

# Packaging Features and Purchasing Decisions: Strengthening the Local Home-Based Products

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## ABSTRACT

Packaging is an unwitting marketing key that protects the product from damage and provides visual impact, uniqueness, and brand image on the sales shelf. The purpose of this study is to identify the influence of innovative packaging on consumer purchasing decisions. The findings are used to communicate the importance of product packaging to women entrepreneurs involved in the Dapur Mawar project and to formulate new designs for the participants. Dapur Mawar is a startup incubator, a program through which early-stage home-based entrepreneurs are empowered to form, grow, and succeed. A survey instrument in the form of an online questionnaire has been developed. The responses from 187 participants revealed that packaging attributes affect consumer purchase decisions, and features considered at the point of purchase were ranked as the top features. As implications for women entrepreneurs, packaging and product presentation are essential in empowering the food industry in the country or the global market. It adds value to products, which acts as a strategic tool to compete with competitors in the market. The recommendations for future studies are also highlighted in the final section.

**Keywords:** *Packaging features, Purchasing decisions, Home-based products, Women entrepreneurs*

## INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurs must focus on innovative activities to compete and survive in business (Ahmetaj et al., 2023). However, the external environment, such as increased competition and the ability to respond to demand and supply changes, is becoming more critical. Entrepreneurs should have the courage to try something new and dare to face the business risk. Entrepreneurs must try to solve problems using different methods or combining new and old methods. It is also agreed by Felicetti et al. (2023) that there is a potential relationship that shows entrepreneurs need to focus on achieving better innovation to have better business performance. Results from past studies have highlighted that in determining the success or

failure of product packaging innovation, knowledge, brand management, product placement, solid financial sources, and the ability to make changes are the most critical factors (Álvarez-González et al., 2023; Skawińska & Zalewski, 2020; Wang et al., 2023). Therefore, this study aims to identify the influence of product features on consumer purchasing decisions for local home-based products.

Creative and innovative product packaging can help to increase consumer confidence (Chen et al., 2020). By differentiating their products from competitors, businesses can build consumer trust in their brand. Consumers will see the product as the right choice to meet their needs. The uniqueness and added value offered by the product can make consumers loyal to the brand. Consumers tend to buy products repeatedly because they believe that the product provides better quality and benefits than competitors (Keller & Kotler, 2022). It also helps to increase market share. By having differentiated products, businesses can attract and retain new customers (Firouz et al., 2021). This will help businesses to increase their market share and beat competitors in business competition. By differentiating products and attracting consumer attention, businesses can increase their profitability. Consumers tend to be willing to pay higher prices for unique products that provide a better experience (Landwehr et al., 2023).

Good brand packaging uses graphic design to attract the eye and informative labels to share marketing messages (Wang et al., 2023). Visuals on packaging, such as packaging color, printed information, packaging materials, packaging design, brand image, innovation, and practicality, are among the elements that will influence consumer purchasing behavior (Álvarez-González et al., 2023; Kim & Ruedy, 2023). Aesthetic aspects such as color, brightness, and typography affect the consumer toward the product packaging on the sales shelf (Just & Goddard, 2023). Consumers take more time to look carefully at these products and packaging, directly affecting whether they buy the product or choose another brand (Palazzo et al., 2023). Innovative packaging can retain the taste of food, prevent it from becoming rancid or changing its taste, and last longer. Moreover, it improves product properties such as taste, appearance, aroma, and look style. Packaging also directly communicates to the consumer regarding product information, history, and condition (Fernandez et al., 2023). The manufacturers are racing to attract consumers' attention. However, there is one thing that neither they nor we can ignore, which is social responsibility towards the environment—using plastic, stiff board paper, metal, and glass as packaging materials should be replaced with other alternatives (Miao et al., 2024; Testa et al., 2020). For example, they use environmentally friendly materials as the main element of packaging innovation.

