 'no purchase'. The present study identified key chocolate packaging cues/variables influencing buying decisions of young consumers in Kannur District of Kerala State across three demographic variables of the respondents namely sex, age and qualification. Chocolate bars were only included in the study. Assorted chocolates, candies and gums were excluded.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The student consumers were asked to visualize that a new chocolate bar has been launched in the market and they were yet to sight it or taste it or a chocolate bar which was already launched in the market and they were yet to sight it or taste it .The present study identified the influence of different chocolate packaging cues that could possibly influence the purchase decision of young consumes in such a scenario**.** A multiple cross sectional descriptive type of research (Malhotra, 2006) was formulated for the study. The study identified the opinion of three different groups of chocolate consumers' namely i) secondary/higher secondary students, ii) graduates and iii) postgraduates towards chocolate packaging. Respondents fell in age group between 11-27 years. Convenient sampling was used as the sampling technique and a total of 240 responses (80 students each from three groups) were elicited. Primary data was used in the study and a survey method of data collection technique was undertaken. Data collection was carried out in two schools and four colleges in Kannur district ,Kerala State,India. The period of study was during June-August 2012. A pre-tested questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. Pretesting of the questionnaire was done among a small group of students from a college to modify/eliminate inconsistency and lack of clarity in certain questions. Based on review of related literature, the following 13 packaging cues were identified for the study: *'Good package related to good taste'* hereafter named as variable *'Taste', 'Good package related to good quality'* hereafter referred to as variable *'Quality', 'Shape', 'Colour', 'Picture', 'Size', 'Brand name', 'Material', 'Price' ,'Expiry dates', 'Nutritional Information', 'Ingredients' and 'Manufacturing unit's address'*. Data obtained through the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS software package (Version 12) in 95 percent confidence interval.

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test and Shapiro-Wilk test are commonly used to test the normality of the data. The K-S test is based on the empirical distribution function (EDF), which is defined as a set of N independent observations x1, x2 …xn with a common distribution function F(x). The Shapiro-Wilk W is the ratio of the best estimator of the variance to the usual corrected sum of squares estimator of the variance. The statistic is positive and less than or equal to one. Being close to one indicates normality. The 13 identified packaging cues/variables were first treated with both Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests to confirm the normality of the data. Kruskal Wallis test, Mann-Whitney *U* test were used for further analysis. The Hypotheses of the entire study were designed as follows.

H_1: There was no normality in the distribution of the data across the packaging cues/variables.

H_2: There were no significant differences of the influence of packaging cues/variables as far as sex of the respondents were concerned.

H_3: There were no significant differences of the influence of packaging cues/variables as far as age group the respondents were concerned.

H_4: There were no significant differences of the influence of packaging cues/variables as far as qualification the respondents were concerned.

The conceptual framework of the study is as shown in Figure 1

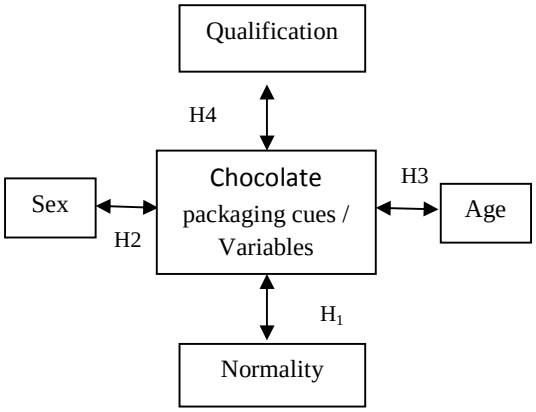

Figure-1

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The box plot and Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test on 240 cases across 13 identified packaging cues/variables yielded the following results as shown in Figure 2 and Table 1 respectively.

