

# Perceptions of Shop Operators on Packaging of Made-in-Ghana Products

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## ABSTRACT

*The importance of packaging in the marketing of a product cannot be overemphasized. It raises the appeal of the product and becomes its silent salesman. Proper packaging is a less expensive means of advertisement and leads to a direct reduction in production cost and indirectly increases sales by attracting the final consumer. The use of packaging as a marketing and sales promotional tool has been very well developed in the advanced countries with developing countries such as Ghana lagging far behind. In Ghana, many products are poorly labelled and packaged. This paper seeks to ascertain the views of sellers/traders about how the packaging of Made-in-Ghana products affects their marketability. Geographically, the study focused on Kumasi Metropolis given that it is a commercialized city in Ghana. The research employed the case study and qualitative approaches. Survey respondents were sampled through the cluster and accidental sampling techniques. The major road corridors served as the bases for clustering while the accidental sampling technique was employed for the selection of the shops to be interviewed given the absence of reliable information on the number and location of shops in the Kumasi Metropolis. A random accessible population of 100 was taken. A structured questionnaire was employed in a more interactive manner upon a pre-test of 10 shops. Data obtained was edited and presented in the forms of tables and charts to facilitate the analysis. The study revealed that indeed, the final purchasing decision of consumers are made at the point of sale and that packaging serves as the silent salesman through its aesthetic value and the adequacy of information provided on the label of the product. To the traders, the foreign products have their packaging really acting as their silent salesman better than the local ones, thus, their low patronage. Also, the incidence of product rejection due to its packaging was greater in the instances of locally manufactured products based on faded labels, exposed products' contents and doubtful expiry dates. The use of right quality packaging materials, appropriate colour schemes, improvements in product branding, embossment of Ghanaian logos were suggested strategies for increasing the patronage of Made-in-Ghana products. Until and unless, the local manufacturer is "pushed" to ensure that their products are properly packaged to attract the final consumer, they would continue to struggle with reduction in sales.*

## KEY WORDS

*Proper Packaging, Product Appeal, Silent Salesman, Increased Sales.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the world, the market performance of goods and services has been based on a plethora of factors. The supplier-customer interactions are a focal position, where value creation, purchasing, usage and marketing are all intertwined positions (Grönroos, 2011). Thus in manufacturing, administrative, logistical, financial and other processes, values are created for customers in those processes (Grönroos, 1979; Gummesson, 1995). The perceptual value attached to goods and services by key stakeholders play a key role in their overall market performance. In developing economies like Ghana, it plays a great role in serving to help build economic growth and development.

However, the packaging industry in Ghana has not yet taken full advantage of the opportunities provided by the increasing purchasing power and modern lifestyle of a rapidly growing middle class as well as potential external markets. Consumers are increasingly demanding higher quality packaging for products, which has in turn increased the role of packaging in the sale of goods and services. The use of packaging as a marketing and sales promotional tool has been very well developed in the advanced countries with countries such as Ghana lagging far behind. Admittedly, there is a certain general perception that foreign alternatives tend to be preferred to locally made products (Opoku and Akorli, 2009; Quartey and Abor, 2011; Musa, Othman and Fatah, 2011; Egyir, Adu-Nyako and Okafor, 2012; Kwakwa, 2013). However, this study focuses on the evaluation of the perception of shopkeepers on packaging of Made-in-Ghana Products and the implications for local producers, policy makers, and law enforcement agencies in ultimately providing value through marketing services to the consumer and for growth of the packaging industry in Ghana.

Over the years, most companies have had to devise all kinds of strategies to either increase or at worse sustain their market share. The most common strategy has been to ensure proper marketing communication (Balmer and Gray, 1999). Smith and Taylor (2003) define marketing as the business of moving goods from the producer to the consumer, where 'goods' are either tangible goods or services. The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM, UK), (2005) define marketing as the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably. Hence, the results of any good marketing process should be an increase in the profit margins of the manufacturers through the satisfaction of the ultimate consumer. Of the numerous marketing communication strategies, advertising seems to be the most widely used. However, studies have shown that effective packaging is a more easier and cheaper means of advertising, since other marketing strategies always need communication to convince and attract the consumer (Moodie, Mackintosh, Hastings and Ford, 2011; Shekhar and Raveendran, 2015; Chauhan and Shukla, 2016). Whenever a product is effectively packaged, the product speaks for itself. Thus, effective packaging is an easier and less expensive means of advertising and hence the huge sums of money spent on other forms of marketing promotions could be redirected by ensuring that the right things are done during the product packaging. Therefore, the truism in the definition of packaging that it is the salesman on the shelf, cannot be over-emphasized (Judd, Aalders & Melis, 1989; Silayoi & Speece, 2004).

