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## Examining Consumer Perception and Purchase Intention of Gift Packaging: A Case Study of Chinese Consumers on Green Tea Packaging

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### Abstract

Tea industry in China is continuing flourish and the sales volume increasing. It is significant for China tea industry focuses on upgrading their marketing strategy in boosting consumption and make it exclusive in the international market. The aim of this research was to identify the impact of gift packaging on consumer perception and their purchase intention. The literature revealed the colour of packaging influences consumer perception and purchase intention in China. This paper proposes two research questions; (1) Does packaging elements influence consumer perception and purchase intention? And (2) Does packaging elements increases business sales to different culture? Findings of this study can be added into current knowledge and literature for future reference. Furthermore, the findings show that consumers have spatial visual attention shifting from product to another product and impact on their evaluation of product evaluation and satisfaction. The findings also show that consumers perceive the brand with distinctive and unique meanings through its packaging elements that meet with contemporary consumers' functional and psychological needs. Additionally, the new insights obtained from this research are important for Chinese green tea businesses and marketers on determining long-term new product developments and in developing the marketing mix for packaging elements that are marketed and can influence consumer purchase intention. This research indicated that utilising packaging elements to influence consumer perception and their purchase intention.

**Keywords:** Packaging Elements, Purchase Intention, Consumer Perception, Chinese Green Tea

### Introduction

China is currently the world's largest supplier of green tea. China used to be the greatest tea supplier and exporter; however, the country has long been affected by a lack of domestic green tea brands. Due to the increasingly higher level of competition of the tea industry and the demand to adapt to consumers' preferences, Chinese tea companies have emphasised on brand development and product marketing strategy to enhance their products' appearances. An effective marketing communication through packaging is important in boosting consumers' awareness with and positive attitudes towards a brand.

The culture of gifting tea is popular among Chinese people. Gifting tea is a gesture as a thinking of you and praying for one health or long life. Today, the tea market become more aggressive and competitive. Many businesses become competitive and offer customised and eco-friendly packaging. Chinese green tea is a popular gift in the Chinese culture and consume among Chinese people. The Chinese people drinking the tea for health and wellness especially at home or visiting someone's home. In China, tea plays significant role in the construction of contemporary national and regional identities that presented and represented for tourists in the form of tea houses, museums, tea trails, guided tours and tea tastings (Weber, 2018). People around the world drinking tea in daily bases and the tea consumption is higher. Based on Kosugi (2022), total tea consumption is 3000000 tons a year and China is the second biggest tea consumption and Middle Eastern countries, follow up with Western countries and other countries. Black tea as Western culture and green tea as Eastern culture, however the green tea has impact on the mental balance, therefore it is leading more people in the Western to consume green tea (Kosugi, 2022).

However, to date, businesses and marketers need to think about how green tea might be packaged so that it can be given as a gift and enhance brand identity. It's not only about who you're selling to; it's also about where you put the products in the market. The green tea packaging must have the ability to handle easily, preserve all nutritional characteristics to appear wealthier; to appear cheaper; to serve as a present; to serve as a memory of consumers' experience. The elements of motifs and visual can offer unique blend cultures of values that can be interpret through Chinese green tea packaging that carry specific cultural meaning and symbols. It is important for the manufacturers and businesses to play significant role to carry the Chinese identity and can be sell worldwide. However, research also confirmed that consumers judgement influencing from the packaging elements (Mohebbi, 2014; Rundh, 2016). The key elements of traditional Chinese visual language are the significant components of visual culture in China that convey unique traditional language through traditional Chinese symbols and patterns (Hu et al., 2019). The use of packaging is significant for the companies to influence consumer perceptions and their expectations of the quality and taste of the product (Lempert & Glantz, 2017). Despite economic and consumer confidence concerns, this Chinese New Year and other Chinese celebrations call for special seasonal commodities, promotions, and seasonal packaging.

The Asian cultures and different than Western culture which each visual and pattern symbolises different meaning. The elements of packaging in China are designed suited with culture and beliefs. The uses of packaging elements carry specific meaning or sensory transmission of the product to the consumer perception. The elements of packaging can bring effects that can change product value perceptions and its characteristics. This paper discusses why businesses in China need to understand and create emotional brand experiences within consumers and create differentiates from other competitors from Western brands. The businesses and marketers should be more creative and innovative in using the elements of green tea packaging to attract and influence consumers perception.

