

# Consumers' Perceptions about Packaging of Made-in-Ghana Products

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## ABSTRACT

*Sale ratio is vividly dictated by equal open product exposure to consumer attention. In these situations, the determining factor of sale is the quality of packaging. On the market where local products stand in contrast with foreign ones, packaging deficiencies of local product stand out. Packaging automatically influences consumer decision and biases. Micro packaging constituents like colour, design and shape play on the psycho-emotional intellect of the consumer and persuade the consumer to buy a product that the consumer may not even readily need. The ultimate goal of increasing sale is however achieved. On the contrary, for local products, packaging may dissuade the consumer from buying a product that may be readily needed, thus, sale drops. This work seeks to find the details existing between local and foreign products that determine the rate and frequency of consumer attraction. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were used from September to October 2009, using cross-analysis research design (Obeesi, 2012). Interviews were conducted using a combination of probability (the cluster sampling techniques) and non-probability sampling methods (the accidental sampling technique). Major road corridors in Kumasi served as the basis for clustering while the accidental sampling technique was used for the selection of the shopping malls interviewed because there was no reliable information on the number of malls in the Kumasi Metropolis and also their locations. Differences existed between local and foreign packaging in the areas of design, aesthetics and product information. Twenty-one percent of respondents confirmed that foreign products were well packaged, attractive and colourful. Hundred percent of respondents indicated that foreign products contained adequate information on product usage and instructions. The study recommends a packaging regulatory body to oversee and ensure standards in local packaging to the level of foreign product packaging.*

**Keywords:** *Made-in-Ghana Products, Packaging Decisions, Patronage*

## INTRODUCTION

Recent marketing trends have led companies to devise all kinds of strategies to increase or sustain market share mostly through marketing communication in general and advertising in particular where packaging is pivotal (Brassington and Pettit, 2000), thus, the realisation of the need for communication to convince and attract the consumer. This, most times involves huge capital outlays and is an added cost to the already high production cost. However, proper packaging is seen as an easier and less expensive means of communicating and convincing consumers. Thus, the truism in the definition of packaging by Judd, Aalders and Melis (1989) and Silayoi and Speece (2004) "salesman on the shelf" cannot be over-

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emphasized. Packaging raises products' appeal through promotion and advertising with desired sales increment and a resultant increase in profit margins, which is the ultimate aim of every producer (Ditcher, 1981; Meyers and Gerestman, 2005). For packaging to play this important role, it must be attractive, informative, and clearly identify with the product. Thus, accentuating Dichter's (1981) view that consumers tend to view a product and its packaging as one. The use of packaging as a marketing and sales promotional tool has been well-developed in the advanced countries, with developing countries such as Ghana lagging behind. In Ghana, many products tend to be poorly labelled in terms of concept and appeal including colour, typography, photography, illustration and layout. This study, consumers' perception about packaging of Made-in-Ghana products therefore sorts the views of sellers about the packaging of Made-in-Ghana products and how they compare with imported ones.

## **PACKAGING OF PRODUCTS**

The definition of packaging is subjective and is based on its perceived numerous functions. Soroka (1996) describes it as a co-ordinated system of preparing goods for transport, distribution, storage, sale, and use. To him, it is a complex, dynamic, scientific, artistic, and controversial business function, which in its most fundamental form contains, protects/preserves, provides convenience, and informs/sells, within acceptable environmental constraints. This definition is broad and the focus is on what really goes into packaging the product. Here, packaging is seen as a service function that cannot exist by itself; it does need a product. Thus, once there is no product, then, there is no need for a pack. Packaging is complex in nature given that, there is always the need for harmony amongst numerous aspects. For instance, manufacturers should not concern themselves with only the container that is supposed to protect the product since the concern is on getting the product to the final consumer as a whole. They need to consider the labelling, shape and structural aspects of packaging, etc. Packaging is seen to be dynamic because it deals with human beings whose tastes keep changing and scientific because there is chemical interaction between the container and the contents. It is also artistic because the right colours must be used to attract the consumer and also the label must communicate to the ultimate consumer. This is the holistic approach to packaging. However, care should be taken not to put too much focus on one aspect to the neglect of the others, because a perfect blend is needed if the product is to perform all the right functions. Also, without the proper packaging mix, the needed or expected increase in the sales trend would not be realized. Again, regardless of the attractive nature of the packaging, it has to communicate the right message so as to sustain its market share and possibly increase it. William and Weilbercher (1979) define packaging as, 'A broadcast commercial opportunity offered for sale at a particular time for a particular price'. This definition is skewed by just looking at packaging as 'Advertising'. The emphasis is on the final product since it would be sold for a price without taking into consideration its safe delivery. However, how it would attract and sustain consumption and even whether consumers are prepared to buy at that price were not considered. Hanlon, Kelsey and Forcinio (1971) support this critic by saying this about packaging:

*“In its more familiar forms, it is the box on the grocers’ shelf and the wrapper on a candy bar. It can also be the crate around a machine or a bulk container for chemicals. It is an art and sciences...”*

He further grouped packaging into three broad categories requiring different technologies and talents for their accomplishment. Category one, which includes consumer packaging concerns small units in large numbers and often decorated in an attractive manner. Category two, being industrial packaging usually made up of larger and heavier units and category three, covering military packaging which is highly influenced by the government to document it in a more intricate way (such as using military codes). Milton (1991) looks at packaging as not just a support for advertising but advertising itself and that ‘...while advertising may alert a large number of potential consumers to a product’s existence, it is only at the point of purchase that the promotion story and the products image come together’ (Milton, 1991). Milton’s view to some extent has been generalized and equated packaging to advertising but then the product should be packed before advertising sets in.

Paine (1996) and Davis (1967) define packaging by focusing on the distributive process. Packaging as a means of ensuring the safe delivery of a product to the ultimate consumer in sound condition at the minimum overall cost (Paine, 1961). This definition takes into consideration only the protective function and the cost. This line of argument is supported by Davis (1967) who sees packaging as a collective term for all kinds of containers in which goods are packed for sale to the consumer. Thus, dwelling much on the container in which the product is packed and forgetting all the other important functions that a package performs.

The above definition is criticized on the basis that in as much as getting the product safely delivered to the shelves is important; the product should speak for itself while on the shelves in order for it to be purchased. Consumers must be able to distinguish the product from other competing ones and also know exactly how to use the product so that it does not cause any unintended harm. According to Judd, Aalders and Melis (1989), packaging as a sales agent or a silent salesman or a dispenser after it has completed its function of delivering the product is well placed. This definition is more appropriate for manufacturers since the profit maximization is the key business principle.

Hanlon, Kelsey and Forcinio (1971) also consider packaging in the sense of the container. To him packaging is any structure that contains or limits its content. This would include crates, nets and cocoons, as well as displays, utensils and conveyance. Hanlon looks at packaging only as a structural thing with or without any visual appeal and also takes into consideration the type of materials used in the manufacture. However, the advertisement or promotional function, distribution to the final consumer and laws governing the packaging industry are not considered. Packaging is indeed the physical container that is able to conveniently protect the product contents through the transportation and distribution stages and has a well-designed label which gives all vital information about the product and most importantly very attractive. The importance of the package leading to the sale of the product is the focus of this study. Packaging is also the interface between the product and the consumer. It is the expression of the brand identity of the product, its

intrinsic qualities, and its “philosophy” Packaging is the voice of the product, its dress-sense and its “look”. It is the product’s first sales pitch, which is of key importance for its market positioning. Packaging represents the looks that a product wears, thus making it attractive, appealing and tantalizing. It does not exclude the quality of durability, transferability and quest for patronage. It has strong inviting tendencies. Packaging’s physical proximity brings it closer to consumers who look at it, lift it up for a closer look, read it, handle it, take it home and use it. The form, colours and texture of packaging provoke sensations in the consumer, thus, it acts as the spokesperson for the product. Advertisers use packaging as a selling point and as a means of creating a brand image. An all-embracing definition is the one by Leonard (1980) ‘A package consists of both structure and appearance’. Clearly speaking, packaging as defined here considers both the structural aspect thus whatever contains the product as well as the appearance of the product. This definition by Leonard has been adopted for the study since the structure and the labelling of packaging has not been totally realized in terms of Ghanaian products reaching the right standards.

