

SENSORY MARKETING: THE EFFECT OF TACTILE CUE ON PRODUCT PACKAGING TOWARDS PERCEIVED NOVELTY AND PERCEIVED LIKEABILITY

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Abstract. According to the research conducted by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in 2015, Indonesian consumer usually will not try for new brands unless they have had a negative experience with a product used in the past. On the other hand, they could try new a product if they hear or know something significant about a new product or the product feature. Therefore marketers need to find new and innovative strategies to interact with the customer. As the sensory marketing emerges as the new strategy in recent pass years, there is one sense that has started to break a new ground and seize the attention of researchers and marketers all around the world, which is the sense of touch or tactition. In particular, the research examined the utilization of tactile cue on product packaging as the new strategy towards perceived novelty and perceived likeability. Furthermore, nowadays less research is explored regarding the potential impact of the tactile cue on product packaging. The study constructed in experimental research design and analyzed by using Paired t-test and Wilconox signed-rank Test. The finding shows customer feel the novelty and more prefer towards the packaging that utilized tactile cue. Consequently, it could increase the opportunity for the product to be chosen by customer. However, further research has to be done regarding the relationship between tactile cue and customer's purchase decision to obtain more impactful result in utilizing tactile cue on the product packaging.

Keywords: Sensory marketing, Tactile cue, Product packaging.

Introduction

Nowadays, most of the biggest companies in the world have been working to provide the product based on customer needs. They are competing to seize customer's attention and interest through different various strategies. One strategy can be considerable is product packaging. As stated by Ranjbarian (2009), packaging has become an effective tool to lead the customer to the purchase intention. When customer is attracted towards the product packaging, it will increase the opportunity for the product to be chosen by customer. According to Underwood, Klein & Burke, 2001; Silayoi & Speece, 2004, packaging represents the brand or the company behind the product, which helps customer to identify the product difference compared to the others. Moreover, to confiscate the consumer's attention through the product packaging, marketers are increasingly starting to explore the opportunities of utilizing sensory marketing strategies.

There are five senses: touch, hearing, taste, smell, and sight that people feel in the world. It means that sensory experience is essential in how companies, brands, and products are evaluated at the Point of Purchase (POP) and during consumption. According to Hultén, Broweus & van Dijk (2008), sensory marketing can help to generate positive evaluations and increase brand loyalty. Furthermore, over 30% of the largest brands in the world already have started utilizing sensory marketing in the last few years (Johnson, 2007). Lindstrom (2005) stated that sight or vision is the most powerful sense compared to the other four senses. However, there is one sense that has

started to break new ground and seize the attention of researchers and marketers all around the world, the sense of touch or tactition.

The sense of touch has a significant role in evaluating many products (Spence & Gallace, 2011). For instance, in the clothing market, people tend to feel the quality of the product by touching it (Citrin, Stem, Spangenberg & Clark, 2003). What the process showed previously is that the inherent material properties can be used to diagnose for product performance. It is making tactition as an essential tool when evaluating products (Citrin et al., 2003). However, it is totally different for packaged products that could not provide information on material properties. Packaging makes difficult for the customer to diagnose the product performance. Where the protecting package is covering the goods, there is usually no related information to be obtained through tactile cue. Therefore, nowadays almost nothing is explored regarding the potential impact of the tactile cue on product packaging.

Problem Identification

According to the research conducted by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in 2015, Indonesian consumer usually will not try for new brands unless they have had a negative experience with a product used in the past. Besides, they could try new a product if they hear or know something significant about a new product or the product feature. Therefore marketers need to find new and innovative strategies to get interact with the customer. Along with recent technological developments, a company does not need to spend high cost in modifying the feel of the package (Spence & Gallace, 2011). Bo Rundh (2013) stated that packaging is not only to protect and preserve the product before reaching the customer, but it also offers the opportunities to improve communication with the customer. Consequently, the last few years have been seen as the early stage of exciting and prosperous developments for the utilization of product packaging with tactile cue. La Vieja Fabrica for instance, they shaped the jar for the jam based on its flavor. It provides multisensory realistic fruit peels by using the visual and tactile cue.