Therefore, entrepreneurs need brand-related knowledge to ensure that packaging innovation can attract consumers' attention. Currently, a small percentage of local products have successfully penetrated supermarkets, and this is difficult to achieve due to the weakness of the packaging quality, which does not meet the standards set by the supermarket owner. Packaging problems often include using poor-quality packaging materials, incomplete information, unattractive design and graphic design, and unsuitable packaging methods (Grosu, 2024; Ye et al., 2024). As a result, the guiding agency has provided various initiatives to improve the quality of packaging, such as training, grants, equipment, advisory services, and packaging design development. This ensures that micro-entrepreneurs in Malaysia can penetrate the supermarket market and compete with competitors in the global market. Past studies have identified various factors related to the challenges and obstacles entrepreneurs face in business. Among them are insufficient financial resources, lack of human capital, a shift in competitiveness in business, limited infrastructure, and poor government policy (Abaddi & Al-Shboul, 2024; Naguib, 2024). This challenge is also supported by Kuratko et al. (2023), who state that capital is one of the main obstacles local businesses face in developing sustainable packaging innovation. Businesses in other countries also face this crisis. According to Shahid et al. (2023), the barriers entrepreneurs face are the high economic cost of innovation, the occurrence of market crises or instability, and the lack of knowledge to implement innovation. Moreover, there is still a gap in existing studies that look at innovation issues from various angles, but the fundamental gap surrounding local home-based businesses must be addressed. This article aims to discuss the effect of packaging features on purchasing decisions critically. This article is divided

into four parts: the introduction, the literature, the research methodology used in the study, the findings, and a discussion of the study's results. The conclusions and suggestions for future research are provided at the end of this article. There is still a gap in research on packaging issues involving local entrepreneurs, especially micro-scale, that needs to be studied and seen in more detail from an aspect of the current practice of entrepreneurs in food product packaging innovation.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Purchasing Decision**

The purchase decision is an essential component of consumer behavior that causes them to buy goods or services (Wang et al., 2023). According to Theben et al. (2020), the purchase decision requires buyers to choose from many offers, so they must be firm and knowledgeable. After the procedure is completed, the buyer must decide whether to purchase. Consumers make purchase choices when deciding between satisfying various desires and needs (Álvarez-González et al., 2023; Kim & Ruedy, 2023). The purchase decision is a person's purchase behavior in determining a product choice to achieve satisfaction according to the needs and desires of the consumer (Kim & Ruedy, 2023). According to Grosu (2024), the indicators used in buying goods or services are recognition of needs and desires, looking for information, valuation of purchase alternatives, purchase decisions, and behavior after purchasing. A purchase decision occurs after going through a stage or process. As expressed by Keller (2008), the purchase decision is a process in which the consumer goes through five stages: problem identification, information search, alternative evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase behavior. The first stage of the buyer's decision-making process is when the consumer recognizes a problem or need. At the level of need identification, marketers must examine and understand the types of needs that drive and direct consumers to their products or services. At this stage, consumers are attracted to find more information. Consumers can obtain information from several sources, such as personal sources (e.g., family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues), commercial sources (e.g., advertisements, dealers, distributors, websites, and packaging), public sources (e.g., mass media, organizations, consumer level, and internet searches), and sources of experience (e.g., handling, inspection, and product use). The next stage is for the consumers to use the information to evaluate alternative brands in a group of choices, and the consumer buys the product. The final stage is where consumers take further action after purchasing based on their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Whether the consumer is satisfied is determined by comparing the consumer's expectations and performance. The consumer's reaction to products includes a) customer exit when the consumer is not satisfied and will not buy the product in the future; b) customer voice (complaining) when unsatisfied consumers submit complaints; and c) customer loyalty, when a satisfied consumer decides to buy back or spend again in the future. In determining whether the product produced can provide maximum satisfaction to consumers, several elements need to be paid attention to in the actual product, namely packaging, quality, brand name, and product characteristics (Wang et al., 2023). These elements allow entrepreneurs to differentiate their product offerings from competitors and overcome competitors by highlighting their uniqueness and dominating the market.

