

## Influence of Packaging on the Buying Decisions of College Students

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**ABSTRACT:** The primary aim of this study is to identify key packaging factors that significantly impact consumers' buying decisions. This research seeks to uncover the pivotal elements associated with packaging effects that contribute to a brand's success. To effectively design packaging that resonates with consumers, companies need a deep understanding of the consumer buying process and a clear grasp of packaging's role as a variable influencing purchase decisions. Therefore, gaining insights into the factors that sway the purchasing behavior of college students and pinpointing the most crucial packaging elements can assist companies in making informed decisions about their product packaging strategies. A potential challenge of this study is the limited scope of the sample, which comprises of 75 college students in Hyderabad. Extrapolating findings from this specific demographic to a broader consumer base may be challenging due to variations in consumer behavior among different age groups and regions. Despite these challenges, the study offers valuable insights into the packaging factors influencing purchasing decisions among college students in Hyderabad, shedding light on a specific consumer segment. The findings can serve as a starting point for businesses looking to tailor their packaging strategies for this demographic, and it underscores the importance of understanding consumer preferences and the role of packaging in shaping buying decisions.

**Keywords:** Packaging, Students, Buying behavior, Purchase.

### INTRODUCTION

Packaging has emerged as a pivotal factor in contemporary product marketing. Recent research underscores the profound influence of packaging on consumer behavior during purchasing decisions, shedding light on various aspects that shape consumer preferences (Smith and Johnson 2021). Predictors such as the choice of packaging material, color scheme, background imagery, font style, wrapper design, label information, and innovative elements have all been identified as critical elements impacting consumer choices (Adams and White 2019).

In an era marked by the growing prevalence of self-service shopping and changing consumer lifestyles, the significance of packaging as a tool for sales promotion and an enabler of impulsive buying behavior is on the rise (Brown and Green 2022). Packaging now holds a central role in marketing communications, particularly at the point of sale, making it one of the most influential factors in shaping consumer purchasing decisions (Roberts, 2020).

Recent studies, as highlighted by Davis and Smith (2018), have emphasized that effective packaging

captures consumers' attention towards a specific brand, enhances its image, and molds consumer perceptions of the product. The role of packaging is not limited to aesthetics; it is also instrumental for product identification and differentiation in the eyes of consumers (Harrison and Young 2019). Not only does it ensure the safe and efficient delivery of products, but it also provides a means for companies to distinguish their offerings from those of competitors (Wilson, 2021).

To make informed decisions about packaging, companies must delve deeper into the contemporary factors influencing consumer purchasing behavior, as identified in recent research, such as sustainability considerations and the impact of e-commerce on packaging preferences (Johnson, 2017). In light of the growing prevalence of self-service shopping and the evolving lifestyles of consumers, the significance of packaging as a means of sales promotion and a catalyst for impulsive buying behavior is on the rise. Indeed, packaging plays a pivotal role in marketing communications, particularly at the point of sale, and can be considered one of the most influential factors

shaping consumer purchasing decisions. As noted by Raheem *et al.* (2014), packaging serves to capture consumers' attention towards a specific brand, enhances its image, and molds consumers' perceptions of the product.

#### Objectives of the Study:

1. To assess the influence of packaging on college students.
2. To determine how packaging factors impact the purchasing behavior of college students.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Raheem *et al.* (2014), their observations emphasize the paramount importance of packaging in influencing consumer behavior. Key packaging elements such as color, packaging material, wrapper design, and innovation emerge as crucial factors that significantly impact consumers' purchasing decisions. Their study underscores the notion that packaging wields considerable influence and stands as a potent determinant in shaping consumer buying choices. Furthermore, their findings indicate that, for many consumers, product quality is positively evaluated after the purchase, suggesting that effective packaging can contribute to favorable post-purchase experiences.

In the study conducted by Mazhar *et al.* (2015) regarding the influence of product packaging on consumer buying behavior in Karachi city, several noteworthy findings emerged. The research highlighted the pivotal role of packaging as a paramount tool in product marketing, serving as a means of communication with consumers. One key observation was the positive impact of packaging color on consumers. The study revealed that consumers were more drawn to dark and visually appealing packaging colors, which, in turn, influenced their purchasing decisions positively. Nisar and Kanwal (2021) studied on packaging impact on consumer buying behavior in the district of Bhakkar in Pakistan and found that sales has increased as packaging improved. The reason is that packaging is not only used for the protection of commodities but also performs lots of responsibilities including value-adding, prestige and informs to buyers. Most of the customers believed that packaging color, designing, material and information as important packaging elements. And also found a negative impact of background image and font style with their buying decision.