Packaging plays an important role in raising the products appeal through promotion and advertising, which invariably results in an increase in sales and for that matter increase in the profit margins – being the ultimate aim of every producer. It plays an integral part in the marketing process by communicating a product's specific marketing objectives to the consumer (Meyers & Gerestman,

2005). In order to perform this role effectively to reap the right results and benefits to the manufacturer – increase in profit margins- a product's packaging must be attractive, informative, and clearly identify with the product. Packaging must also continuously communicate its real benefits and create awareness to ensure image and brand preference. This is in line with Dichter's (1957) view that consumers tend to view a product and its packaging as one which was supported by Stern (1981) when he emphasized that consumers relate emotionally to a product and its package. Therefore, effective packaging provides the pivot on which marketing, both locally and internationally, are done for increased sales and maximization of manufacturers' returns.

### **Definition of Packaging**

The concept of packaging is one very subjective issue with any definition based on one or two of the aspects of packaging. The concept of packaging is quite complex because there are a number of aspects, which have to be in harmony. Packaging is dynamic as it deals with humans with ever changing taste and is scientific as there are chemical interactions between the container and the contents. It is also artistic because the right colours must be used to attract the consumer, while labels must communicate to the ultimate consumer. This is the holistic approach to packaging. Hence, it is important not to focus on one aspect and neglect others, as a perfect blend is needed for the package to perform all its functions. Also, without the proper packaging mix, the needed or expected increase in the sales trend would not be realized. 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.

For instance, Soroka (1996) defined it as a co-ordinated system of preparing goods for transport, distribution, storage, sale, and use. 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. It is a service function that cannot exist by itself; it does need a product. Milton (1991), viewing packaging mainly for its advertising properties, defined packaging as, a broadcast commercial opportunity offered for sale at a particular time for a particular price. He further emphasized 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 product images come together. Hanlon (1971) sees packaging in its more familiar forms, as being the box on the grocers' shelf and the wrapper on a candy bar, as well as the crate around a machine or a bulk container for chemicals. It is an art and science. To Hanlon (1971), packaging was any structure that contained or limited its contents. This would include crates, nets and cocoons, as well as displays, utensils and conveyance. Hanlon (1971) 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, issues of advertisement or promotion in terms of cost, laws governing the packaging industry as well as even how it would be conveyed to the final consumer are not considered.

Some other authors look at packaging in the light of the distributive process. For instance, Paine (1961) defined packaging as a means of ensuring the safe delivery of a product to the ultimate consumer in sound condition at the minimum overall cost. This definition by Paine takes into consideration only the protective function and the cost. This line of argument is supported by Davis (1967), when he defined 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 aspect of the container in which the product is packed at the expense of the other important functions that a package performs. This definition is criticized

on the basis that in as much as getting the product safely delivered to the shelves is important; the product speaks for itself while on the shelf 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. Hence, the definition by Judd, Aalders & Melis (1989) which sees 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 cost minimization is a key business principle.

Byett (2002) defined packaging as an item's physical container, label and insert. In the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2003), it is also seen as the technology and art of preparing a commodity for convenient transport, storage, and sale. These two definitions are similar in scope. 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'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. In a word, it is the spokesperson of the product. Advertisers use packaging as a selling point and as a means of creating a brand image.

The definition by Leonard (1980) notes that the package consists of both structure and appearance. Clearly, this definition as well as that of Byett (2002) are very much linked to this study because as was indicated in the problem statement, the structure and the labelling of packaging has not been totally realized in terms of Ghanaian products attaining the right standards.

### **Constituents of Good Packaging**

There is always the need and importance of using the shape, colour and decoration on the container to identify the contents of a package (Hanlon, 1971). Manufacturers and merchandisers are constantly learning new and better ways to take advantage of this value of the package to improve sales.

A good package is seen as the difference between success and failure in any commercial enterprise. 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 (Judd, 1989). 'A good package will have the following ingredients: Have adequate capacity (volume) to hold the content; Be 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>).