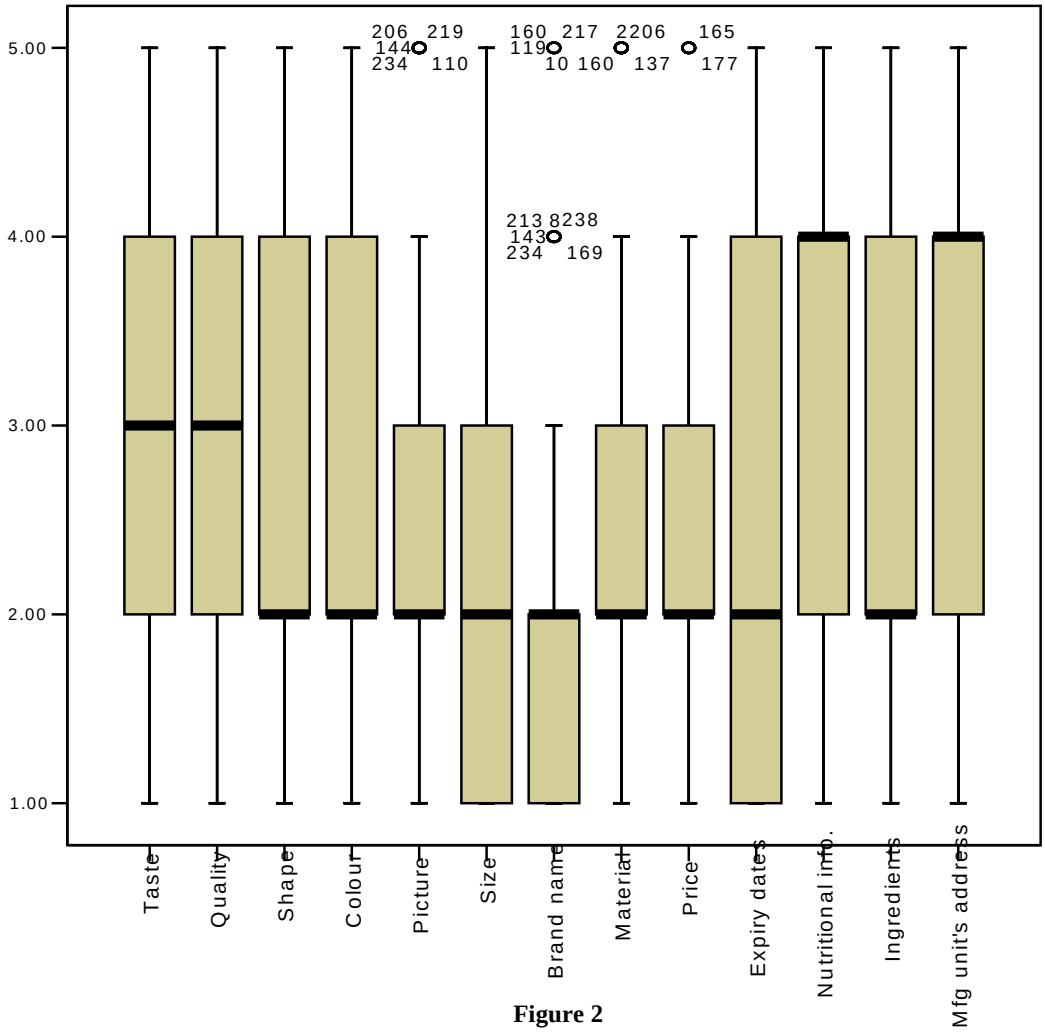

Figure 2

Table 1 Test for normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov(a)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Taste	.222	240	.000	.898	240	.000
Quality	.201	240	.000	.900	240	.000
Shape	.277	240	.000	.870	240	.000
Colour	.303	240	.000	.854	240	.000
Picture	.278	240	.000	.869	240	.000
Size	.294	240	.000	.823	240	.000
Brand name	.275	240	.000	.789	240	.000
Material	.284	240	.000	.868	240	.000
Price	.310	240	.000	.842	240	.000
Expiry dates	.234	240	.000	.821	240	.000
Nutritional information	.260	240	.000	.885	240	.000
Ingredients	.234	240	.000	.898	240	.000
Mfg unit's address	.245	240	.000	.890	240	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction Source: Primary data

