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AN ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL APPROACH TO PACKAGING AND CHILD-PARENT INTERACTION**SURAJ KUSHE SHEKHAR****RESEARCH SCHOLAR****DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****KANNUR UNIVERSITY****THALASSERY CAMPUS****KANNUR****DR. P.T RAVEENDRAN****PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES****KANNUR UNIVERSITY****THALASSERY CAMPUS****KANNUR****ABSTRACT**

This paper illustrates a situation confronting child and the parent when making a purchase decision at the checkouts for high impulse purchase categories; chocolates. An Elaboration Likelihood Model approach is used to describe the decision making process. The paper examines the significance of packaging cues; pester power and the time pressure in bifurcation of the persuasive process into central and peripheral routes. The 'central route' is used to process information due to high package relevance, high personal motivation and high cognitive communication of the child resulting in the purchase of the chocolate. In the 'peripheral route', the child or the parent has low personal interests and low product involvement. The end result may be a 'purchase' or 'no purchase'. The paper concludes with limitations in mapping to the model, implications and scope for future research.

KEYWORDS

Children, Elaboration Likelihood Model, Packaging, Parent.

INTRODUCTION

Ⓟ Packaging is any container or wrapping in which the product is offered for sale and can consist of variety of materials such as glass, paper, metal or plastic, depending upon what is to be contained (Brassington and Petit, 2002). Packaging is defined as an extrinsic element of the product (Olson and Jacoby, 1972); an attribute that is related to the product but does not form part of the physical product itself. Packaging is a structure prepared to contain a commercial food product, i.e. enabling it easier and safer to transport, protecting the product against contamination or loss, degradation or damage and maintaining a convenient way to dispose of the product (Sacharow and Griffin, 1980). Stewart (1995) described the basic function of food packaging as to 'preserve product integrity' by protecting the actual food product against potential damage from 'climate, bacteriological and transit hazards'. However, the first to define packs as the 'silent salesman' was Pilditch (1961). Vazquez, Bruce and Studd (2003) argued that the pack must come alive at the point of purchase, in order to represent the salesman. About 30 years later, (Lewis, 1991) expanded further on Pilditch's views, stating that 'good packaging is far more than a salesman; it is a flag of recognition and a symbol of values'.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE**PACKAGING & MARKETING**

Packaging plays an important role in the marketing of any product. It is an integral part in the process of communicating the marketing objective of a specific product to the consumer (Stem 1981, Meyer and Herbert 1981). To perform its role, packaging must be attractive, informative, and clearly identify the product and communicate its real benefits. Many marketers have called the packaging a fifth 'P'; the other four Ps being Product, Price, Place and Promotion (Kotler, 2004). Well-designed packages can create convenience and promotional values (Kotler, 2004). Prendergast and Pitt (1996) discussed packaging as one of the most important factors in purchase decisions made at the point of sale where it becomes an essential part of the selling process (Rettie and Brewer, 2000). Silayoi and Speece (2007) argued that when the consumer is undecided, the package becomes a critical factor in the purchase choice because it communicates to consumers at the decision making time. Silayoi and Speece (2007) further suggested on how consumers perceived the subjective entity of products as presented through communication elements in the package, influenced choice and as the key to success for many marketing strategies. Lo'fgren (2008) called this as 'the first moment of truth' when the package functioned as a silent salesman. Underwood et al. (2001) demonstrated that visuals on the package can be a strategic method of differentiation as pictures are much more effective stimuli compared to words. In addition, consumers processed visual information faster and easier, particularly in low involvement situation. The right selection of package colors also played a very important role in purchase decisions (Kauppinen-Ra'isa'nen and Luomala, 2010). As the retail environment becomes saturated with competitors vying for consumers' attention, packaging has to work harder than ever if the product is to be noticed through the congestion of competitive products (Milton, 1991).