A further addition to the market performance of packaged products is the brand value. For a product to compete and thrive in a busy market environment, then brand value – lent by quality, by personality, by product or service superiority and by strategy is key. There is a perception or emotional satisfaction that accompanies the purchase of branded products, because they are an assurance of quality, consistency, reliability and satisfy status needs. Brands offer profit opportunities to manufacturers and for consumers, offer less time in purchasing decisions taken (De Chernatony and McWilliam, 1989; Anholt, 2005).

## **METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE**

Geographically, the study focused on the Kumasi Metropolis given that it is a nodal town and arguably the second most commercialized town in Ghana. The case study method was used for the study since detailed information was obtained using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time (Kumekpor, 2002; Stake, 2003; Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2006; Baxter and Jack, 2008). This is a purely qualitative research with cross analysis of facts, hence the meanings behind the responses of yes or no were of greater importance than the percentages themselves. Primary data was obtained by using a semi-structured questionnaire for interviews. A combination of probability (the cluster sampling techniques) and non-probability sampling methods (the accidental sampling techniques) were used in obtaining the interviews (Kothari, 2004; Tansey, 2007).

The major road corridors served as the bases for clustering while the accidental sampling technique was employed for the selection of the shops to be interviewed because there was no reliable information on the number of such shops within the Kumasi Metropolis and also their locations. Furthermore, since all the roads did not have the same number of

shops, the ratio and proportion method was used in the sampling per road (Barlett, Kotrlik and Higgins, 2001). Thus, more shops were sampled from roads with greater numbers of shops along it. Here, any shop within the study area that was responsive to the researcher at a particular point in time was selected and interviewed.

The total population of shops was not known and hence, a random accessible population of 100 was taken which was considered to be scientific as according to Chadwick et al (1984) and Israel (1992), in cases where the actual population of a variable is not known, a minimum allowable sample size of 100 is accepted. To ensure internal and external validity, a pre-test was done with 10 shops. The questionnaires were left in the cases that the respondents had to seek approval from their managers. Data obtained were edited, and analysed using the SPSS version 20 and the data was presented in the forms of tables and charts to facilitate the analysis and for easy understanding.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Location of Shops**

Based on the methods used for sampling of the shops as described in the methodology section of this paper, Adum being the Central Business District (CBD) of Kumasi with the highest number of shops had the majority of sampled commercial shop operators. Adum was followed by Abuakwa with 11 respondents, the reason being that the Abuakwa community serves as a pivotal point for two major roads coming into the Kumasi Metropolitan Area which are the Sunyani and Sewfi Bekwai Roads.

### **Types of Products Sold**

As shown in Table 1, the survey revealed that, majority of shops (29.6%) were engaged in the selling of provisions (FMCG-Fast Moving

Consumer Goods) such as milo, milk, etc followed by those selling confectionaries who constituted 21.8%. This suited the objectives of the study as most of these products are packaged either foreign or local. Also, most of the observable shopkeepers' packaging related dissatisfactions are about products in these groups. The least sold products are cereals accounting for 6.6% of the distribution as can be seen in Table 1. Also, the sale of manufactured products, most of which are imported is prime in Kumasi, as studies by Solomon-Ayeh (2008) and Sagoe-Addy (2006) have shown.

### Perception Of Shopkeepers On Consumers' Purchasing Decisions

The packaging of a product is said to be a silent salesman for the product by attracting attention and communicating emotions, hence 75% of purchasing decisions are made at the point of sale (TIEPIK, 2005). As shown in Table 2, this position was corroborated by 56% of the shop operators who contended that it is only when the packaging of a product attracts the final consumer to make a purchasing decision that the trader and invariably the manufacturer make some profits. For about 21% of the

Table 1: Types of Products Sold

Types of Products	Frequency	Percentage
Provisions (FMCG)	72	29.6
Cosmetics	31	12.8
Confectionaries	53	21.8
Toiletries	42	17.3
Alcoholic beverages	29	11.9
Cereals	16	6.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>243</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2: Influence of Packaging on the Purchasing Decision of Consumers

Extent of Packaging	Frequency	Percentage
Very Large Extent	56	56
Some Extent	21	21
Not Considered	16	16
Do not know	7	7
Total	100	100.0

Table 3: Perceptions of Packaging of Locally Manufactured Products

<b>Impression of Packaging</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Not Attractive	38	22.2
Shabbily Done	53	31.0
Inadequate Information Provided	42	24.6
Does Not Reflect Ghanaian Culture	38	22.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>100.0</b>

shop operators, the packaging of a product to some extent, a part to play in what a customer decides to purchase thus indicating that foreign products were, in terms of material and aesthetics, properly packaged, while 7% were indifferent. They believed the utilization of the product was the main factor to be considered. The shop operators are expected to give valuable feedback to manufacturers, especially the local ones so they can improve the product and its packaging. Therefore, if 77% (more than three-quarters) of the sampled shop operators appreciate the advertising functions of an effective packaging, then local manufacturers have to deal with compliance in respect of packaging standards.

