

## The Influence of Product Packaging on Consumers' Perception

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### Abstract

The article examines the influence of product packaging on consumers' perception in a main market of Ikeja business district area of Lagos State Nigeria. The main thrust of the study is to know dimensional impact of packaging as determinant factor in the consumer behavior. The research adopted descriptive survey design and purposive sampling technique in selecting the respondents. The sample size employed was one hundred customers who patronized different products in the market as respondents. The result of the study indicated that ten variables of packaging also known as attributes or features or characteristics are quite significantly influenced consumers perception during the purchase. It was concluded that organizations producing products should increase their packaging creativities in line with product core values and strategy in order to enhance consumers' patronage and boost their sales and profit performance.

*Keywords: Influence, Product, Packaging, Consumers Perception, Behavior.*

### Background to the Study

The need for the development of packaging can be traced to the fact that production and consumption cannot always take place at the same place and time. This necessitates that produced goods or products and services must be properly packaged, transported and distributed to places of sales and consumption. In this regard, packaging becomes a connecting link between production and consumption. The importance of the link between production and consumption is growing globally, especially in the urbanized societies where it was noticed that from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, packaging not only protect the products,

but also serves as a tool for exhibition. Also, the aestheticism is of great importance to the marketers, since it attracts interest and stimulates purchase decisions of the customers [Rettie and Brewer, 2000].

In this regard, packaging is an important aspect of marketing communication for everyday goods or services, especially in area such as the shapes, size, colour, labels and general appearance. However, package's role is not only to give appearance to the product but also, being informative, it has advertising effect, which is crucial in the present market situation. It is important that the balance is maintained between the product's appearance and its performance. In essence, packaging is one of the most vital promotional tools as it plays a significant role in the presentation, differentiation promotion as well as protection of goods or services. It adds value to product offers for sale in most stores or markets for the final consumers to be attracted to.

The term package or packaging has both the extrinsic and intrinsic products' features which are seen to have influence on the consumer behaviour in the terms of buyer's perception and purchase behaviour. Never the less, packaging is more of promotional function which is responsible for strong product identification, recognition and differentiation. It educates, attracts, arrests and compels purchases of consumers. More importantly, companies' product packaging cannot be undermined as it stands as an integral reinforcement and differentiation. According to Odowoima [2003] it is the responsibility and duty of companies to build names that will eventually become known with the generic product. Need for packages do not come from the organizations themselves, but from the stakeholders such as distributors, customer, and consumers. Therefore, package may have added informational and influential values to consumer behaviour without which products could not have identified in shops [Christopher 2003].

It is against this background that this paper will make an attempt to investigate consumers perception of product packaging given the wide diversity for the uses and contribution of products' packaging, it must be noted that consumers behaviour is just as complex and multifaceted that a product alone does not presuppose the very essence of consumers buy certain products. It is equally important to ascertain whether consumers consider packaging in their choice of products, as well as what impression product packaging gives? Therefore, our main objective is set to investigate influence of product packaging on the consumers' perception, since the differences in perception are likely to result in different choices for what consumers buy and use. Furthermore, need to establish as well as understand consumers' perceptions for the likely price to be offered for a well-packaged product and non- well packaged product, with similar product quality are examined at point of purchase.

## Literature Review

### Concept of Packaging

Package may refer to packaging and labeling-that is the science, art, and technology of enclosing or protecting product for the final consumers' satisfaction and utilization. Packaging can be a bundle of activity or something usually of small, medium or big size that is packed and wrapped or boxed. Packaging is the technology of enclosing or protecting

products for distribution, storage, sales, and use. Kottler and Keller [2006] define packaging as all activities of designing and producing the container for a product. They identified three levels of material as packages- [i] Primary packages [ii] secondary package and [iii] shipping package, with emphasis that well designed packages can create convenience and promotional value. Adesina [2003] established that making decision about actual products, marketers must make cognizance of factors associated with packaging, since packaging aids the sales promotion activities of manufacturers and constitute the basis for successful advertising and personal selling. In this regard, consumers often have goodwill or positive feelings associated with a brand or a company that termed equity. More so, favourable equity has been shown to result in strong brand loyalty as well as a premium image for the target brand or company. Recent researches have shown that the product packages have equity associated with “packaging influence” that goes beyond product perception. In other words, consumers buy products not only because they perform core function well or they are produced by a well-known company, but also based on the product disposition. Kottler and Keller [2006] stated that packaging must be a styling weapon, especially in food products, cosmetic, toiletries, and small consumer appliances. Rundh [2005] mentioned that packaging is the first point of contact with the brand for a consumer product, more so packaging is the buyer's first encounter with the product and is capable of turning the buyer on or off [Kottler and Keller, 2006]. The role of packaging has involved from the traditional function of protecting the products through enhancing distribution channel against dirt, damage, theft, mishandling and deterioration, and most common types of packaging materials are glass, metals, plastics, paper, nylon board, llimincon Foil, [Silayoi & Specce, 2004]. Therefore, packaging is crucial being the first thing that the public see before making the final decision to buy.