### **Constituents of Good Packaging**

In many cases, the packaging industry responds to new demands which arise for specifically packaged products. Hanlon, Kelsey and Forcinio (1971) writing under the function of packaging, also made this comment about the need and importance of using the shape, colour and decoration on the container to identify the contents of a package. He further went on to say that this quality of the package has been realized and exploited to a very high degree. Manufacturers and merchandisers are constantly learning new and better ways to take advantage of this value of the package to improve sales.

Thus, packaging is seen to have acquired an important and indispensable role in marketing. A role that determines the difference between success and failure in any commercial enterprise. Judd, Aalders and Melis (1989) make a good point in this direction when saying: ‘the package or its label is the silent salesman and the way in which we present its proposition and the intelligibility of its argument is the difference between sale and no sale, life and death.’ A good package will have the following ingredients: adequate capacity (volume) to hold the content; compatible with the content (inert) and should not cause any deterioration in the integrity of product/or be affected by content; Have adequate strength to withstand the weight of the content as well as other stresses that may be encountered during transportation and handling; Attractive to enhance marketability of product; Informative; providing information on product identity and its use and disposal precaution in the event of accident or misuse as appropriate; Safe to handle and use convenience; Containing products, defining the amount the consumer will purchase; Protecting products from contamination, environmental damage and from theft and quality; Facilitate transportation and storing of products; and Carry information and colourful designs that make attractive displays (<http://www.fao.org>).

## **METHOD**

The study focused on Kumasi because of its geographic advantage as a nodal town and the intense commercial activities. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods

were used from September to October 2009, using cross-analysis research design (Obeesi, 2012). Interviews were conducted using a combination of probability (the cluster sampling techniques) and non-probability sampling methods (the accidental sampling technique). Major road corridors in Kumasi served as the basis for clustering while the accidental sampling technique was used for the selection of the shopping malls interviewed because there was no reliable information on the number of malls in the Kumasi Metropolis and also their locations. For this study, a shopping mall was defined as any retail outlet. Hence, any shop within the study area that was responsive to the researcher was selected and interviewed. Another criterion was the density of shops available along a particular road corridors. A sample of 100 retail shops was taken based on random accessibility. To ensure internal validity of the questionnaire, a pre-test of 10 shops was done and the results used to review and modify the questionnaire (Babbie, 1992). Data obtained were edited, and presented for easy understanding.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

***Factors Considered by Consumers before Buying Products:*** Before a consumer buys a product, certain factors might have been considered. This is proportionate to the choice and selection of a product. Whereas others consider the need and desire for consumption, the satisfaction of beauty in which the product is made of and not necessarily the need is the focus of other consumers. For the purpose of this study, the need to understand and appreciate the factors that consumer's lookout for when making a decision to purchase a product cannot be overemphasized. This is because packaging designers need such knowledge to understand what consumers expect to see on the packaging. Manufacturers also, need to appreciate these factors so that they can demand from the designers the right packaging to make the right sales and profits. Consumers who are the final users of all products would also be well equipped so that they make the right choices. Table 1 elaborates on the different scenarios.

The most critical factor considered by the sampled consumers in the choice and selection of a product is the need for that particular product. The necessity for the product is the major priority issue considered by most consumers before purchases as was stated by 34% of the consumers while 29% considered the content of the product first before any other reasons. Most importantly, a section of the consumers considered the beautiful nature of the package as a key factor to purchasing a product. This view shared by this group of consumers is in conformity with this research. This is 76 respondents constituting 13% of the overall distribution. A further investigation was undertaken to ascertain whether consumers really consider packaging as a determinant in their purchasing decision and the Figure 1 indicates the response of the consumers. Indeed Figure 1 confirms the strong influence packaging has on the purchasing decision of consumers. Out of the overall respondents, 65% confirmed that they are influenced by the packaging while 35% declined. For further clarity, the study sought to ascertain the reasons why packaging influences their purchasing decision. This was aimed at validating the issues raised from the problem statement and the literature reviewed and investigating the depth and spread of these