From box plot (Figure 2) it was observed that for packaging cues/variables named *'Shape'*, *'Colour'*, *'Picture'*, *'Material'*, *'Price' and 'Ingredients'* , the median was found to be at the bottom of the box indicating a positively skewed distribution for these variables. For variables named *'Brand name'*, *'Nutritional information' and 'Manufacturing unit's address'*, the median was found to be at the top of the box indicating a negatively skewed distribution for these variables. Variable named *'Expiry dates'* showed a clear asymmetry in the data pattern. A close scrutiny of the seven numbers summary for variables named *'Taste'*, *'Quality' and 'Size'* indicated that the

locations of the seven marks on the box plot were unequally spaced. Further, Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk tests results from Table 1 yielded $p < 0.05$ for all the cases. This goes well to conclude that there were clear deviations from the normality pattern of distribution for all the 13 variables under study. Hence H1 is accepted. I.e. there was no normality in the distribution of the data across the packaging cues/variables.

The subsequent hypotheses where tested using Kruskal Wallis tests. Kruskal Wallis tests were run to test H2, H3, and H4 and yielded the following results as shown in Tables 2 to 4.

Table 2 Test Statistics [ab]

Variable	Statistics	Statistics
Taste	Chi-Square	0.06
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.795
Quality	Chi-Square	2.535
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.111
Shape	Chi-Square	3.113
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.078
Colour	Chi-Square	1.420
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.233
Picture	Chi-Square	2.110
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.146
Size	Chi-Square	0.757
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.384
Brand name	Chi-Square	0.265
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.607
Material	Chi-Square	1.738
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.187
Price	Chi-Square	0.017
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.895
Expiry dates	Chi-Square	3.772
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0 .052
Nutritional	Chi-Square	0.016
Information	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.898
Ingredients	Chi-Square	8.811
	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.003
Mfg. unit's	Chi-Square	6.642
address	df	1
	Asymp. Sig.	0.010

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Sex
Source: Primary data

Table 2 indicated that the test was significant ($p < 0.05$) only for variables *'Ingredients' & 'Manufacturing unit's address'* as far as the sex of the respondents were concerned. This goes well to show that males and females differed significantly with respect to these two variables, making H2 only partially valid.

Test results for H3 is shown as in Table 3

Table 3 Test Statistics [ab]

Variable	Statistics	Statistics
Taste	Chi-Square	1.542
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.673
Quality	Chi-Square	8.380
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.039
Shape	Chi-Square	3.630
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.304
Colour	Chi-Square	2.670
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.445
Picture	Chi-Square	2.405
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.493
Size	Chi-Square	3.877
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.275
Brand name	Chi-Square	1.389
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.708
Material	Chi-Square	9.257
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.026
Price	Chi-Square	6.858
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.077
Expiry dates	Chi-Square	1.562
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.668
Nutritional	Chi-Square	4.559
Information	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.207
Ingredients	Chi-Square	10.370
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.016
Mfg. unit's	Chi-Square	8.141
address	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.043

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Age
Source: Primary data

Table 3 indicated that the test was significant ($p < 0.05$) for variables *'Quality'*, *'Material'*, *'Ingredients' & 'Manufacturing unit's address'* as far as the age group of the respondents were concerned. This showed that purchase influence of the students with respect to these four variables differed significantly across the age groups making H3 only partially valid. To ascertain which age groups differed significantly across the four variables, a post hoc pair wise Mann – Whitney *U* test was conducted and indicated that age groups '11 to 15 years' & '23 and above' differed significantly as far these four variables were concerned. Age group between 11 to 15 years were found to be more conscious on *'Quality'* (Mann-Whitney

