

# Aesthetic Packaging and Purchase Intention

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## ABSTRACT

This research intends to investigate the elements of the aesthetic packaging of skincare products. The research proposed three independent variables namely colour, shape and visual weight, while purchase intention is adopted as a dependent variable. The respondents of this research are millennials who are the users of skincare and also have a purchasing power to choose the skincare products that are appealing to their eyes. The finding expects all the proposed hypotheses are supported and conclusion and recommendation are discussed at the end of the section.

**Keywords:** *Aesthetic packaging, Skincare, Colour, Shape, Visual weight, Purchase Intention*

## INTRODUCTION

The term 'aesthetic' was borrowed from the aesthetic fields. The aesthetic field was first found in the 18th century by Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten. He is referred to as the founder and scholar in aesthetic fields defined aesthetics as theory of beauty and theory of sensitive knowledge (Wessell, 1972). In the

20th century, the marketing scholars started to take interest in the aesthetic field and many marketing scholars started to explore the aesthetics field (Charters, 2006; Veryzer, 1995; Holbrook, 1980).

Aesthetics is defined as the art of creating reactions without words and communicating by way of sense (Newkirk & Crainer, 2003). Consumer appraise product's aesthetic through product designs include design proprietaries such as colour, shape, design, patterns, trademarks (Blijlevens et al., 2012). An aesthetic design may give response to the affective, cognitive and sensory of the receiver or a buyer (Wagner, 1999). This also aligns with the prior research by Bloch (1995) where an aesthetic product packing could generate psychological reactions which include cognitive and emotional contents. These psychological reactions also cause behavioural responses which indirectly lead to behavioural responses. Therefore, marketers use product aesthetics as a tool for competitive differentiation (Cox & Cox, 2002).

Today, the concept of aesthetic is not limited to the products only, marketers adopted the similar concepts to a packaging and it is called aesthetic packaging. Aesthetic packaging refers to the colour, size, shape, graphic images and the place of images, information available on packaging, graphic font, typeface and letters on the packaging, material of packaging and the technology of packaging which mostly have impact on the emotional aspect of products and making decision on product selection.

Aesthetic packaging may have contributed to the success of many brands and companies. Strategically, aesthetic packaging helps for pricing which helps to gain higher profits by gaining trust from the customer (Kristensen et al, 2012). Therefore, this research intends to investigate elements of aesthetic packaging in skincare products which could enhance the intention to purchase skincare products. Precisely, the research will explore the element of the aesthetic packaging which may induce the intention to purchase.

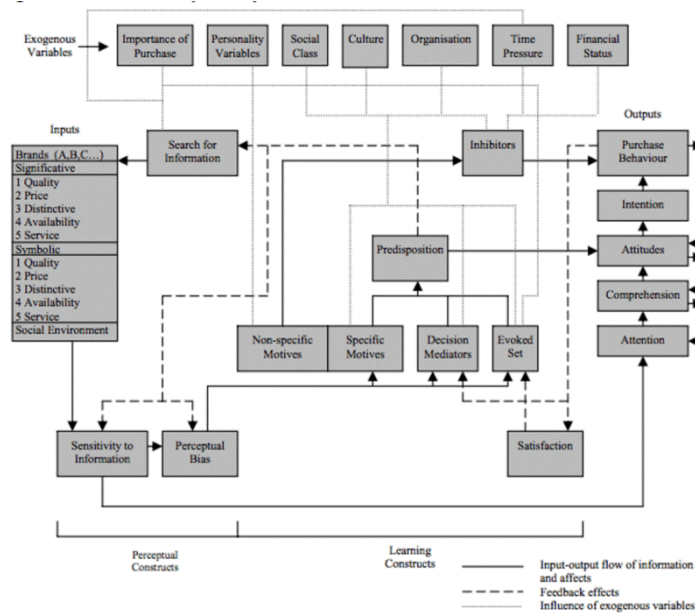
## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Packaging plays a key role in marketing of consumable products including aesthetic products. Through packaging, the consumer perceives the nature of the product through communication elements of the packaging. Thus, it is important for the designers or business development department to identify the current trends of the design that could appeal to their target market. To identify the current trends in the market is more challenging, as it requires dealing with the issue and problem in designing (i.e copyright, trademark and patent), market analysis and processes are necessary. Obviously, this target of designing the aesthetic packaging is to convince a potential customer to become interested in and buy the product (Creusen & Schoormans, 2005). The research adopted four variables namely colour, shape, patterns and visual weight of the aesthetic products to be tested with purchase intention. The next section discusses the details of the variable and the relationship with purchase intention.