factors as well as unearthing whatever new and unknown factors that existed and which had some influence no matter the extent. The analysis on table 2 reveals that most consumers were enticed to do some impulse buying because of the attractive nature of the product's package. This reason is shared by more than half of the overall respondents constituting 51.7%. Respondents also affirmed the unscientific conceptions that the nature of a products' packaging to a larger extent determines the quality of that product hence they are forced to buy. It accounts for 22.3% from the views of 62 respondents (Table 2). Other opinions shared included the presentation of good impression about the product quality and the provision of all necessary information. They constitute 11.9% and 4.7% respectively (Table 2). The above analysis confirms the assertion made by Judd, Aalders and Melis (1989) that, packaging is the silent salesman and that with 75% of the purchasing decisions are made at the shop, all attention need to be directed at making the products very attractive in terms of colour, shape, size etc. while providing all the needed information such as manufacturing and expiry dates, instructions for usage, care and storage instructions. It should equally contain information on the disposal of the package after exhausting the contents. It should be noted that some product containers or packages serve other purposes like shopping bags, storage packs, waste bins, etc. Contrary to those who expressed their opinions on the influence of packaging on their purchasing decision, below are the reasons from consumers who do not attach priority to packaging before buying any product.

- The need for the product is what is important
- We believe packaging increases production cost
- The attention is on the product and not the packaging
- We believe the package is not all that necessary
- We believe the content is what matters and not the package
- We believe it does not add any value to the product.

***Extent to which Packaging Determine the Purchasing Decision of Consumers:***

The packaging of a product sells it by attracting attention as well as communicating emotions, as it is believed that 75% of the purchasing decision of consumers is made at the point of purchase (TIEPIK, 2005). From the study, 56% of the respondents admit that consumers were to a large extent influenced by the packaging of a product in making their purchasing decisions while 21% state that the impact of a product packaging on consumer decisions was minimal. However, 16% of consumers do not consider the packaging of products but the content of the product (table 3). These group of people are influence by packaging when the purchase is first time. A small section of respondents (7%) could not make an informed decision about the situation.

***Packaging of Made-In-Ghana Products:*** About 31% of the respondents reveal that local products were shabbily packaged. Moreover, they assert that inadequate information provision especially on usage and instructions were among several reasons why local products were not competitive. Others who think the unattractiveness of local products and the lack of Ghanaian culture as a reflection of product packaging accounted for 22% (Table 4). Corrective measures are therefore needed to amend the situation and increase patronage.

***Reasons for the Low Patronage of Made-In-Ghana Product:*** The fact that patronage of Made-in-Ghana products is reducing cannot be overemphasized. Hence, it was necessary to validate some of the reasons found from literature through the field survey. Here, the opinions and views of the consumers regarding the factors for the declining patronage of locally-manufactured and locally-packaged products were analyzed. A combination of factors was responsible for the above state of affairs. The absence of expiry dates and manufacturing dates deter consumers from buying a product because expired products are harmful for consumption. Another 27% of the respondents believe that the composition of package like plastic bottles and paper bags are inferior, hence not appealing to the eyes and also sometimes results in leakage of liquid products. Contents of the products were reduced by silage and did not correspond to the weight listed on the package. During the survey, examples were found in products like shito and herbal medicines. Again, 24% of the participants indicate that faded labels prevents them from making a purchasing decision on a local product. This is because labels are relevant for the right use of the product. The study discovers that there is a strong influence of packaging on the purchasing decision of consumers. Out of the overall respondents, 65.4% confirm that they are mostly influenced by the packaging of a product in buying them.