U =908.500; p=.043), *'Material'* (Mann-Whitney *U* =910.500; p=.043) and *'Ingredients'* (Mann-Whitney *U* =576.00; p=.000) where as '23 and above' were more particular about *'Manufacturing unit's address'* (Mann-Whitney *U* =761.000; p=.002). Test results for H4 is shown as in Table 4

Table 4 Test Statistics [ab]

Variable	Statistics	Statistics
Taste	Chi-Square	2.795
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.424
Quality	Chi-Square	3.273
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.351
Shape	Chi-Square	4.492
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.213
Colour	Chi-Square	5.720
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.126
Picture	Chi-Square	2.501
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.475
Size	Chi-Square	5.097
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.165
Brand name	Chi-Square	8.100
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.044
Material	Chi-Square	26.356
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.000
Price	Chi-Square	5.672
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.129
Expiry dates	Chi-Square	1.581
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.664
Nutritional Information	Chi-Square	2.683
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.443
Ingredients	Chi-Square	8.620
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.035
Mfg. unit's address	Chi-Square	5.326
	df	3
	Asymp. Sig.	0.149

a. Kruskal Wallis Test
b. Grouping Variable: Qualification
Source: Primary data

Table 4 indicated that test was significant (p< 0.05) for variables *'Brand name'* ,*'Material' and 'Ingredients'* as far as the qualification of the respondents were concerned making H4 only partially valid. To ascertain which group differed significantly across the variables, a post hoc pair wise Mann – Whitney *U* test was conducted and indicated that 'secondary students' & 'post graduates' differed significantly as far these variables were concerned. Secondary students were more inclined to *'Ingredients'* (Mann-Whitney *U* =1441.500 ; p=.004) and *'Material'* (Mann-Whitney *U* =1441.500 ; p=.004) of the chocolate where as post graduates were more inclined to *'Brand name'* (Mann-Whitney *U* =761.000; p=.002).

CONCLUSION

Inferential statistics showed that chocolate packaging cues had significant influence in purchase pattern of young consumers. However, a normal pattern of distribution was hardly noticed for the responses across the 13 identified packaging cues/variables. It was observed that out of the 13 identified packaging cues/variables, males and females differed significantly with respect to two variables namely *'Ingredients' & 'Manufacturing unit's address'*. Females were found to be self driven by *'Ingredients'* where as males were conscious of *'Manufacturing unit's address'*. *'Quality', 'Material', 'Ingredients' & 'Manufacturing unit's address'* were found to be significant as far as the age group of the respondents were concerned. Age group between 11 to 15 years were found to be more conscious on *'Quality', 'Material', & 'Ingredients'* where as '23 and above' were more particular about *'Manufacturing unit's address'*. *'Brand name', 'Material'* and *'Ingredients'* differed significantly across the qualifications. Secondary students & post graduates differed significantly as far these three variables were concerned. Secondary students were more inclined to *'Ingredients' and 'Material'* where as post graduates were more inclined to *'Brand name'*.

The key observation noticed from the study was that informational elements on the chocolate packaging were considered as more important in purchase decisions than visual elements. This supported the findings of Estiri et al. (2010) pointing that the informational element of food packaging were considered as the most important product selection criteria while visual element of packaging attracted least attention. However, the result was in contradiction to the findings of Silayoi and Speece (2004) which stated that visual elements on packages positively influenced purchase decisions more than informational elements as far as low involvement purchase situation was considered.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study was confined in a district of Northern Kerala and the sample size drawn was too small. Future studies may be extended to a broader area with a bigger sample size. As chocolate is a type of product which is consumed irrespective of age groups, the study could even be extended to all age groups from toddlers to older people. Such an extended study would give more information in understanding the significant differences across several demographic variables. The study can also be extended to understand the difference in purchase pattern if any across young consumers of urban and rural areas. The study could even be raveled to diverse products/brands and even on unbranded chocolates and the consumer behavior patterns can be interpreted with different methods of analysis such as discriminant analysis, conjoint analysis, factor analysis, cluster analysis etc.

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