PACKAGING AND CHILDREN

Children have growing spending power in terms of being customers in their own right (Pettersson and Fjellstrom, 2006). Children are also major influencers within the family decision making unit. This unique power of children has resulted as an increasingly attractive target segments for marketers (Coughlin and Wong, 2002). In a study of the nutritional content of products targeted to children, Fitzhugh and Lobstein (2000) defined and classified children's food product as one which used familiar cartoon characters appealing to children (e.g. Tony the Tiger, Mr Men); tie-ins with children's TV programmes or films (e.g. Postman Pat, Star Wars); child-oriented animals or creatures (e.g. dinosaurs, sharks); child-oriented product shapes (e.g. alphabet pasta); free gifts or special promotional offers suitable for children; use of words such as 'kids' or 'ideal children's snack' or 'perfect for school lunch boxes'.

The world loves chocolate and there is some truth in a popular remark like, 'nine out of 10 people like chocolate, the tenth person always lies' or 'Chocolate makes everyone smile even bankers' (Doherty and Tranchell, 2007). Children are the major segments having a high affinity towards chocolates. 'Chocolate affinity' factor combines the cost and purpose due to which consumers buy a particular chocolate; it has emerged out to be one of the important factors that affect consumers' buying behaviour (Doherty and Tranchell, 2007). In a study conducted by Patwardhan et al (2010) the major factor that affected consumer's buying behaviour is the attractive look of the product which particularly attracted children, and the ingredient of chocolate. In correlation analysis, a high correlation was observed between buying behaviour and packaging of chocolates. They also opined that different customers have different likings and preferences for chocolates. Some people might prefer dark chocolates with high cocoa content, whereas others go for chocolates with more milk and nuts. They also argued that shape and design of chocolate attracted consumers. In a similar study, Roberts (2005) investigated into children's perception and attitude to

food and referred to children's food as that which is a combination of food and fun. In other words, children's food was perceived as 'eatertainment'. Roberts (2005) observed specific 'eatertainment' techniques employed by marketers like: premium offers, i.e. offers of free gifts such as free toys, stickers, trading cards, etc. inside packages of snack foods, cereals and convenience foods; children's licensed characters and movie tie-ins on food packaging; 'Kids meals' combining child-sized portions of food with soft drinks and free toys or confectionery; fun product designs that incorporate interactive play value, often incorporating unusual shapes, textures, colors, tastes and smells, and characters printed directly onto the food. From the above discussions, it can be inferred that packaging targeted to children is crucial and can be very vital in chocolate industry.

PACKAGING AND PARENT

Food packaging can be very attractive with regard to color, typography, graphical shapes and images, text, design, logo and illustration (Ampuero and Vila, 2006). These factors may tempt any consumer to try out a product. However, parents are becoming increasingly aware of the relationship between their diet and their health over the last decade, and this trend is likely to continue to influence consumers' buying patterns (Bartlam, 1993). But the increasing influence of children in family decision making for food purchases (Children's Food and Drinks Report, 1992) and the 'pester power' for most food products are representing a threat to mothers' willingness to make their children eat more healthily. Hence parents confront a dilemma when they shop along with their kids and make a purchase decision with respect to their children.