Additionally, the analysis reveals that most consumers were enticed to buy certain products which hitherto are not planned for as a result of the attractive nature of the package. Majority of them were of the notion that, the nature of the packaging to a larger extent determines the quality of the product hence they are forced to buy them. This should be a clue to local manufacturers and designers that consumer attention can be captured through colourful and attractive packaging. About 94% of the sampled consumers patronized locally made products. However, most of them indicate purchasing locally manufactured products out of convenience or at times due to their monopolistic nature, thus, they have no substitutes. There was no mention of purchasing Made-in-Ghana products because they were more attractive. The fact remains that packaging of most made-in-Ghana products was a deviation from the constituents of a good packaging and hence, consumers would reject such products for the more attractive foreign ones. Interestingly, all incidents of product rejection were due to the poor packaging and these products were all locally manufactured and packaged. Concerning consumers' perceptions of the packaging of foreign products as compared to their local ones, the responses for the packaging of foreign products were positive while those for the local ones were mostly pessimistic. Consumers were of the opinion that, foreign products are well packaged, thus, the packaging protects the product content very well as well as providing needed and adequate information of the product which makes these products seem very presentable.

Also, from the study, most people indicate that most Ghanaian made products are shabbily prepared which does not take into consideration the interest of the consumers and this accounted for the reasons why more than half of the customers indicated having rejected products on the account of poor packaging. In finding out the reasons behind why they do sometimes reject locally made products, they were of the opinion that:

i Most Made-in-Ghana products normally lack important information including

manufacturing and expiry date as well as instructions on usage and storage of the products.

- i Inferior materials are used for the packaging of some Made-in-Ghana products, some manufacturers do this in order to reduce the cost of production and maximize profit
- iii Mostly, some of the products may have expired already.

The production process is not complete until the product gets to the final consumer. This presupposes that, product would have to be aesthetically appealing and needed by the consumer for it to be purchased. It is clear that the need for a product is the first consideration but when a consumer is faced with the choice of two products which are substitutes then other consideration come to play. The first factor considered here is the aesthetics value of the packaging (how attractive it is). This attraction would lead to the choice of one product over the other even though they might solve the same problem. It is only after a choice has been made that, the consumer would then check the label to find the information such as manufacturing and expiry dates, weight, storage and usage etc.

Therefore, there are different levels of factor consideration and it is important for manufacturers and packaging designers to admit and appreciate this so that they can take full advantage of it. The above analogy shows that it is essential for a product to be attractive as if it is to have a high probability of being purchased. Therefore, in as much as packaging is important, its aesthetic value comes first before the vital information that needs to be provided are considered. Consumers associate the beauty (aesthetics) of a package to the quality of the product. This was very interesting, as it defies logic and rationality. One cannot determine the quality of a product by the level of attractiveness of its packaging.

Interestingly, majority of Ghanaians are known to do impulse buying (purchasing wants and not needs) therefore, manufacturers of Made-in-Ghana products can increase their sales trends by making conscious effort to ensure that, the packaging of their products are very colourful and attractive to entice consumers and increase their desire to purchase the products even though they might not need them. Interestingly, even though about 94% of consumers purchased Made-in-Ghana products, none of them did so because it was attractive, had aesthetics and portrayed Ghanaian cultural values. This is a clear indication that had Made-in-Ghana products been aesthetically attractive and portrayed some elements of Ghanaian culture, the patronage would have increased. The other side of the issue is that the major reason for purchasing foreign products was that they were well packaged, beautiful in terms of colour and shape (aesthetically pleasing) and provided all the needed information. These inherent qualities of the products give them the edge over the local ones. They are thus, purchased when the consumer has to make a choice. The impressions of consumers about the packaging of Made-in-Ghana products are that it is not well packaged, not attractive and mostly the designs are shabbily done and do not reflect any Ghanaian culture. This is the reason why an increasing number of Ghanaians are purchasing Chinese Products (especially medicinal ones) to the detriment of the local ones. It is therefore not surprising that the incident of product rejection by consumers is high for Made-in-Ghana products than the foreign ones.