#### Concept of Perception

Schiffman and Kanuk [2004] defined perception as the process by which an individual selects, organizes and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. It means perception can be described as “how we see the world around us”. In biological realm, perception refers to the senses that any human being or living thing uses to gather information about its environment. Wade and Tavris [1989] highlighted that the senses correspond to the human being sense organs, which have been categorized as vision (eyes), heerog [ears], tasting [tongues], touching [skin] and smelling [noses].

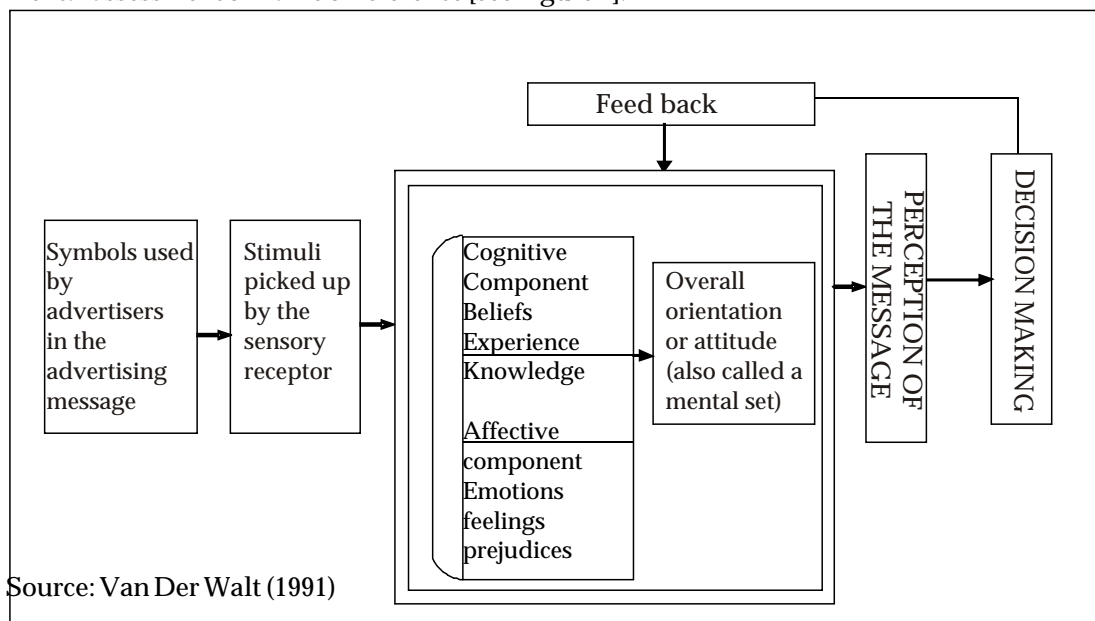
In consumer behaviour, however, perception refers to much more than just the biological uses of sensory organs. It includes the way stimuli are coordinated through interactions and integrations by the consumer. Walters and Bergiel [1989] provides clarity on the entire process by which the individual becomes aware of the environment and interprets it, so that it will fit into his or her frame of reference. Furthermore, they elaborated on the definition by stating that every perception involves a person who interprets through the senses something, situation, event, phenomenon or relation which may be designated as the perception.

By this implication, perception occurs when the sensory receptors receive stimuli through the brain, code, categories the information and assign certain meanings to the information, depending on the person's frame of reference. A person's frame of reference consists of all previous and current experiences, beliefs, feeling and other psychological actions or reactions of known/unknown origin, particularly, under consideration of positive or negative impacts. It is important to establish that the perception has long been recognized as the most significant to effective communication, especially as marketing information hinges on the consumer's perception of the communication content [Vander, 1991].