#### **Perceptions of Packaging of Locally Manufactured Products**

On the other hand, the study explored the perceptions of shopkeepers on the packaging of made-in-Ghana products. It was revealed that 31% of the shopkeepers viewed the packaging of the local products as being shabby with almost 25% describing the local packages as lacking vital product information on the labels, while 22% described them as not attractive, hence their uncompetitive market performance (See Table 3). Corrective measures are therefore needed to amend the situation and increase patronage.

#### **Perceptual Differences between the Packaging of Foreign and Made-In-Ghana Products**

Observations indicated that there were stark shopkeeper perceptual differences between the packaging of foreign products and the locally manufactured ones. 55.6% perceptual value was attached to local packaging as being shabbily done with inadequate information provided. Additionally, 44.4% felt that local packaging was not attractive and non reflective of Ghanaian culture (Herche, 1994; Vida and Fairhurst, 1999; Watson and Wright, 2000).

Consequently, shopkeepers experienced instances of product rejection as a result of poor packaging, as shown in Table 4.

The result indicated that about 41% of the sampled shop operators had at least, experienced product rejection because of poor packaging with the remaining 59% responding in the negative. A sober reflection of the effect of endemic poor packaging and lack of needed investment into appropriate technology.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 5, this phenomena was undergird by specific reasons- about 21% of the incidences of product rejection were due to lack of expiry dates, about 17% product rejections were based on exposed product content, 16% rejections were also experienced because of leaking containers,, while about 14% rejections occurred as a result of faded labels, where vital instructions on usage were missing and so on. Incidentally, alcoholic

Table 4: Cross Tabulation between Frequency of Stocktaking and Instances of Project Rejection Due to Poor Packaging

Frequency of stocktaking		Instance of Product Rejection due to Poor Packaging		Total
		Yes	No	
After sales everyday	Count	6	13	19
	%	31.58	68.42	100
Every weekend	Count	20	17	37
	%	54.05	45.95	100
Once a month	Count	12	22	34
	%	35.29	64.71	100
Quarterly	Count	2	5	7
	%	28.57	71.43	100
Bi annual	Count	0	1	1
	%	0	100	100
<b>Total</b>	Count	40	58	98
	%	40.82	59.18	100

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

Reasons For Low Patronage	Frequency	Percentage
Exposed Product Content	23	16.8
Lack of Expiry Date	29	21.2
Labels that are Fading	19	13.9
Lids that are not Tight	9	6.6
Leaking Containers	22	16
Shabbily Done	8	5.8
Not Attractive	8	5.8
Poor Design of Packaging	2	1.4
Lack of Innovativeness/Creativity	12	8.8
Poor Promotion Criteria	3	2.2
Package does not reflect on Product Quality	2	1.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>100.0</b>



beverages were some of the products mostly rejected due to the provision of wrong information on their package. For instance, most of these products were said to be aphrodisiacs and hence good for “sexual weakness”. However, medical experts disproved these claims, leading to the Ghana Standards Authority recalling some of these products off the market (Sabin et al, 2013).

Other observed reasons for rejections were linked to difficulty in package openability, discrepancies in weights and measurements, non-disclosure of the presence of additives, preservatives and other chemicals.

Evidently, packaging and labeling of Ghanaian products lack the quality that can make them competitive in any market. Therefore, their patronage has been hampered by the general perception that most made-in-Ghana goods are of inferior quality due to poor packaging. However, for the Ghanaian market, despite low patronage (Mensah, Bahhouth and Ziemnowicz, 2011; Bamfo, 2012), communication strategies that identify the product with superior quality and positions the brand in the consumer’s mind should be implemented.