**Table 1: Factors Considered by Consumers before Buying Products**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Beautifully Packaged	76	13.1
Need for the Product	200	34.4
Manufacturing and Expiry Dates	68	11.7
Contents of the Products	168	28.9
Cultural elements	14	2.4
Packaging Providing the Needed Information	56	9.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Obeesi, 2012.

**Table 2: Reasons why Packaging Influences Purchasing Decision**

<b>Reasons</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Good packaging do attract me to buy a product	23	8.3
It determines the quality of the product	62	22.3
It gives good impression of the product quality	33	11.9
Nice colours mostly influence my decision	3	1.1
It Provides all necessary information	13	4.7
Product's beauty attracts my attention to buy	144	51.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>278</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Obeesi, 2012.

**Table 3: Influence of Packaging on the Purchasing Decision of Consumers**

<b>Extent of Packaging</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Very Influential	56	56
Minimal Influence	21	21
Not Considered	16	16
Do not know	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Obeesi, 2012.

**Table 4: Impressions of Packaging of Locally Manufactured Products**

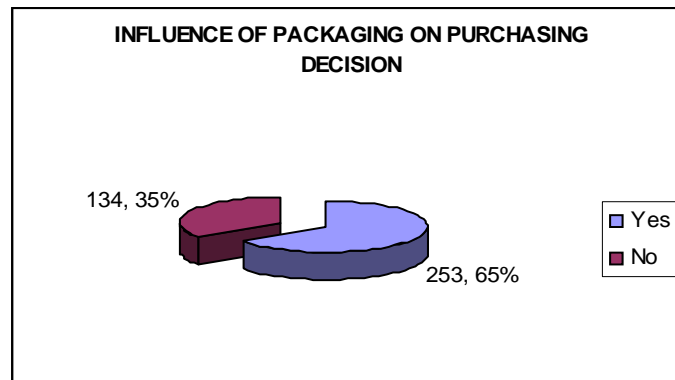
<b>Impression of Packaging</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not Attractive	22	22
Shabbily Done	31	31
Inadequate Information Provided	25	25
Does Not Reflect Ghanaian Culture	22	22
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Obeesi, 2012.

**Table 5: Reasons for the Low Patronage of Made-In-Ghana Products**

<b>Reasons For Low Patronage</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Poor material composition of package	27	27
Lack of Expiry Date	31	31
Labels that are Fading	24	24
Poor Design of Packaging	18	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* Obeesi, 2012.



**Figure 1:** Influence of Packaging on Purchasing Decision *Source:* Obeesi, 2012

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The analysis confirms that to a very large extent purchasing decisions are mostly made at the point of sale and that the aesthetic value and the adequacy of information provided on the label of the product are key influencing factors in choosing which product to purchase. Until and unless, a local manufacturer is “pushed” by the strict implementation of all existing laws on packaging and labeling to ensure that the right professionals are employed to package the products in a way that attracts the local consumers, they would continue to struggle with reduction in sales. To ensure increase in the demand of locally manufactured and packaged goods, the following suggestions are made:

- i ***Educate manufacturers on packaging and its effects on sales of the product:*** The first major step is to educate manufacturers on the need to have a good package for a product. The fact that packaging is the silent salesman should be hammered to manufacturers.
- ii ***Strict Measure from the Ghana Standard Board:*** As an institution in charge of standards, Ghana Standard Board should put in place systems that will provide standards for locally manufactured and packaged goods. Penalties must be directed at companies that do not meet the standards. Penalties can include: Sanctions, seizure of operation license, fines and barring of products from the market.
- iii ***Employment of Packaging Designers:*** One major factor to the poor nature of packaging of local products is the unavailability of professional designers in the local manufacturing companies. Hence, it is recommended that the services of such professionals should be engaged to help design attractive and appealing packages for local products. Such investments will be recouped when sales rise or is maximized.
- iv ***The Use of Durable Materials for Packaging:*** As already noted, the packaging of the product cannot be isolated from the product itself. Hence, the use of durable materials for packaging should be encouraged. This will allow for easy storage, clear label, no leakages and consumer friendly products. This makes the entrepreneur reach the aim of consumer satisfaction and hence maximize sales.

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