Although, a problem with perception is that two individuals may be subjected to the same stimuli under apparently the same conditions, but how they recognize, select, organize and interpret stimuli may be quite different because individual process is based on each person's own needs, values expectations not on the basic of objective reality [Schiffman and Kanuk, 1991]. The perception process is complicated due to the possibility that individuals may be stimulated below their level of conscious awareness known as subliminal perception that is they can perceive stimuli without being consciously aware of the stimuli in question. It is important that marketers understand the whole notion of perception and its related concepts so that they can always determine what influences consumers to buy what they buy [Schiffman and Kanuk, 1991].

#### Operation of the Frame of Reference

The frame of reference acts as a filter such as a decoder and encoder and according to Vander [1991], how this filter works remain a misery which could possibly never be solved. The frame of reference entails the evaluation of every stimulus to which a person is exposed to, in the light of previously held emotions, behavioural intentions, and beliefs. These evaluations determine an overall orientation or attitude towards a certain object, often referred to as a mental assessment of frame of reference [see Figure 1].



Source: Van Der Walt (1991)

### Tricomponent Attitude Model

The tricomponent attitude model implies that attitudes consist of three major components: a cognitive component, an effective component and a conative's component, as the three main components through which all information must flow in the frame of reference (Vander, 1991; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2004)

### Cognitive Component

This is first part of the tricomponent attitude model which consists of a person's cognitions, that is the knowledge and perceptions that are acquired by a combination of direct experience with the attitude object and related information from various sources.

### Affective Component

This affective component involves emotions; feelings which have primary evaluation in nature that is they capture an individual's direct or global assessment of the attitude object (i.e. the extent to which the individual rates the attitude object as "favourable or unfavourable" "good or bad")

### Cognitive Component

This is final component of the tricomponent attitude model which is concerned with the likely hood or tendency that an individual will undertake a specific action or behave in a particular way with regard to the attitude object. The cognitive component may include the actual behaviour itself. Therefore, if a message is perceived, it means that the stimuli have passed through all three components of the individual frame of reference in such a way that the person is ultimately able to take a decision. Although, the fact that stimuli are passing through a person's frame of reference does not mean that the message can be received correctly or that the decision that flows from it can be positive.

It is important to note that the meaning of the market stimulus depends on the context in which it is perceived [Walters and Bergiel, 1989], as all senses have some limits to responsiveness to stimulation. These limits are referred to as thresholds. Wilkie [1990] states that a threshold is simply a point at which an effect begins to occur. Wade & Tavriss [1987] noted variations on discussion of thresholds that the relationship between physical properties of stimuli and the human psychological experience are quite varied. The ability of consumers to detect variations in stimuli is determined by their threshold levels [Assael, 1992].

### The Significance of Packaging Influence in Marketing of Consumer Goods

The importance of packaging cannot be underestimated, because marketers often measure consumer brand perception and ignore the package. However, we know from the way consumers react to unbranded products, that packaging plays a huge role in reinforcing consumed perceptions. Packaging helps to drive the way consumers become aware of a product (Rice and Hofmeyr, 2000).

### The Influence of packaging on Customers' perception

The term “sensation transference” was pointed out by Louis Cheskin in the 1930s and as the first marketer to notice that peoples' perception of a product have directly related to the aesthetic elements of its packaging design. Cheskin (1930) established that it is how people feel about the package that is often transferred to how they feel about the product itself. He justified this with the case of imperial Margarine (previously called Jelke's Good Luck Margarine) Cheskin's investigation revealed that rather than using direct questioning in an artificial environment e.g. (Focus Group Discussion), product could be put in the environment where it would actually be used and gauged consumer perceptions indirectly. Also, asking customers directly how they feel about a product or package is going to result in just their perceptions about the package, whereas, what is generally more relevant is how the package makes people feel about the product itself. Therefore, effect created as a result of visual factors truly does modify subsequent product perception, then packaging is not just a form of protection or promotion but also serves as a means of improving the overall product experience.

### The Roles of Packaging as Information and Communication Marketing Tool

Marketing environment has become increasingly complex and competitive, thereby making, and promotional strategy more desirable. Although, promotion strategy can be highly effective means of communication for those consumers who are exposed to it and reaching the entire target market for most products may not be a feasible prospect. More importantly that media fragmentation is becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to reach real and potential customers, forcing marketers to adopt more innovation means of reaching their target market [Hill and Tilley, 2002].

