



Young Purchasers' Buying Decision: Cosmetic packaging on gender distinction

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate a distinctive perceptual response between young males and females on graphical and packaging appearance leading to their buying decisions. The research endeavors to reveal distinctive graphical and formal design factors determining packaging preferences in accordance with the level of cognitive and affective sensory between genders. The research found that color, materials, formal design, size, shape, and textual style correspond to young purchasers' gender differences. Research tools comprise distinctive visual stimulus set embedded with the contradictory factors and questionnaires set to draw perceptual reactions. Sampled respondents are drawn from 19-23 graduate and undergraduate students from the Department of Industrial Design and Education. The research finally suggests a set of differentiating packaging design guidelines in accordance with the research findings for paradigmatic purposes.

Keywords: packaging design, cosmetic, gender differences, formal design, marketing.

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1.0 Introduction

The current mass marketing approach attempts to attract a wide range of customers, a strategy which can hardly succeed due to existing fierce product competition, and also because the new generation of consumers hesitates to make decisions until their genuine needs are proven to have been met. As a result, in marketing, customers are to be broken down into clusters of specific groups and different strategies are assigned to each of the groups to gain targeted responsive behavior. Sexual marketing, for instance, is one of the existing marketing strategies that offer alternatives to targeted gender, especially in the realm of cosmetic products. Nivea body lotion, for example, has long been marketed without taking gender differences into consideration until recently. The product's company found that sale figures of men's body lotion doubled compared with that of the females'. Obviously, it is worthwhile to take gender differences as one of the sale strategies to attract both genders as two different markets. According to Manager Weekly newspaper report on Nivea body lotion, the metro-sexual trend has continued to rise, making the boundaries of gender products more distinct. Male users of such products have grown by more than 100%. This indicates that the market for the product is distinctively male, and equal to that of the females'. Packaging design reflecting the products' content and identity is also a crucial factor which could draw the potential purchaser's attention.

Gender perceptual differences on packaging design are thus the prime concerns of this research in terms of cognitive and affective discernments of merchandize. Taking cosmetic packaging design as a case study, this research attempts to elucidate the determinants of design elements such as color, material, form, and graphical design on gender differences. It aims to use cosmetics as a case study to test the differences in preference on packaging design across genders. And finally, the research attempts to derive a set of different design guidelines for packaging design for both males and females.

1.1 Hypothesis of the research

The research hypothesizes that design elements and principles have a profound impact on gender differences, especially on their purchasing decisions.

2.0 Theoretical background

This research bases its theoretical foundation on the mainstream Gestalt visualization and perception, aesthetic perception, principle of packaging design, gender differences, and cosmetic packaging design principles. The Gestalt visualization and perceptual theory explains an integration of design elements, which collectively forms complete imagery. The theory also clarifies the visualization process of human eyes which gather information in accordance with the enclosure, similarity, proximity, property of space and composition. Not only is the whole of design property perceived simultaneously, the aesthetic aspects of design perception are also recognized. In line with the Gestalt theory, the human nature of

perception, cognition, and recognition processes are also part of the visual perception procedure, subjectively or objectively. In this light, taxonomy of identity such as class, positioning and gender can be explained by means of presumption as such and can be applied to the domain of graphical or advertisement design as well.

Elements in packaging design, on the other hand, comprises dots, line, plane, shape, surface, typography, and color which are analogical to materials for design. The specific process for designing should conform to the principles of design which comprises the doctrines of compositional arrangements such as harmony, proportion, balance, rhythm and repetition, unity emphasis, and contrast. Derived from the aforementioned theoretical foundation, the research thus proceeds to its procedural steps by means of theoretical framework formation.