The research is supported with a Theory of Buyer Behavior by Howard and Sheth (1969). The theory is adopted to explain the empirical phenomenon regarding the buying behaviour of individuals over a period of time. The theory attempts to explain the choice behaviour of the buyer; where the choice is made systematically, not random. Most importantly, buying behaviour is rational, in the sense that it is within the buyer's 'bounded rationality' (March & Simon, 1958).

The theory identifies the elements of the decision process, observes the changes, and shows how a combination of decision elements affects search processes and the incorporation of information from the buyer's commercial and social environment. The elements of the buyer choice decision are 1) a set of motives 2) alternatives courses of action 3) decision mediators – by which the motives are matched with the alternatives. Motives are seen as specific to a product class and reflect the underlying needs of the

buyer and the alternatives are the various choices that have the potential of satisfying the buyer's motives. Figure 1 below illustrate the elements of the theory.



**Figure 1. Theory of buyer behaviour**  
 (Source: Howard and Sheth, 1969)

## Purchase Intention

Purchase intentions are referred to as a next planned decision to purchase or not to purchase a specific product in future (Yeo et al., 2015). Liat and Wuan (2014) states that, when an individual has the arrangement to purchase a specific item or service over a period of time, the purchase intention will arise. The intention to buy will be influenced by the conduct, the recognition of the product and the disposition (Keller, 2009).

The purchase intention of consumers has become an interesting area of study by marketing experts (Hosein, 2012) to examine shopper recognitions and procedures as well as to investigate customers' purchase intention (Javed et al., 2016). Correspondingly, Yeo et al. (2015) mentioned that customers' purchase intention is an important key factor for a company to gain a competitive edge in the marketplace. Furthermore, Chi (2013) found that consumers' purchase intention becomes a vital key to anticipate the buying behaviour that can be found through the advantages and value of procurement of a specific product or service. Past research stated that purchase intention is utilised to become the best apparatus when marketers attempt to investigate the buying process of consumers.

## Colour

Colour is the most important element of packaging where different types of colour will affect the consumers to have a different view or opinion towards the packaging (Keller, 2009). Keller (2009) also stated that the colour of the packaging is an imperative component that will help the consumer to differentiate from other products with similar characteristics that are offered by competitors. Some of the researchers stated that the colour of packaging will influence the purchase intention of consumers when

consumers relate to the new styles of packaging for a new product that has a similar colour with the original product bundle (Ibojo & Olawepo, 2015).

Previous studies by Javed and Javed (2015) stated that making the right choice of colour for the packaging will have the power to attract the consumer's attention. However, the wrong choice of colour will result in a loss of interest by consumers toward the product. The colours that are used by the packaging all have their significance in appealing and stressing different moods (Ali et al., 2015). The study also determines that packaging colour of product induces the purchase intention of the customer, packaging colour can be remembered and packaging colour does bring competitive advantages to company with this convincing literature, the first hypothesis is developed as:

*H1: There is a significant positive relationship between colour and purchase intention.*

## **Shape**

The packaging is defined as how big the item is and the appearance outline of the item (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). According to Ali et al., (2015) a study on packaging found that the shape of packaging will influence the purchase intention of consumers who prefer the design of packaging that is convenient. Consumers will be attracted with the outward appearance of packaging which is large but if the item inside the packaging is small or low in quantity, the customer will not have a repurchase intention towards the particular product again (Ali et al., 2015). Consumers feel the packaging of products in large sizes give them better value in contrast with product packaging that comes in small sizes (Ali et al., 2015). When the consumers cannot define the quality of the product by the appearance of the packaging, the packaging size will have a very strong impact towards the customers' purchase intention (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). According to research done by Agariya et. al. (2012), consumers will have an association with a particular product by seeing the outline shape of the packaging. With this convincing literature, the fourth hypothesis is developed as:

*H2: There is a positive relationship between shape and purchase intention.*

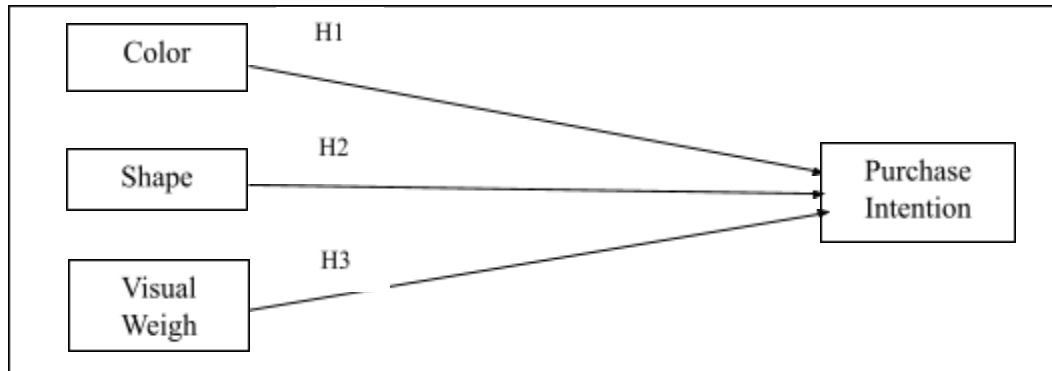
## **Visual Weight**

Past research has shown that the weight of the object can transmit different meanings such as quality and expense (Lindstrom, 2006). For instance, perfume bottles, considered a luxury item, are mostly made of glass because the weight provides the customer with a sense of luxury that other materials, such as plastic, cannot provide (Caldwell & Flammia, 1991). Similarly, the research by Van Rompay et. al, (2014) also shows that excessively lightweight mobile phones might harm value perceptions and, consequently, lower price expectations.

Yang (2020) further states that the weight of an object can transmit different meanings for consumers Interestingly, a visually heavier product was expected to be more expensive. These findings highlighted that visual heaviness can be communicated through skincare packaging with the help of colour and health claim design to positively influence consumer intention. Previous research has shown that the weight of the object can transmit different meanings such as quality, and expense (Lindstrom, 2005; Van Rompay & Ludden, 2015). Moreover, the food of a heavier container was found to be more satiating than that in a lighter container, indicating that consumers' product experience can be influenced by the heaviness of the container or package (Piqueras-Fiszman & Spence, 2012). From the discussion above, the third hypothesis is formulated as below:

*H3: There is a positive relationship between visual weight and purchase intention.*

From the elaboration discussed in the above section, the study proposed a conceptual framework of the study as shown in Figure 2 below.



**Figure 2. Conceptual framework**

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research is still at the infancy steps. More reviews from the past research were adopted. The research aims to call for the millennials to participate with the research. The development of the scale items and data analysis is still in progress. The next section will provide the conclusion and recommendation for the research.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the impact of packaging on the customer purchase intention. This research will be very valuable for designers who prepare packaging for many industries. To attract the customer purchase intention with product packaging, the packaging industry must know about what the customers' needs and wants are to fulfil their requirements. This research will assist the packaging industry to determine the factors of packaging that can enhance the esthetic elements and could increase the customers' purchase intention.

In future, a bibliometric analysis will be referred to enhance the representability of the proposed conceptual framework above. A bibliometric analysis of aesthetic packaging of the cosmetic products is still in a progress of the development and a collaboration with different expertise is required to produce the manuscripts. A collaboration from art and design experts are required to provide more insightful ideas of the matters.

Underpinned by a Theory of Buyer Behavior (Howard & Sheth, 1969) a moderator and mediator will be introduced to a framework which may mimic the real situation of purchasing skincare products with an aesthetic packaging in the market. A consistent finding of the constructs will be adopted as a mediator of the framework. While, the inconsistent findings would be meaningful to be employed as a moderator of the framework, where this construct is expected to strengthen or weaken the relationship among the constructs within the framework.

Last but not least, the research would be more meaningful if by performing an aesthetic packaging comparison of preferences of various cultures among the six continents. This would be useful for the marketer to understand the market better which aligns with the contemporary marketing and modern consumer behaviour demand.

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