If tactile cue helps in assessing the product performance, gathering tactile information could be important. But according to Percy & Elliot (2009), if the tactile cue is irrelevant for the product performance or it could not make a difference on product evaluation, the customer is rarely rational. For example, as explored by Krishna and Morrin (2008), the customer could evaluate a drink based on the feel of the glass. Accordingly, there is a reason to consider that marketers could utilize product packaging as the tactile cue even if the product or material inside does not provide relevant performance information. On the other hands, there is still less research done within the area. Thus, gaining an understanding of how tactile cue could affect interaction with the product is essential for the sensory marketing research.

Research Question

This research aims to answer the following research questions:

How tactile cue on product packaging could generate perceived novelty?

How tactile cue on product packaging could generate perceived likeability?

Literatuare review

Sensory Marketing

Conventional marketing strategy, for instance advertising, only focuses on engaging customer through auditory and visual communication. It is here where a failing may occurs and companies start to communicate their brands insufficiently. Therefore marketing strategy needs to reinvent itself. Thus, a new approach where long-lasting relationship between the customer and the brand need to be explored by utilizing creative and distinctive communication strategy (Barwise, 2004). As time goes, sensory marketing has started rising as the new approach to engaging customers.

Sense of Touch

Studies of sensory information have mostly focused on visual sense (e.g., Baars, 1997; Singer, 1998; VanRullen & Koch, 2003). This is relatively surprising as the first sense to develop is touch. As early as 4th Century BC, a Greek Philosopher, Aristotle proposed his theory about sensation hierarchy. He stated that our five senses are ordered hierarchically with touch on the beginning. As stated by Marmodoro (2014), Aristotle argued, "Touch provided an authentic picture of the intrinsic nature of the object." For instance, the soft fur of a kitten would be indicating its inherent softness character.

Touch is classified as one of the five senses along with sight, smell, taste, and hearing. Touch is one sense that has an essential role among all of the sensory experiences, which also be considered as an underlying form of non-visual perception (Gibson, 1966). Moreover, according to Spence & Gallace (2011), touch is one of the hardest sense to be manipulated or counterfeited and the sense that customers trust the most. Consequently, it would be a great advantage if products can seize customer's attention based on the tactile input. The sense of touch has further been determined to have an influence towards customer's impulse. Moreover, the exploration to physically interact with the product has been proven to be effective in term of the number of purchased products (Peck and Childers, 2006). The need of touch for a product in general will be different from one individual to another. One will be contented with touching the product just only once while others will need more time to evaluate the product before they make a decision to purchase. (Peck and Childers, 2003b).

Touch in Packaging

Designing products that 'feel' good in a potential customer's hands or on whichever part of a customer's body, they are likely to come into contact with, actually has a surprisingly long history. Back in 1932 (i.e., just after the last stock market crash), the importance of making products feel good was stressed by Sheldon and Arens (1932). Egmont Arens, director of the Industrial Styling Division of Calkins and Holden and his colleague Roy Sheldon, championed an approach to product design known as 'consumer engineering' (or 'humaneering' after John Dewey who first coined this term; see Sheldon & Arens, 1932). It was a business tool for designing products that more closely addressed the tastes and needs of the typical consumer (Calkins, 1932). Thirty-five years later, Donald Cox (1967) highlighted the importance of lining the pockets of fur coats in materials that were pleasing to touch to promote sales. More recently, Helander (2003) has noted that a consciously built-in 'good feeling' to a product can be sufficient to trigger the final purchasing decision. However, although the importance of tactile stimulation in shopping behavior has been mentioned periodically over the intervening years (e.g., Cox, 1967; Fiore, 1993; Holbrook, 1983; Spence, 2002); the majority of product design efforts have, at least until recently, been directed toward customers' other senses. It is including the visual, olfactory, and, where appropriate, gustatory aspects of product design or marketing. (e.g., Ellison & White, 2000; Neff, 2000; Trivedi, 2006; though see Barnes & Lillford, 2006; Namagachi, 1995; Schütte, Eklund, Ishihara, & Nagamachi, 2008).