## **Literature Review**

### **Culture and Packaging Elements**

Different cultures interpret different meaning of specific thing. Culture influences the design of packaging to adapt with local culture. Consumer preferences are different around the

world. Culture is defined as 'the totality of behaviour patterns in people's lives' and it is correlated with national borders, age, lifestyle, gender, social class, profession, religion etc (Berg-Weitzel & Laar, 2001). Indeed, successful businesses have in-depth understanding the market and on how to focus on the new product development based on consumer needs and preferences. Therefore, packaging is the important window opportunities for businesses to show first impression of their brand. Packaging plays a significant role for businesses to increase the sales, grab consumer attentions and creative positive judgement and the expectations towards the product (Halabi, 2021). It is a marketing tool to create competitive advantage for business and a medium to communicate direct to consumers (Halabi & Hands, 2018).

The position and alignment of packaging elements define different meaning and characteristics of the product. Visual information from the packaging elements such as colour, typography, shape, information label shape consumer judgement. The decorative, emotional and symbolic of packaging elements create the product value such as issues of utility, safety, and comfort that can satisfy the consumer (Crilly et al., 2004). Packaging elements carries different messages and represent the characteristics of product, thus influencing consumer perception towards the product value as a whole (Halabi & Hands, 2018). The appearance of a product is a critical determinants of consumer response and product success (Bloch, 1995).

The visual information of packaging creates faster connection with consumer and brand. Businesses show the characteristics of brand using the inspiration of traditional fold or cultural elements to create uniqueness and make it stand out among competitors. Consumer connects emotionally with packaging design with strong visual effect, at the same time promoting the products. While packaging is correlated with various essential features of marketing, the packaging also incorporates with culture and nation art with deeper need states. A story created through packaging in unique ways and communicate the brand values.

### **Purchase Intention and Packaging Elements**

Attitudes correlated to behavioural intention, based on the theory planned behaviour by Ajzen (1991) the intention can be anticipated from attitudes toward behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Cognitive, affective and behavioural attention influence by attitude that associated with stimuli or beliefs. Consumer purchase decision made fully conscious to notice everything and influence their decision making process through the impact of few visual cues in store (Clement et al., 2013). However, to date, there are various products in the same category with different brands that have similar packaging attributes. The first impression is significant to attract consumer to pay more attention along with personal preferences. Clement et al (2013) state that consumer get confused and less interested by seeing too many products with too much information.

The characteristic of packaging is important to have better communication to the market. The product information such as product origin, the ingredients and other labels also create impact on influencing consumer purchase intention. Businesses must pay attention on how packaging can reflect to consumer preferences and associated with social and economic status. The evaluation of how to use the product based on the effectiveness of message settings from the visual packaging elements (Medina-Molina et al., 2021). The identification of product based on the structure of packaging elements such as shape, size, colour, materials

and others have a direct impact on consumer purchase intention. Attractive packaging with beautiful image background, colour and shape inspire consumer to choose the product. Medina-Molina et al (2021) state that consumers place more trust in memory-based information than in context-based information but when memory-based information is more accessible, contextual information will not be used to make judgements.

### **Packaging Elements Carry Different Meanings**

Colours increase consumer's brand recognition, and it is crucial elements especially for food packaging. The colours symbolise sweetness, healthy ingredients, fruity, bitter, sour and many more. Colours associate with individual taste and it creates immediately judgement of a given taste (Spence et al., 2015). Businesses carefully selected colours for their packaging in influencing consumer purchase intention and how the product look different on the shelf. Red colour in food packaging always associated with sweetness and it is always represent the red meat or red chilli in the ingredients creates the characteristics of sweetness (Spence et al., 2015). Previous researchers argue that the shape and colour of packaging have influence consumer perception on the taste (Piqueras-Fizman & Spence, 2012), colour concerning of flavour and quality (Velasco et al., 2014) and shape contains more quantity (Sevilla & Kahn, 2014).