### **The Effect of Food Packaging Functionality on Purchasing Decision**

According to Keller (2008), consumers are faced with more than 20,000 product options in a 30-minute shopping session, and based on the options available before the purchase decision is made, product packaging is one of the best marketing tools manufacturers can use to sell products. Keränen et al. (2023) stated that the most critical consumer characteristics of packaging are comfort and durability. It is

also supported by Kim and Ruedy (2023), who found that the quality of food products with attractive packaging gives a more positive perception to consumers compared to when it is packaged in conventional packaging. This ensures that the product produced is different from competitor products and remains relevant to the market (Just & Goddard, 2023). Several aspects and roles need to be considered in determining whether the packaging method differs from that of competitors. Among these include using visuals such as design, color, and graphics that can promote the product and give an excellent impression to the consumer (Palazzo et al., 2023). Food packaging is a packaging method for food. These packages provide protection and resistance against special physical, chemical, or biological requirements. It may require a nutrition facts label and other information about the food offered for sale. Packaging and package labeling have several objectives, namely: 1) physical protection, 2) obstacle protection, 3) containment or agglomeration, 4) transmission of information, 5) marketing, 6) safety, 7) convenience, and 8) portion control (Landwehr et al., 2023). The entrepreneurs must understand the food requirements for preservation, choose the proper packaging, use advanced packaging systems, use modern technology at every level, and act according to scientific requirements. If exports are to be made, it is essential to act according to the legislation of these countries regarding packaging, carry out packaging testing, and ensure brand awareness in packaging design. The chemical composition and physical and chemical properties of different foods differ from each other. Therefore, different foods have different preservative requirements for packaging. Packaging requirements may vary according to the structural characteristics of each food, and thus, the food packaging criteria change (Firouz et al., 2021).

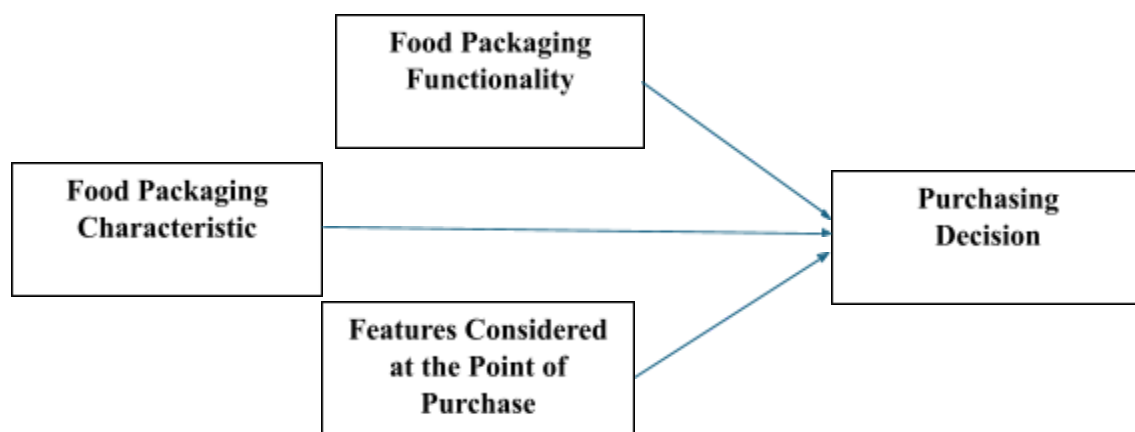
### **The Effect of Food Packaging Characteristics on Purchasing Decision**