Meanwhile, introduction of a product's packaging is something which all buyers experience and which has strong potential to engage the majority of the target market. In this respect, it can be an extremely powerful and unique tool in the modern marketing environment. Apart from the benefit of reach, some marketers believe that packaging is actually influential than promotional tools in enticing consumers, particularly, as it has a more direct impact on how consumers perceive and experience the product. It has been pointed out that pack designs are more likely to influence the consumer perception of the brand than advertising [Hofmeyr and Rice, 2000]. Rudh [2005] stated that for product with low advertising support, packaging takes on and even more significant role as the key vehicles for communicating the brand positioning. Never the less, all necessary information must be clearly visible or implied through the design and direct communication. More so that direct communication describes the producer's nature, its benefit and how to use it.

It is generally observed that consumers on shopping take few seconds looking at label on products. Therefore, it is recommended that only simple and capturing key points of communication are placed on a front label. Adding more messages is likely to clutter the label which often detracts from appealed and perceived quality and make it more difficult for people to notice or absorb the key information, communication from the label [2000] [young 2003]. Grossman and Wisenblit [1999], revealed that information elements tend to be less important than visual in low involvement products decisions, and graphic the product's packaging [Rettie and Brewer, 2000].

### The Relevance of Packaging as a Marketing Tool

It is interesting and revealing that packaging multiple role is what makes it a truly unique marketing tool unlike other forms of communication, which tend to be fleeting, packaging plays a crucial role of not only at point of sale, but also after the actual purchase of the product. The packaging has to provide consumers with the right cues and clues both at the point of purchase and during usage. In this respect, packaging creates customer attention and communicates the benefits of the product, as well as producing the tools the customer needs in order to experience the benefits when using the product [Lofgren, 2005].

### Function of Packaging

Packaging stimulates sales particularly at point of purchase. A recent point of purchase advertising institute [POPA] survey in United Kingdom; found that a number of purchase decisions are made in store at the point of purchase. Brand purchases are being made or broken in the five seconds at the point of purchase [Jugger, 1999]. Therefore, packaging serves a number of key functions namely; [i] cutting through clutter- this is process of creating attention, to notice or see the product. [ii]communicating marketing information[iii] Stimulating or creating brand impressions [iv] providing various brand cues: value, quality, safety.[v] Creating a powerful shelf presence, enhances the brand stand out from the crowd and product actually noticed and it does not pay to be subtle [Young, 2003].

In another dimension, most promotional tools can be relatively brief in exposure; packaging continues to build brand values during the extended usage of the product and can drive brand equity and loyalty [Rudith, 2005]. Therefore, after purchase, packaging plays a functional and marketing role extensively. Also, packaging influences perceived price of consumer goods as packaging in different economic size can extend the horizon of product into new target markets or help to overcome cost barriers. In developed markets, the pack design can mean the difference between the success or failure of a brand. Different economic sizes of packaging allow price difference of the product, and making the product more readily affordable to a greater proportion of the population. Brands that do not offer smaller or single size products are making their products unsuitable for those living in smaller or single household that do not desire family size packs. [Cateor and Graham, 2002].

### Message Placement Influence Perception on Packaging

The placement or positioning of messages is quite influenced consumer's perception. Research in psychology on brain shows that perception is not symmetrical, for instance, words are recalled better if they are perceived from the right hand side of the individual, while pictorial or non-verbal cues are more successful if it comes from the left hand side. Also, brain research has found that verbal stimuli are recalled better when they are on the right-hand side of the visual field, and non-verbal stimuli, are better recalled when they are on the left hand side of the visual field.

If we accept this theory, it implies that in order to maximize consumer recall, pictorial elements should be positioned on the left hand side of the package and visuals should be placed centrally or on the right hand side of the package. Other elements, such as an unappealing legal description or a product disclaimer of which recall is not very important



for brand building should rather be placed on the left hand side or back of the label [Bettie and Brewer, 2000]. According to Young [2003] it is best to group the key message or benefits in one location, and as such one creates a consistent or dominant viewing pattern by leading shoppers from the main visual or product visual to the key messages.