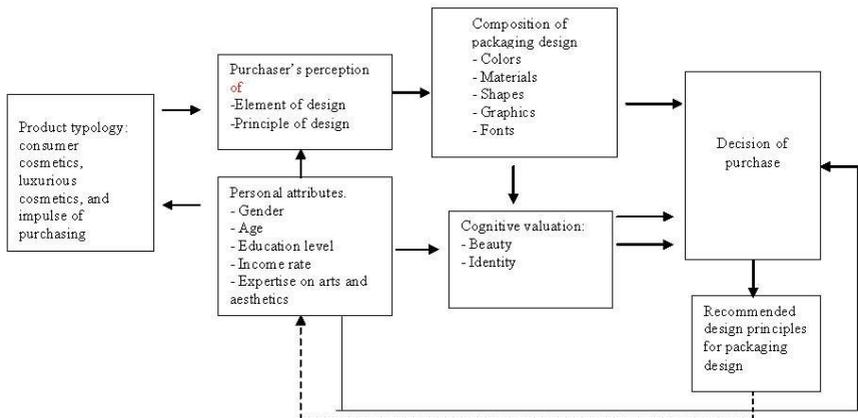


Figure 1: Theoretical framework

For the convenience of investigation, prior to any inquiry stage, cosmetic products were categorized into three lines of merchandizing as follows:

Consumer cosmetic products include

1. Skin cleanser products
 - Body cleanser products such as shower cream.
 - Facial cleanser products such as facial foam
2. Skin care products
 - Body / skin care products such as body / skin lotion
 - Facial skin care products such as moisturizing cream
3. Perfume and other fragrance agents such as deodorant
4. Hair care products such as – Shampoo and conditioner

Luxurious and impulsive cosmetics

1. Fragrance – Perfume, cologne.
2. Hair treatment products – Hair gel.

The taxonomies of cosmetic products enable the research to compare the differentiation of packing identity between genders in terms of design elements and principles of design as shown in tables 1 and 2.

3.0 Research Methodology

In order to derive a design criteria for cosmetic packaging design—from the differentiation of packaging perceptions and preferences across genders—the research intends to conduct a stimuli-response type of inquiry on both the functional and aesthetic/attractiveness aspects of packaging design towards purchasing decision on both genders. Six steps of research design were planned as follows;

- Step 1: Investigation of differentiation in aesthetic preferences across gender by means of a pictorial-stimuli—such as color and formative design—and questionnaire-response approach on a group of undergraduates were conducted in 3 universities amongst both art and non-art majors.
- Step 2: Attempts in utilizing the collected data was taken from step1 to obtain a set of relevant variables for the steps that follow.
- Step 3 With the DELPHI technique, a set of different packaging pictorial stimuli—with different colors, materials, forms, graphical designs, and compositions—which were hypothesized as being able to attract both sexes differently.
- Step 4: Testing of the research tools against the designated target group for perceptual response.
- Step 5: By means of statistical package the collected data was organized and designed.
- Step 6: A set of packaging design criteria was used in an analysis to determine patterns that distinctively attract male and female target groups.

3.1 Sampling frame

Since potential purchasers of cosmetic product are teenagers, 200 undergraduate students, aged 19-23 years old (of equal proportion to gender) were randomized from three fields of study—namely, industrial education, fine arts, and technical linguistic studies as research samples to gain a wide variety of target groups, either possessing art expertise or without, within the designated age range of the sexes.

3.2 Research tools

Two sets of questionnaires and pictorial stimulus were designed to solicit response from the sampled respondents on two aspects, namely, the aesthetic preference and the packaging formative design perceptions. Both sets of questionnaires comprises two sections: the personal attributes—such as gender, age, education level, income and expertise on arts—and the responsive scaling against the pictorial stimuli. The second part of the first questionnaire consists of questions responding to the first set of pictorial stimuli which focus on the general artistic aesthetic perception. The second part of the second set of questionnaires involves questions regarding different forms of packaging designs for both sexes. Both of the pictorial stimuli were also designed in accordance with variables derived from theoretical background and the results from the DELPHI methods.

3.3 Data collection procedure

The first questionnaire was applied in the sampling groups to derive the first set of information through which the second set of questionnaire is based. A simple random sampling technique was applied to select 200 samples from the designated sampling frame. Information was thus collected by using both sets of questionnaires on two different survey schedules at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang.

3.3 Data analysis

Collected information was analyzed by using the SPSS statistical package to obtain associative and correlative information regarding different types of design features and genders to draw final recommendations with regard to design criteria for the specific gender.

4.0 Expectations of the Research

The research attempts to develop a set of design criterion for cosmetics in general and to test the research mythology on design features utilizing a stimuli-response approach to reach a final generalized pattern of research tool to be applied to other types of environment and behavioral research in particular.

Acknowledgement

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