A product can be offered to the market to get attention, purchase, use, consume, and fulfill a desire or need. A product can be a physical item, service, experience, event, person, place, property, organization, information, and idea (Keller & Kotler, 2022). According to Landwehr et al. (2023) and Testa et al. (2020), the following eight dimensions are referred to to determine the dimensions of product quality. These include: 1) performance (i.e., related to the functional aspects of an item), 2) features (i.e., performance aspects that are useful for adding essential functions, related to product choices and development), 3) reliability (i.e., matters relating to the probability or possibility of an item successfully carrying out its function), 4) conformance (i.e., the level of conformity to specifications that have been previously determined based on customer wishes), 5) durability (i.e., a reflection of economic life in the form of a measure of the durability or useful life of goods), 6) serviceability (i.e., characteristics related to speed, competence, convenience, and accuracy in providing services for repairing goods), 7) aesthetics (i.e., a subjective characteristic regarding aesthetic values which is related to personal considerations and a reflection of individual preferences), and 8) perceived quality. Quality is a marketer's positioning tool, directly impacting product performance. Quality can be narrowly defined as "free from defects." Most companies define quality in the context of customer satisfaction. Product quality is the product's ability to perform its function, which includes product durability, reliability, precision, ease of operation, and repair. Quality consistently reflects the level of targeted performance. Poorly designed packaging can turn off customers and result in lost sales, whereas innovative packaging can help businesses stand out from the competition and increase sales (Branca et al., 2023). In addition, the appearance of packaging design can differentiate between competing products and contribute to creating value for a product (Rambabu & Porika, 2020). For example, children react more positively and have more fun choosing products with more visually appealing packaging than regular packaging (Landwehr et al., 2023).

### **The Effect of Features Considered at the Point of Purchase on Purchasing Decision**

Complete product information is also one of the factors that users consider when making a purchase (Álvarez-González et al., 2023; Kim & Ruedy, 2023). More precise information will attract the user's

interest in choosing the goods or services they want. Advertising sources from social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube help entrepreneurs market the goods they sell. Firat (2019) examines the value of advertising on YouTube on purchase intention. Results show that informative advertising can increase the value of ads on YouTube and attract users to make purchases. According to Kim and Ruedy (2023), information must constantly be updated to be easy to understand, accurate, complete, engaging, and relevant so the customer can decide to make online purchases. Therefore, product manufacturers, especially micro-entrepreneurs, must focus on packaging innovation to improve product marketing and attract purchasing power. Products whose packaging has been labeled as halal or with nutritional facts will emotionally influence the consumer to ensure that the product is safe and free from risk, which then affects the purchase decision process (Macall et al., 2021). The research results of Wang et al. (2023) show that the label significantly affects the brand image of the product. In addition, to comply with the rules and legislation set by the authorities, the entrepreneurs need to take advantage of the packaging to introduce the business identity through a logo or brand and inform about current promotions or offers (Fernandez et al., 2023). Moreover, the trend of sustainable food packaging requires less use of natural resources, which allows businesses to continue to produce food product packaging at a lower cost and improve its overall sustainability in the long term (Testa et al., 2020). A PDF QR Code can be printed along with food packaging, which allows many businesses to save their expenses from printing a thousand pages, which is expensive and harmful to the environment. PDF QR Codes are cost-effective, more environmentally friendly, and, at the same time, innovative. Figure 1 portrays the study's conceptual model.



**Figure 1. The conceptual model**

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study design is a quantitative survey approach. The sampling method used is a convenient sampling technique. The study population consists of consumers who live in the states of Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. The required number of samples is calculated based on Green's (1991) formula for regression analysis. According to Green (1991), the sample size of the research that has a multiple regression model is determined by the following formula:  $N \geq 50 + 8m$  ( $m$  is a number of independent variables). Thus, the minimum sample required is 74. The total number of study samples obtained is 187, sufficient for the regression analysis. This study instrument consists of a modified questionnaire adapted from Bou-Mitri et al. (2021) and Shukla et al. (2022). The questionnaire is divided into three parts: the demographic part, the measurement of product features, and the purchasing decision. Variable measurement uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The instrument items and Cronbach's

Alpha reliability value are shown in Table 1. Hair et al. (2010) state that Cronbach's Alpha values exceeding 0.70 are categorized as reliable items.