#### Shelf Context of Packaging is key for positive Patronage

It is equally important that packaging should be measured positioned in terms of the shelf context within which it is usually found [young, 2003]. The most attractive or popular design is not necessarily the most effective one at the point of sale, because it may blur in shelf cluster and or fail to communicate key message and a point of difference quickly and clearly [young, 2003]. Therefore packaging concepts should be evaluated in context, not in isolation if possible packaging should be able to stimulate both the shopping and usage perception, giving people an opportunity to interact and feel the package's functionality shelf visibility and impact on brand imagery [Jugger, 1999]. Furthermore, shelf context packaging of should as much as possible take into consideration consumers' purchase behaviour in relation to their usage pattern against fast moving consumer goods.

#### Methodology

The survey research design method was adopted in this study. It is quantitative approach and as such, the metric dimension to data analysis was employed. More so that Struwing and Stead [2001] listed four basic data collection methods for data collection for quantitative research, among which survey is inclusive. The method was chosen because of its unique advantage according to Hair, Bush and Ortinan [2000] that the method can accommodate a large sample, it allows for making "generalized inference" about the target population, standardized common data can be collected which allows for direct comparisons between responses, and by means of statistical within the data can be determined. The population of study comprises of consumers in Ikeja Metropolis market which was selected through random sampling technique of a combination of Judgment and convenience sampling was chosen to draw the needed sample within the population of interest.

Convenience sampling involves selection of sample elements that are most readily available to participate in the study and who can provide information require for investigation [Joseph, Arthur, Philip and Mike, 2007]. Ikeja Metropolis market was chosen because is situated at capital city of Lagos State and market accommodates patronages of almost classes of customers /consumers.

A target sample size of one hundred [100] respondents were confidently chosen. A structural questionnaire was used for the data gathering and to ensure reliability of data gathered as well as to maintain high rate of response, a self-administration of questionnaires was employed. According to Hair, etal [2000], self-administered questionnaire is a data collection technique in which the respondent reads the questions and records his or her own responses without the presence of trained interviewers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section one comprises of bio-data and demographic profile of the respondents with respect to genders, age, educational, qualification, working experience, and religion etc. Section two contains ten (10) statement items arranged in logical order, particularly to elicit



information on the respondents' opinion in respect of influence of product packaging on customer perception. A five [5] pointlikert scale format was used, ranging from strongly disagree [1] to strongly agree [5].

The research instrument was subjected to both face and content validity by team of experts from National Institute of Marketing of Nigeria [NIMN] Lagos and Marketing Unit of Department of Business Administration and Marketing, Babcock University, Illisahn-Remo, Ogun State Nigeria. Experts' assessment appropriately fine-tuned the questionnaire items for suitability of the study. Cronbach Alpha reliability test was used to determine the content consistency of instrument and a reliability index between 0.78 and 0.88 were obtained as such being high than the standard threshold of 0.7 it is found to be more identified and acceptable. Also ten percent [10%] of the sample size were used as a pilot study particularly to pretest the instrument face constant.

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive analysis to characterize the respondents and their perception on product packaging, while analysis of variance [mean(x) and standard deviation (SD) was used to measure the influence of product packaging on consumers' perception. The mean value of 3.0 was used as an index of decision taken, such that any mean value from 3.0 and above was taken as an index of agreement while a mean value below 3.0 was taken as an index of disagreement.

#### Presentation of Analysis and Result

Table 1: Frequency distribution and Percentage Computation of Respondents on Variables

S/N	Statements of Variables	Variables									
		SA[5]		A[4]		U[3]		D[2]		SD[1]	
		F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1	The packaging in protects the produce	51	51 %	25	25%	6	6%	12	12%	6	6%
2	The packaging makes the product easy to handle	30	30%	25	25%	10	10%	15	15%	20	20%
3	The packaging prevents the product from negative environment impact	25	25%	40	40%	5	5%	15	15%	15	15%
4	The packaging enhances purchase of the product	40	40%	15	15%	15	15%	25	25%	15	15%
5	The packaging identities the product among	30	30%	20	20%	15	15%	15	15%	20	20%
6	The packaging attracts consumers of a product	35	35%	15	15%	10	10%	20	20%	20	20%
7	The packaging differentiates the brand of product	32	32%	18	18%	10	10%	20	20%	20	20%
8	The packaging has after consumption values	24	24%	26	26%	13	13%	17	17%	20	20%
9	The packaging has multipurpose of utility in the product	38	38%	22	22%	10	10%	15	15%	15	15%
10	The packaging is a means of promotion of product.	28	28%	32	32%	10	10%	13	13%	17	17%