The findings from Amin *et al.* (2015) underscore the significance of packaging as a primary tool for gaining a competitive advantage in the market. Their study emphasizes that various elements of packaging, including color, size, material, quality, and design, serve as instrumental tools for boosting product sales. Packaging is recognized as a means of effectively conveying essential information about the product, thereby attracting consumers and facilitating their purchase decisions. Moreover, the size of the packaging plays a pivotal role in product selection, influencing consumers' perceptions and choices in the process.

The study conducted by Zekiri and Hasani (2015) highlighted several key points regarding the role of packaging in consumer behavior and marketing strategies:

**Packaging Color:** The research revealed that packaging color is crucial factor in helping consumers differentiate their preferred brands. Additionally, it serves as a tool for companies to capture consumers' attention and generate interest in their products.

**Consumer Value Labels:** Consumers highly value labels on products because they provide essential information about the product, including its origin, content, and usage. These labels not only assist consumers in making informed choices but also enable companies to promote their products effectively in the market.

**Information on Packaging:** The information displayed on packaging plays a pivotal role in supporting a company's marketing communication strategies. It helps in establishing brand identity and image. Printed information encompassing details about product quality, pricing, and descriptions aids customers in identifying the product and streamlines the decision-making process during the purchase.

**Language on Packaging:** The choice of language used on the packaging was also observed to influence consumer behavior during the buying process, suggesting that the linguistic aspect of packaging plays a role in shaping consumer preferences and decisions.

#### METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research design was used for this study with a simple questionnaire. Simple random sampling was done to collect data among 75 students who were studying intermediate, graduation and post-graduation in Hyderabad. The questionnaire consists of a total of 11 questions related to the packaging. The data collected were analyzed through percentages and frequencies in which the data were presented in table formats.

#### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Age of the respondents

According to Fig. 1, it is evident that a substantial majority, approximately 79% of the respondents, fell within the age bracket of 19 to 22 years. The remaining 21% were below the age of 19 years.

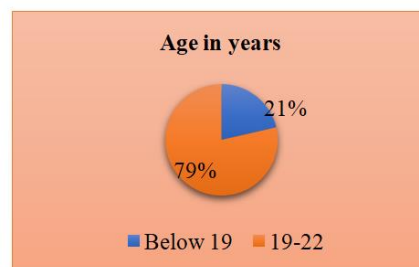


Fig. 1. Age of the respondents.

##### B. Education of the respondents

As depicted in Fig. 2, a significant majority of respondents, approximately 79%, are currently pursuing

their undergraduate degrees. Additionally, fourteen percent of respondents are actively engaged in post-graduate studies. The remaining seven percent of respondents are in the intermediate stage of their education.

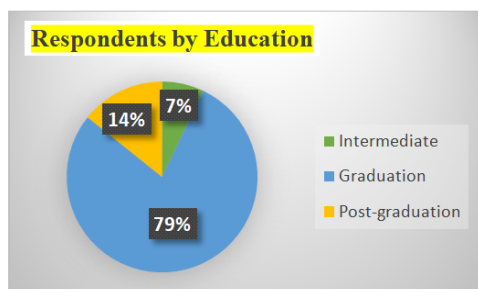


Fig. 2. Education of the respondents.

#### C. Monthly family income of the respondents

A significant portion of the respondents, specifically 47%, reported having a monthly family income of below Rs. 30,000/-. Another 27% fell within the income range of Rs. 30,000 to 50,000/- per month. Furthermore, 22% indicated a monthly family income falling between Rs. 50,000 to 1,00,000/-. In contrast, a smaller but notable four percent of respondents reported a monthly family income exceeding one lakh rupees.

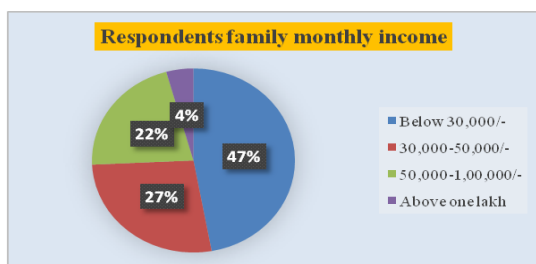


Fig. 3. Monthly family incomes of the respondents.