In contrast, as shown in Table 3, about 77% of shopkeepers felt foreign packaging were much more effective and fully advertised products. Although there were no cases of outright rejection of foreign products, 23% of shopkeepers were indifferent to the packaging, possibly suggesting a key consideration to be product efficacy and not necessarily packaging effectiveness, underlying a lack of understanding the role of effective packaging by these shopkeepers (Estiri, Hasangholipour, Yazdani, Nejad and Rayej, 2010; Deliya and Parmar, 2012). Packagings of foreign products were mostly made to suit international standards, employing modern technologies and materials as well as well-trained designers. Consequently, favourable perceptual values attributed to packaged foreign products were the reason for the desire of most shopkeepers in stocking them than local ones.

### **Strategies for Made-In-Ghana Products Market Performance**

There is the need for the evolvement of appropriate production and marketing strategies that caters for the characteristics of available markets, both local and international (Matsuno and Mentzer, 2000; Aulakh, Rotate and Teegen, 2000), thereby ensuring much better performance of local products and hence improved perceptual values from shopkeepers. This could possibly translate into downstream payment of higher prices for attractive well-packaged products from consumers. Improved surface graphics, possibly bothering on ethnocentric design, could be employed for enhanced attractiveness of local products. Adherence to the Ghanaian required legal framework- Labelling Law LI 1541- by all stake holders in the packaging industry, would ensure the provision of legally required information which goes a long way in product surveillance and recall, despite possible compliance issues (Rose, L.D., 2012; Opoku-Adjel, E.Y., 2014). The pursuit of quality assurance benchmarks by the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) and voluntary certification systems by groups would serve to ensure a greater export volume of local products.

Use of required quality packaging materials should be used for product protection and ensured longer shelf lives. An improvement in product branding should be adequately promoted, since product differentiation through brand positioning enables better market penetration for local products. There should be adequate promotion so that the general public becomes well informed of the many good locally manufactured products on the market (Kellogg, D.M., 2014; Saffu and Walker, 2006; Opoku and Akorli, 2009).

## CONCLUSION

This study focused on the evaluation of the perception of shopkeepers on packaging of Made-in-Ghana Products and the implications for local producers, policy makers, law enforcement agencies and consumers. The perceptual value attached to goods and services by key stakeholders, especially shopkeepers, play a key role in their overall market performance. The study revealed that, majority of shops (93.4%) were engaged in the sale of confectionaries, toiletries and fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) such as milo, milk and so on.

There were stark shopkeeper perceptual value differences between the packaging of foreign products and the locally manufactured ones, where 77% of shopkeepers felt foreign packaging were much more effective and fully advertised products. There were also no cases of rejection of foreign products, since packaging of foreign products were made to comply with international standards, employing modern technologies and materials as well as well-trained designers. Consequently, favourable perceptual values attributed to packaged foreign products were the reason for the desire of most shopkeepers in stocking them than local ones.

Conversely, 100% perceptual value attributed by shop operators related to poor and shabby local packaging, inadequate information provision, coupled with unattractive packaging which were non reflective of Ghanaian culture. Furthermore, the study indicated that about 41% of the shop operators experienced product rejection because of poor packaging. This phenomena was linked to instances of lack of expiry dates, exposed product content, leaking containers, difficulty in package openability, discrepancies in weights and measurements, faded labels, non-disclosure of the presence of additives, preservatives and other chemicals. Evidently, packaging and labeling of Ghanaian products lack the quality that can make them competitive in any market. Therefore,

their patronage has been hampered by the general perception that most made-in-Ghana goods are of inferior quality due to poor packaging.

However, communication strategies that identify the product with superior quality packaging, enhanced surface graphics, possibly bothering on ethnocentric design, could also be employed for product differentiation through brand positioning (Mensah, Bahhouth and Ziemnowicz, 2011; Bamfo, 2012). This ensures much better market performance of local products and hence improved perceptual values from shopkeepers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The poor packaging of most locally manufactured products, regardless of their quality, has affected their competitiveness both locally and internationally. Ghanaian products can only capture the local market through an improvement in the quality and aesthetic value of their packaging to meet international standards and are in line with international best practices. A massive education on redesigning most unattractive packages would be beneficial. Seminars should be organized for manufacturers and packaging designers. Adherence to the Ghanaian required legal framework, regulations and agreed upon protocols by all stake holders in the packaging industry, would ensure the provision of legally required information on packages which goes a long way in building a network of better distribution channels, product surveillance, defect management, product recall and compliance. The pursuit of quality assurance benchmarks by the Food and Drugs Authority (FDA) and voluntary certification systems by groups would serve to ensure a greater export volume of local products as well as a possible dominant position in the local and sub-regional markets. A consequent resultant reduction in imports could lead to favourable balance of payments.

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