Western culture and Asian culture are different, and each element of packaging convey different meanings. Colour is a fundamental element for marketing communications because it influences moods and emotions. However, colour also carry different meanings and symbolises personality in a cross-cultural marketing perspective (Aslam, 2006). Colour communicates the product taste and other sensory experiences whether it is full, rich or strong flavour, such as mild, smooth and mellow associated with light blue or silver and cool or fresh associated with green (Lempert & Glantz, 2017). However, colour preferences for red are different for certain cultures, for instance, the Chinese symbolises as love, happiness lucky, prosperity, meanwhile for Germanic is symbolises fear, anger and jealousy (Aslam, 2006). Colour are assessed among British, natural flavoured packaging with blue, lemon flavour with green (a typical association in Colombia), cheese and onion with blue and salt and vinegar with green (Piqueras-Fizman & Spence, 2012). The colour associated with flavours and it is significant when it comes to the expectation of colour-flavour across cultures.

### **Satisfaction and Innovation**

Packaging carries brand recognition as well as the business, innovation opportunity, consumer affluence, self-service in conveying the message of product and attracting consumers (Panda et al., 2022). The packaging elements gives the impression of satisfying before the purchase the product. It creates product image, first impression of the benefits of the product through heuristics with material properties such as quality, weight density etc (Ferreira, 2019). In the context of online and offline shopping, perceived attractiveness of packaging aesthetic value, its functional and its information influences quality perception and choice satisfaction. The shape of packaging, the influence of symmetry draws more attention of less complex products compared to asymmetrical shape (Bigoin-Gagnan & Lacoste-Badie, 2018). Consumer willingly to pay from positive product design inference and creates higher interest from the symmetry packaging.

Furthermore, well designed packaging enhancing the attractiveness at the point of purchase and added value to consumer's expectations. For instance, consumer taste assessments and express satisfaction are higher affected from the elements of packaging, however the findings indicate that texture of packaging did not affect consumers satisfaction (Ferreira, 2019). Businesses need to pay attention to the details of the selection packaging elements to create a sense of brand image. The materials of packaging also associate with certain meaning, for instance, paper bags are more associated with organic products meanwhile plastic cause environmental inconsideration or indicated as 'unnecessary' (Fernqvist et al., 2015). The social and psychological trait stimuli an individual what to purchase and why and a good packaging can lead to the more satisfaction feeling. In the process of decision making, consumer gather the information based on his requirement and needs based on the packaging on the shelf. The visual information of packaging communicates and attract the attention as well as differentiate the brand from other competitors.

### **Findings**

According to Spence & Velasco (2018), packaging elements evoked consumer's product expectations but do not influence their product experience, either sensory or higher-order product sensory. Moreover, the expectations associated with specific taste and flavours as well as reflected to consumer's product saturation and intensity (Gatti et al., 2014). It is noted that, the shape of packaging makes the product look attractive and exclusive (Hung & Chen, 2012). It is highlighted that cultural differences can cause various interpretation of product information in consumer's mind that influences consumer behaviour and purchase intention.

Packaging communicating the brand positioning and identity as well as influencing their purchase intention (Cortina-Mercado et al., 2017). Businesses responsible to use packaging elements to communicate to consumers its benefits, achieve differentiation, and attract consumer with the need or desire to achieve satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Individuals recognised cultures discover pleasure throughout using their sense of sight (Bloch, 1995). To launch an effective packaging, a product must have all packaging elements to make it stand out and unique characteristics among other competitors. The brand identity enable represent through packaging to attract consumer interest to purchase and it is a fundamental feature for market success. The visual elements and informational elements by Silayoi & Speece (2007) such as colours, graphics, shape, materials and typography as well as the product information such as logo, nutritional label, recycle logo transmit the information to the consumer's mind and emotion.

Making decision 'on the spot' is significant impact of how powerful the packaging elements rather than making plan ahead. The first impression is the main concern as in increasing the positive perception towards the product. For instance, previous study indicate that elongating shape influence the volume and the consumer expecting less amount of product (Ordabayeva & Chandon, 2013). The process of making decision depends on various aspects other than packaging elements such as price, promotion and past experience purchasing a product. According to Webster & Keller (2004), consumer purchase intention generally leads to purchase behaviour. Developing appropriate marketing strategies by marketers depends on the consumer purchase behaviour.