**Table 1. Measurement of Variables**

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Food packaging functionality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The food packaging should be able to protect the food</li> <li>● The food packaging should be able to communicate information about the product correctly</li> <li>● The food packaging should be easy to handle (carry/open/store ...)</li> </ul>	0.890
Food packaging characteristic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I prefer safe food packaging (stable/ not lead to migration of material into the food)</li> <li>● I prefer recyclable food packaging.</li> <li>● I prefer easy-to-handle food packaging (carry, open, re-seal, pour, grip fraction, stack, store at home, empty)</li> </ul>	0.864
Features considered at the point of purchase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I will look/check on the production/expiry date</li> <li>● I will look/check on the price</li> <li>● I will look/check on the brand</li> <li>● I will look/check on nutritional facts</li> <li>● I will look/check the list of ingredients</li> <li>● I will look/check on health claims or halal label</li> </ul>	0.879
Purchasing decision	What is the probability that you will purchase the product if it fulfills the packaging features? ... Possible/Impossible	0.856

In statistical analysis, measures such as skewness and kurtosis are crucial to understanding data distribution. According to Kline (2011), the value of skewness and kurtosis should fall between the range  $\pm 3.0$  and  $\pm 10$ , respectively, to suggest normal distribution. Pearson's correlation is then used to determine if there is a relationship between the independent and dependent variables. If the correlation figure is positive, the relationship is unidirectional. Finally, to identify the most significant predictor, the study employed a linear regression technique to predict the relationship between two or more variables.

## FINDINGS

Table 2 shows the frequencies and the percentage of respondents. This study's total number of participants was 187, whereby 102 (54.5%) were female, and 85 (45.5%) were male. The frequency and percentage of age show that the highest number of respondents in this study were aged 25-29, with 59 (31.6%). An examination of the highest level of education showed that most respondents received a bachelor's degree qualification (n=119, 63.6%). Next, in terms of living area, most participants live in Selangor (n=123, 65.8%).

**Table 2. Profile of the Respondents**

Profile		Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	85	45.5
	Female	102	54.5
Age	18-24	34	18.2
	25-29	59	31.6

	30-34	54	28.9
	35-40	40	21.4
	Above 40	0	0
Highest educational level	Secondary School	0	0
	Certificate	4	2.1
	Diploma	54	28.9
	Bachelor's Degree	119	63.6
	Master's degree/PhD	10	5.3
	Others	0	0
Living Area	Selangor	123	65.8
	Kuala Lumpur	64	34.2

Table 1 shows the normality test of the data distribution, which was measured using the criteria of skewness and kurtosis. The analysis found that the skewness and kurtosis values were normally distributed (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Normality & Reliability Results**

Variable	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Independent Variable:				
Food packaging functionality	4.671	0.781	-0.216	0.278
Food packaging characteristic	4.450	0.519	-0.431	0.345
Features considered at the point of purchase	4.621	0.447	-0.654	0.562
Dependent Variable:				
Purchasing decision	4.436	1.654	-0.390	-1.180

Based on Table 4, correlation analysis discovered that there is a significant relationship between food packaging functionality ( $r = 0.311$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), food packaging characteristic ( $r = 0.509$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), and features considered at the point of purchase ( $r = 0.467$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) towards a purchasing decision.