Perception

Perception is considered as the process of attaining sensory information, interpreting it, sorting the interesting one and then organizes it (Peck and Childers, 2008). While sensation refers to the early stage of both identifying and encoding the environment around us, perception is referring to a psychological process, which includes context, connection, meaning, past experiences and memory as primary factors (Schiffman, 2001). To perceptually interpret environment around us, it requires specialized sensory receptors such as our five sense organs. Those organs are the eyes for vision, the nose for olfaction, the tongue for gustation, the ear for hearing, or the skin for touching. Stimuli are defined as the factors from an environment that evoked perception or sensory impressions (Davis and Murphey, 1994). When a stimulus is given, each organ will respond reactively. The respond then will be forwarded to the brain via the central nervous system.

Novelty

A novel product contains something that has been created and is original (Cambridge, 2007). Product novelty has been commonly studied as the deviation in a new product from the current state of the market. More specifically, it is the degree to which the new product differ from other existing products in its category (e.g. Fang, 2008a; Lau, Yam, & Tang, 2011; Sethi, Smith, & Park, 2001a; Talke, Salomo, Wieringa, & Lutz, 2009). Thus, author operationalizes novelty concerning how “new” the product is, both regarding for the new features and within feature categories about existing products (Chakrabarti, 2009). Following Chakrabarti (2009), if a new product has particular features or characteristics, it would be depicted as more novel. On the other hand, if a particular new product were not different from existing products concerning product features and characteristics, it would be considered as less novel.

Perceived Likeability

Perceived likeability is a psychological factor that affects consumers’ reactions to a source such as a company, brand, price, or other marketing tactics (e.g. Reysen, 2005). For this study, perceived likeability would be focused toward marketing tactic, which is the utilization of tactile cue in product packaging. As mentioned by Bo Rundh (2013) that packaging is not only to protect and preserve the product before reaching customer but it also offers the opportunities to improve communication with the customer. Research suggests that consumers are concerned with likeability of the brand or product when they find it engaging and that they are often averse to purchase the brand or product that is perceived as dislikeable (Eagly et al., 1991).

Hypotheses Generation

The brand owner needs to seize customer’s attention towards numerous products available in the market while the packaging is just the only thing that directly interacts with the customer in the Point of Purchase. Furthermore, brand owner has to create something that is totally different in term of product packaging to make it stand out compared with other similar products. As stated by Fang, 2008b; Katila, 2002; Martin & Mitchell, 1998; Sethi et al., 2001b; Wu et al., 2004 that novelty examines how the distinct product differs on product features and attributes relative to other existing product offerings. Novelty indicates that a product could be perceived as entirely different if it is categorized as novel. Consequently, the first hypothesis is generated:

H1. Including a tactile element in the product packaging will increase the perceived novelty

Novelty has been used as a measure of the degree of newness of an innovation (Amabile, 1996). In this study, newness of an innovation refers to the utilization of tactile cue in product packaging. As mentioned by Bo Rundh (2013) that packaging is not only to protect and preserve the product before reaching customer but it also offers the opportunities to improve communication with customer as the part of marketing strategy or tactics. Even tough, customer has different reactions to address the newness of an innovation itself. In order to measure their reactions, perceived likeability is included. Perceived likeability is a psychological factors that influences consumer’s reactions to a source such as a firm, brand, price, or other marketing tactics (e.g. Reysen, 2005). Before customer decide whether they want to purchase the product or not, perceived likeability has major role in customer’s buying decision. Finally, the second hypotheses is generated:

H2. Including a tactile element in the product packaging will increase the perceived likeability.

Methodology

In this research, the author adopts a deductive approach regarding the hypotheses, which are developed based on existing theory and knowledge (Bryman & Bell, 2007). An experimental research design was chosen due to the nature of the study, which considers that respondents need to interact directly with product packaging. As stated by Bryman and Bell (2007), an experiment could be explained as intentional manipulation of independent variables, which is done to determine whether it could influence the dependent variable. Webster and Sell (2007) emphasized that the advantage of an experimental design is the opportunity to comprise the independent variables while eliminating irrelevant factors. This process creates the possibility of the relationship between independent and dependent variables to be more accurate. Moreover, Churchill and Iacobucci (2005) also stated that an experiment could generate more reliable evidence of causal relationships rather than exploratory research. The sample size for the study is 47 people who living in Bandung and divided into four groups based on demographic (gender and age)

Initial Work

Initial work is needed to determine the sequence of the research steps. Those steps are designing product packaging and selection of stimuli/modification material. Moreover, the measures have to be done sequentially.