### Discussion, Conclusion and Further Research

To date, many green tea businesses in China have integrated with tourism and they have to follow the standards of national-level tourist attractions. Throughout the year, Chinese people celebrate a broad variety of holidays and occasions. Businesses may feel pressure to promote to the widest potential audience but doing so would be wasteful of resources and unproductive. Instead of focusing on a single holiday, it is ideal for businesses and marketers to create packaging that fits the whole seasonal concept. For instance, companies and marketers would do well to incorporate Chinese features into packaging in order to highlight the same colours throughout the year regardless of the season. The packaging would not only focus on specific festive packaging, for instance, only for Chinese New Year; but the packaging can also be suitable for other celebrations in the second half of the year as well. Moreover, the packaging also carry the China culture to the international market and increasing the green tea industry development. The elements of packaging enable to carry specific meanings and communicate with consumers through packaging. The manufacturers and designers should emphasise on the design aspects through Hofstede's five dimensions that correlates with cultures, expressiveness, context, symbolism, information and identification (Berg-Weitzel & Laar, 2001). The high level of packaging has significant impact for marketing and leading to many new opportunities of offering. Currently, the trends in packaging for businesses in China going for premium image to increase loyalty and consumer repurchase the products. Tea gifting is part of the Chinese culture and businesses should focus on creating unique packaging that can be memorable and increase consumer interest to purchase them.

Packaging elements communicate with consumers, but it can be influenced by cultural factors and corresponds on the specific packaging elements. The adaptation level is needed to create separate visual design elements and standardise strategic decision making to meet the cultural differences in different countries. The arrangement of image and symbols and colours are the important elements as information source for consumers and create either positive or negative first impression. The findings show that the adaptation of packaging across cultural group must evoke by emotional reaction and eye-tracking in the decision making process (Ploom et al., 2020). Consumer experience help business to win consumer satisfaction and increase repurchase intention in the offline or online shopping channel (Anita et al., 2021).

Despite with the cultural differences, colour carries the colour-taste reference mapping to the consumers when they are making decisions selecting the product (Spence et al., 2015). Positioning of necessary packaging elements increasing positive perceptions towards product quality and its value and influence desired perception in the consumer's mind (Halabi, 2021). In the case of differences between Asian culture and Western culture, it seems that businesses use packaging communicating desired values in the international context that packaging can be used in different cultural environment. The interpretation of the meaning behind the elements of packaging should be emphasised on the specific elements that can carry similar meaning and able to communicate the same brand intent.

A semiotic approach needed for businesses use packaging to focus on the meaning behind every element and focusing on identifying the popular trends that can meet consumer needs. It is important that businesses know what consumers want and feel comfortable and trust with everything brand offer and giving what they expect (Bruveris, 2022). Semiotics is useful

approach for teasing out denotative and connotative meanings in the marketing strategy that trademarks corporate identity (Murray, 2012). The feeling of uniqueness can create positive judgement in the evaluation process and increase the intention of what is the actual product inside the packaging. The front and back of packaging associated with the face of product and backside of the product head where the primary intention focusing on the colour, traditional symbols and typography and not focusing on the brand name (Hu et al., 2019).

The first impression is vital to attract consumer's attention by receiving all the information from the elements of packaging. The characteristics of packaging such as easy-to-open, sustainable, established design, appropriate with cultural elements are the product performance guarantee and the ability to affect consumer satisfaction levels (Simms & Trott, 2010). Service quality and attention to consumers are important part of corporate culture which is reflected in the company's vision, mission and values, so that the company can implement superior service to consumers and always measures the level of consumer satisfaction and makes consumers loyal to the company (Devi & Yasa, 2021). Consumer satisfaction is affected by the impact of positive perceived value which the packaging gives the sense of better product quality and suitable gift ideas for any occasions in China. The upcoming research should develop how marketers and manufacturers use packaging elements of green tea can attract consumer intention to purchase generate higher sales using both online and offline shopping. It is important for businesses and marketers to understand the necessity of taking steps to reduce the packaging impact on the environment. Creating sustainable seasonal packaging that may be used again after the initial use is one solution to reduce the 'waste package' issue. Sustainable gift packaging for green tea is healthy for the environment and can offer the present box a second life. The above discussion will serve as a tool for future research. This study did not reveal a significant relationship between the loyalty to repurchase the products through packaging elements for global consumers. Semantic design feature of packaging as marketing tool and consumer loyalty in China is needed for further research.



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