#### D. Influence of packaging on purchase by respondents

Based on the data presented in Figure 4, it becomes evident that the impact of packaging on consumers' purchasing decisions is substantial. A majority of respondents, comprising 59%, acknowledged that packaging plays a significant role in influencing their product choices. Additionally, 34% of respondents reported being occasionally influenced by packaging, while a smaller group of seven percent stated that packaging did not influence their purchasing decisions at all.



Fig. 4. Influence of packaging to purchase by respondents.

A study on role of packaging in consumer purchasing decision by Khan *et al.* (2022) found that packaging

factors such as information on the package, design of the product wrapper and packaging quality had a significant impact on consumer purchasing decision.

#### E. Factors affecting the purchase of the product

As depicted in Figure 5, the findings of the current study underscore the significance of product quality as the most influential factor in shaping purchase decisions, as highlighted by a substantial majority of respondents, accounting for 60%. Other factors that impact product purchases include price, with 17% of respondents considering it a significant factor, brand reputation, which holds importance for 16% of respondents, and the product's design, noted as a key factor by 5% of those surveyed, as illustrated in Fig. 5.

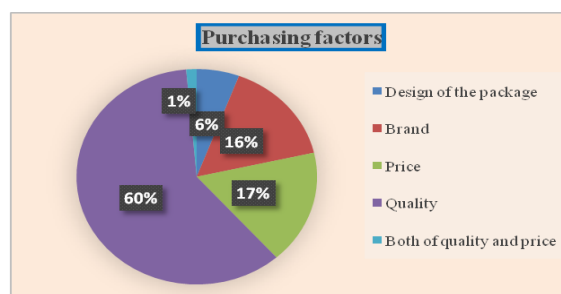


Fig. 5. Factors affecting the purchase of the product.

As shown in the Fig. 5, it was found that quality is the most important factor that affects the purchase of the product as quoted by the (60%) respondents' of the current study. The other factors affecting purchase of the product are price (17%), brand (16%) and design of the product (5%) as shown in the Figure 5.

The impact of product information on packaging on consumer purchase decisions by Singh and Kaur (2019) found that the product information on packaging had a significant impact on consumer purchase decisions, with consumers being more likely to purchase products with packaging that provided clear and accurate information about the product.

#### F. Respondents priority towards packaging

Approximately 48% of the respondents emphasized that the foremost priority for packaging should be its protective function in safeguarding the product. Another significant portion, accounting for 33%, prioritized eco-friendliness in packaging. A smaller but still noteworthy percentage, around 16%, deemed attractiveness as a key priority for packaging. Lastly, a minority of three percent mentioned other priorities such as safety and transport considerations.

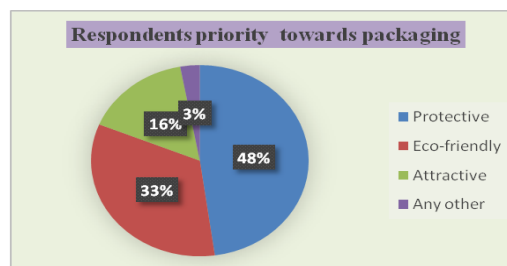


Fig. 6. Respondents priority towards packaging.

The impact of packaging quality on consumer purchase decisions by Kumar and Mathur (2018) found that packaging quality had a significant impact on consumer purchase decisions, with consumers being more likely to purchase products with high-quality packaging.

#### G. Switching brand due to change in package

As shown in Fig. 7, it's evident that respondents' purchasing behaviors in response to packaging changes vary. Approximately 40% of the participants reported switching to different brands when packaging changes occur. Conversely, 41% remained loyal to their current brand and did not switch to others. Additionally, an additional 40% indicated that they occasionally switch to other brands. These differences in brand-switching tendencies may be attributed to a range of factors, including the types of incentives offered by brands such as discounts, free gift coupons, gift hampers, buy 1 get 1 offers, and more.

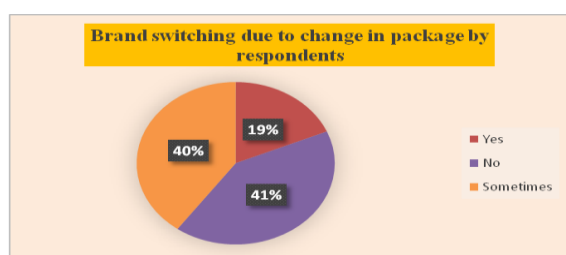


Fig. 7. Switching brand due to change in package.