Designing Product Packaging and Basic Material

The objective of first initial work is to design the product packaging that is appropriate to be tested. Considering the product packaging must not including brand to show, the author decided to create own packaging with a standard shape, cuboid. The packaging is not modified (not including tactile element) for pre-test group and modified (including tactile element) for the post-test group. Furthermore, the primary material is made from paperboard as it dominated global packaging material in 2012 with a total percentage of 34% (www.ey.com, 2013).

Selection of Stimuli or Modification Material

The objective of second initial work is to determine the right material/stimuli to modify the product packaging. As mentioned in section 2.7.1, the author wants to examine the relationship between the tactile cue and perceived novelty. Therefore the material has to be rarely found or never been found in the market, which is fabric.

Sampling Technique

In obtaining the robustness of the data, stratified sampling was used. As stated by Malhotra (2004), stratified sampling separates the population into different subgroups and then takes the sample from each subgroup. The sample was divided into four different groups based on demographic aspects, which were gender and age. Random assignment was conducted during the experiment where the respondents assigned into those four groups to assure that all groups are similar to each other and increase the internal validity.

Regarding to the sample size as suggested by Roscoe (1975) and Sekaran (2006), a simple experimental research with tight control and sample size as small as 10 to 20 could be successful and adequate. Therefore, the sample size for this study was 11-12 respondents for each group, and total 47 respondents for all groups. Although the sample size could be expanded to the maximum number (n=20 for each group), but due to limitation of resources, 11-12 respondents for each group were acceptable.

To extend the robustness of the data, respondents must fulfill two requirements. First requirement or general requirement for all groups must be the people who have ever visited convenience store and acted as the decision maker during the purchase. Secondly, the specific requirement for each group was based on respondents' gender: male and female. Because as stated by Mitchell and

Walsh (2004), males and females want or need different kind of products, which leads to the different way of liking and obtaining something. The last specific requirement or the third requirement for each group was based on respondents' age: 18-24 years for the people living independently such as college students living in dormitory or boarding house, and 25-34 years old for the decision maker within the family such as mother or father.

Table 3. 1 Grouping For The Experiment

Group	Requirement	Number of Respondents
1	Male, 18 – 24 years old	12 people
2	Male, 25 – 34 years old	11 people (1 people was absent)
3	Female, 18 – 24 years old	12 people
4	Female, 25 – 34 years old	12 people
Total		47 people

Findings

By conducting two testing method, Paired t-test and Wilconox signed-ranked test, the finding shows that including tactile cue in the product packaging could increase the perceived novelty (Group 1: $0.002 < 0.05$), (Group 2: $0.000 < 0.05$), (Group 3: $0.002 < 0.005$), and (Group 4: $0.000 < 0.005$). Therefore author concludes that hypothesis 1 is supported. While in the perceived likeability, result of four different groups showed that including tactile cue in the product packaging could increase the perceived likeability (Group 1: $0.033 < 0.05$), (Group 2: $0.037 < 0.05$), (Group 3: $0.032 < 0.05$), and (Group 4: $0.005 < 0.05$). Therefore, the findings lead the second hypothesis to be supported.

Conclusion

As the study has been examined, the author concludes that including tactile element in product packaging could increase the perceived novelty. As previously mentioned that product packaging for the packaged product cannot be utilized to evaluate the product itself, however including tactile element in the product packaging for the packaged product could generate perceived novelty and considered as different compared to other similar products available.

The finding also states that including tactile element in product packaging could increase the perceived likeability. The perceived likeability can be interpreted as positive initial reaction towards products or brands. Therefore, it could increase the opportunity for the product to be chosen by customer. However, further research has to be done to obtain the relationship between tactile cue and customer's purchase decision.

Managerial Implications

Based on the findings, tactile cue could be be applied by brand owner towards product packaging for the packaged product. However, it is limited for the product that only could be associated with the product packaging itself (e.g. softness, which use cotton as the tactile cue for softener product; and texturized, which use rind as the tactile cue for juice or fruit drinks).

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