**Table 4. Pearson Correlation Results**

		Purchasing decision
Food packaging functionality	Pearson Correlation	0.311*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	187
Food packaging characteristic	Pearson Correlation	0.509**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	187
Features considered at the point of purchase	Pearson Correlation	0.467**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	187

**Table 5. Regression Results**

Variable	Beta ( $\beta$ )	Sig. ( $p$ )	Tolerance	VIF
Food packaging functionality	0.340	0.000	0.848	1.176
Food packaging characteristic	0.269	0.000	0.944	1.062
Features considered at the point of purchase	0.514	0.000	0.867	1.169
R <sup>2</sup>	0.543			
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.589			
F Change	37.977			
Sig	0.000			

Table 5 shows that the tolerance value of the three independent variables was above 0.10, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below 10, so it concluded that a regression model is independent of multicollinearity. Then, the R Square value obtained is 0.543, showing that the ability of food packaging functionality, food packaging characteristics, and features considered at the point of purchase in explaining the variation of change in the purchase decision is 54.3%, and other factors explain the remaining 45.7%. The ANOVA generated in this test also shows a significant probability value ( $p=0.000$ ). Between food packaging functionality, food packaging characteristics, and features considered at the point of purchase, factors that have a dominant influence on purchase decision are features considered at the point of purchase motivation because it has the most considerable Beta value, namely 0.514, while the Beta value of food packaging functionality and food packaging characteristic are 0.340 and 0.269, respectively.

## DISCUSSION

This article aims to identify the influence of packaging features on consumer purchasing decisions. The responses from 187 participants revealed that packaging features affect consumer purchase decisions, and features considered at the point of purchase were ranked as the top features. Businesses that can produce innovative products have the potential to win customer trust, gain competitive advantage, and maintain relevance in a constantly changing market. Therefore, micro-entrepreneurs need to focus on packaging innovation from an aspect of the use of more suitable and quality packaging materials, improvement of methods or techniques of packaging, and the use of environmentally friendly packaging materials in addition to improvements in information delivery, shape, color, and graphic design. Past studies have identified knowledge, attitude, awareness, finance, institutional network, and technology have been successfully identified among the factors that encourage entrepreneurs to conduct packaging innovation (Álvarez-González et al., 2023; Kim & Ruedy, 2023; Wang et al., 2023). The government must provide several types of assistance such as training, technologies, grant assistance, mentorship, and facilities to ensure that entrepreneurs continue innovating in packaging. Therefore, this institutional network is seen as one of the critical factors in packaging. Micro-entrepreneurs' collaboration with the industry and private institutions could help improve packaging innovation (Skawińska & Zalewski, 2020). Institutional networks are seen to be able to develop the attitude, skills, and knowledge of entrepreneurs towards innovative packaging (Álvarez-González et al., 2023). Good relationships between entrepreneurs and research institutions such as universities and community colleges also provide benefits in technology and knowledge sharing. Past researchers have emphasized the role of research and development in product innovation (Branca et al., 2023). Research and development can solve general problems and produce problem-solving options to advance or achieve business goals. For example, the university can formulate experimental activities to evaluate appropriate product packaging. Based on the study's output, Dapur Mawar food packaging has been formulated accordingly (see Figure 2). Dapur Mawar is a business



incubator program that provides training in the form of theory and practical hands-on. Under the program, 23 selected local home-based entrepreneurs are guided with various training modules that meet the needs of the industry and the current market.



Figure 2. Sample of food packaging for Dapur Mawar entrepreneurs

## CONCLUSION

The findings revealed that packaging attributes affect consumer purchase decisions, and features considered at the point of purchase were ranked as the top features. Thus, innovation in products and services is an effort to create added value for customers. This involves the development of new ideas, technologies, or more efficient approaches to meet customer needs. Innovation helps them to differentiate businesses from competitors. It also can reduce production costs and improve profitability. Overall, this article successfully identifies the reason for micro-entrepreneurs to carry out packaging innovation. Although this study's empirical results support the current model, there are several limitations to the current study. First, the small sample size and convenience sampling methods limit the generalization of results. It warrants future research with a larger sample. Second, a cross-sectional research design could prevent us from inferring the causality effect. As such, the longitudinal research design could help to confirm the causal relationships between these variables. Third, the current study only examines a limited set of variables, and many factors could affect consumer purchasing decisions. Therefore, a future study might gain new insights by exploring the effects of other factors.

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