#### H. Packaging features

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it becomes evident that several factors played a significant role in influencing respondents' purchasing decisions. Specifically, 75% of the participants were swayed by the product information displayed on the packaging. Furthermore, a substantial 73% of respondents were influenced by the quality and type of packaging. The design of the package also held sway over a majority, with 51% indicating it played a role in their decision-making process. Language featured on the packaging had an impact on 37% of the respondents, while the color of the packaging influenced the choices of 35% of those surveyed.

Table 1: Features that influencing the respondents purchasing behavior towards packaging.

Packaging features	N= 75
Packaging Color	35%
Design of the package	51%
Language used on package	37%
Product Information on the package	75%
Packaging Quality/ Kind of Packaging	73%

The impact of package design on consumer purchase decisions by Gupta and Jain (2021) found that package design had a significant impact on consumer purchase decisions, with consumers being more likely to purchase products with visually appealing and informative packaging.

#### I. Packaging factors effecting on purchasing

Table 2 illustrates various packaging factors and their impact on the purchasing decision. The majority of

respondents considered information on packaging to be highly influential, with 88% acknowledging its significance. Additionally, 80% of respondents believed that packaging serves as a form of advertisement for a product. Evaluating a product based on printed information on the packaging was considered important by 79% of respondents. However, only 48% of respondents stated that they evaluate a product based on printed information. Interestingly, paying an extra amount for superior packaging was found to have a lower impact on purchasing decisions, with only 41.3% of respondents indicating its relevance.

Table 2: Packaging factors effecting on purchasing by respondents.

N= 75			
Factors	Yes	No	Sometimes
Information on packaging	88	5.3	-
Evaluate product according to printed information	79	15	-
Design of the product wrapper	48	44	-
Pay an extra amount for good packaging	13.1	41.3	38.6
Packaging of a product leads to its advertisement	80	13.3	-

Research study on packaging factor influencing consumer buying decision in confectionery item by Behera and Mohanty (2021) found that packaging elements such as graphics and font style, color, shape, size, packaging material, and information on the package were all important factors when consumers made purchasing decisions for confectionery items.

#### J. Levels of satisfaction in relation to the packaging parameters

In Table 3, the satisfaction levels of respondents regarding packaging elements were analyzed. For packages with attractive backgrounds, the majority expressed satisfaction (69.1%), with a notable 10.3% strongly satisfied and 20.6% holding a neutral view. In the context of packaging innovation importance, responses varied, with 57.9% reporting satisfaction, 21.8% expressing neutrality, 20.3% being highly satisfied and only 3.1% indicating dissatisfaction. Furthermore, when considering the impact of innovative packaging on purchasing decisions, 47.7% were satisfied, 33.8% held a neutral stance, 13.8% were highly satisfied, and 4.7% reported dissatisfaction. Respondent satisfaction with creative font styles in packaging also varied, with 40% expressing satisfaction, 27.7% remaining neutral, 16.9% being highly satisfied, 13.8% dissatisfied, and 1.6% highly dissatisfied. In terms of the importance of wrapper design in packaging, 54.9% were satisfied, 25.8% were neutral, 12.9% were highly satisfied, 9.8% reported dissatisfaction, and 1.6% was highly dissatisfied. Lastly, regarding the significance of beautiful backgrounds in packaging, the satisfaction levels ranged from neutral (41%) to satisfied (33.4%), highly satisfied (18%), dissatisfied (9.8%), and highly dissatisfied (1.6%).

**Table 3: Levels of satisfaction by respondents in relation to the packaging parameters.**

Parameters	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Highly dissatisfied
Package having attractive background	10.3	69.1	20.6	-	-
Innovation is important in packaging	20.3	57.9	21.8	3.1	-
The innovative package can change your decision while purchasing	13.8	47.7	33.8	4.7	-
Creative font style in package	16.9	40	27.7	13.8	1.6
Wrapper design is important in packaging	12.9	54.9	25.8	9.8	1.6
Beautiful Backgrounds	18.0	33.4	41.0	6.0	1.6

## CONCLUSIONS

The present study conducted among 75 intermediates, graduates and post graduates college students on impact of packaging and purchasing behavior. The current study revealed that design, information provided on package, quality of packaging mostly affecting the respondents to purchase products/while purchasing. Sometimes respondents pay an extra amount for good packaging. It can also be concluded that the attractive background, innovative packaging and the design of the packaging wrapper influences the college students towards product purchase.

## FUTURE SCOPE

Given the increasing significance of e-commerce, investigating how packaging factors influence online shopping decisions could be a relevant research area. Comparing packaging preferences and their influence on consumer choices across different cultures or regions can reveal cross-cultural variations and universal packaging principles.

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**Conflict of Interest.** None.

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