Table 2: Computation of Means of Responses

S/N		SA	A	U	D	SD	Total	Mean
1		256	100	18	24	6	403/100	4.03
2		150	100	30	30	20	339/100	3.30
3		125	160	15	30	115	345/100	3.45
4		200	60	45	50	15	370/100	3.70
5		150	80	45	30	20	325/100	3.25
6		175	60	30	40	20	325/100	3.25
7		160	72	30	40	20	322/100	3.22
8		120	104	39	34	20	317/100	3.17
9		190	88	30	30	15	353/100	3.53
10		140	128	30	26	17	341/100	3.41

#### Discussion of Findings

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of variable of product packaging through consumer's perceptions.

Table of product packaging of consumers' perception [n-100]

S/N	Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Remarks
1	Protection	4.03	1.01	Agreed
2	Easy Handling	3.30	2.33	Agreed
3	Prevention	3.45	1.97	Agreed
4	Enhancement of purchase	3.70	3.28	Agreed
5	Identification of product	3.25	2.31	Agreed
6	Attraction of consumers	3.25	2.51	Agreed
7	Differentiation of Brand	3.22	2.44	Agreed
8	Post consumption values	3.17	2.18	Agreed
9	Multipurpose of utility	3.53	2.23	Agreed
10	Means of promotion	3.41	2.10	Agreed

The descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation shows the relationship amongst the study variables. All variables have positive and significant relationships with packaging features or attributes. There is an observed indication that protection, enhancement of purchase, multipurpose of utility, prevention and means of promotion has leading rank according to the mean and standard deviation [ $X=4.03$ ,  $SD=1.01$ ;  $X=3.70$ ,  $SD=3.28$ ;  $X=3.53$ ,  $SD=2.53$ ;  $X=3.45$ ,  $SD=1.97$  and  $X=3.41$ ,  $SD=2.10$ ] respectively. While easy-handling, identification of product, attraction of customers, differentiation of brand, and post consumption values show respective values [ $X=3.30$ ,  $SD=2.33$ ;  $X=3.25$ ,  $SD=2.31$ ;  $X=3.25$ ,  $SD=2.51$ ;  $X=3.22$ ,  $SD=2.44$ ; and  $X=3.17$ ,  $SD=2.18$ ].

The functional roles of product packaging as sampled consumers measured are protection, easy handling, prevention, enhancement of purchase, identification of products, and attraction of consumers and differentiation of brands on agreement remarked. In addition, post consumption values, Multipurpose of utility, means of promotion are characteristics and features of product packaging. It is inferred from the above that the product packaging are fundamentally served as function of all these variables.

Therefore, development of product packaging are being pursued to a high extent in order to enrich as well as enhance marketing practices and or polices of products on one hand and organizational performance on other hand. All variables involve have positive and significant relationship with product packaging. There is an observed significant relationship between product packaging with each identified variables as they have value of 3.0 and above as show in {table 1}.

However, it also ascertained impact of packaging as for protection of products, easy handling or convenient possession of the product, means of prevention and enhancement of purchase i.e. it facilitates buying processes. Identification of product differentiation of brand, post purchase value, multipurpose utility, Means of promotion. In this view, packaging is increasingly improved their sales and profit standard as well as capacity to enhance organizational performance. By this implication, result can be used to infer that packaging is therefore a major influencing factor of market share, no debt this collaborates with the research result of Cambell {2003} which suggest that customer identification of product in a quick manner promote and increase purchases as well as affect both revenues and cost in the equation of profitability.

### Conclusions

Based on the above result, the study concluded that packaging is an important aspect of product development as it is synonymous with the core value of the product in an offering market. The article has explored some of the essential areas in which packaging and consumer behaviours are predicted upon and also established the relationship between consumers' perception and packaging under Consequently, the implication of the study is that producers of products in manufacturing sectors should generally increase their packaging strategies as to enhance their level of business viability and invite their customers and or consumers' attraction and retention relationship in order not to lose their patronage to competitors. different constructs. From the forgone discussion we can establish that a significant relationship exists between consumer and product packaging.

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