PACKAGING AND PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR: CHILD-PARENT INTERACTION

Gelperowic and Beharrell (1994) identified that children were attracted by 'nice looking' packaging. They concluded that in order for an item of food to be purchased by the mother, it must look appealing to the child so that the mother could be assured that the child will eat it and unnecessary waste be avoided. Therefore, it was clear from their study that mothers believed that packaging could have an effect on their children's requests and also that mother's often succumbed to these requests in order to avoid a conflict situation. Kelly, Turner and McKenna (2006) identified that parents found it increasingly difficult to deny their children food products that were endorsed by their favorite celebrities. Nicholls and Cullen (2004) found that the most stressful environment for a parent and child to enter is a supermarket because the child is most likely to be there as an 'unavoidable companion rather than as a pre-selected choice-maker' and all products are displayed and readily available for the child to see. Gelperowic and Beharrell (1994) also claimed that children have increasing influence in family purchase decisions and although mothers may wish their children to eat healthily, the lack of appeal of non-HFSS foods counteract this, as children are attracted to unhealthy HFSS foods. Manufacturers are increasingly using developed technology to create products that appeal to children through fun packaging and new shapes. Unfortunately these products are not always healthy and more often mothers give into 'pester power' in order to avoid conflict. They found that 33 percent of respondents admitted that their children did have an influence on purchase behavior and only 6 percent said that they had no influence at all. McNeal and Ji (2003) estimated that 34 percent of sales in the food category are driven by children 'nagging'. They further added that children make an average of 15 purchase requests on a given shopping trip; they estimated that between 40 percent and 80 percent of these requests were granted. McNeal and Ji (2003) also opined about children's preference for confectionery such as chocolates. Their outcome validates the findings that packaging affects children's product preferences and influences their choice. However Ogba and Johnson (2010) in their study concluded that parents do not routinely give into their children's request.

ELABORATION LIKELIHOOD MODEL (ELM)

Developed by Cacioppo and Petty (1984), the ELM was an extension on the theory of message involvement in the role of persuasion and attitude formation. Central to this model is the 'elaboration continuum', which ranges from low elaboration (low thought) to high elaboration (high thought). Motivation and ability are the two factors determining how a consumer will attend to and consider a message (Cacioppo and Petty, 1984). Motivational factors include (among others) the personal relevance of the message topic, accountability, and a person's 'need for cognition' (their innate desire to enjoy thinking). Ability factors include the availability of cognitive resources (e.g., the presence or absence of time pressures (Silayoi & Speece, 2004) or distractions) or relevant knowledge needed to carefully scrutinize the arguments. Two routes of information processing were proposed in ELM including the central and the peripheral route. It is through either of these routes that persuasion will occur (Bitner and Obermiller, 1985). Elaboration likelihood is high if conditions promote increased motivation to attend to a message and ability to develop relevant thoughts are present (Petty and Cacioppo, 1984). A high level of elaboration indicates that consumers will critically analyze the message and subsequently develop an attitude regarding the stimulus (Cacioppo & Petty, 1984). Attitudes formed through this route are considered to be enduring and strong (Rucker and Petty, 2006). In conditions in which elaboration likelihood is low, the peripheral route of processing is utilized and proper consideration is absent from thought processes. The resulting attitudes are formed by cues derived from the stimulus (Bitner and Obermiller, 1985). Despite the use of cues rather than carefully constructed thought processes in attending to the message, attitudes formed through the peripheral route are still predictive of resulting behaviour in the short term (Rucker and Petty, 2006). The subject's general education level, as well as their education and experience with the topic at hand greatly affect their ability to be persuaded. Under conditions of moderate elaboration, a mixture of central and peripheral route processes will guide information processing.

NEED/ IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Packaging has established itself as an important factor influencing purchase decisions. Chocolates are product categories which are consumed irrespective of any age groups. Today, packaging of chocolates are considered as highly critical. Children are the target groups who are highly influenced by chocolates. Chocolate packaging plays a crucial role in their influential and purchase process. Although previous studies dictates chocolate consumption behaviour and in-store buying behaviour, very less literature focus on how purchase mechanism takes place at the point of purchase particularly when the child-parent interaction is considered. This article explains one such situation using an Elaboration Likelihood Model. The paper examines the significance of packaging cues; pester power and the impact of time pressure in mapping the purchase situation to such a model.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the child-parent purchase interaction (chocolate bars) at the point of purchase using an Elaboration Likelihood Model.
2. To study the impact of packaging cues; pester power and the impact of time pressure in mapping the purchase situation to such a model.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher used the existing literature to identify the variables influencing child-parent at the point of purchase and develops a conceptual ELM model to initiate discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

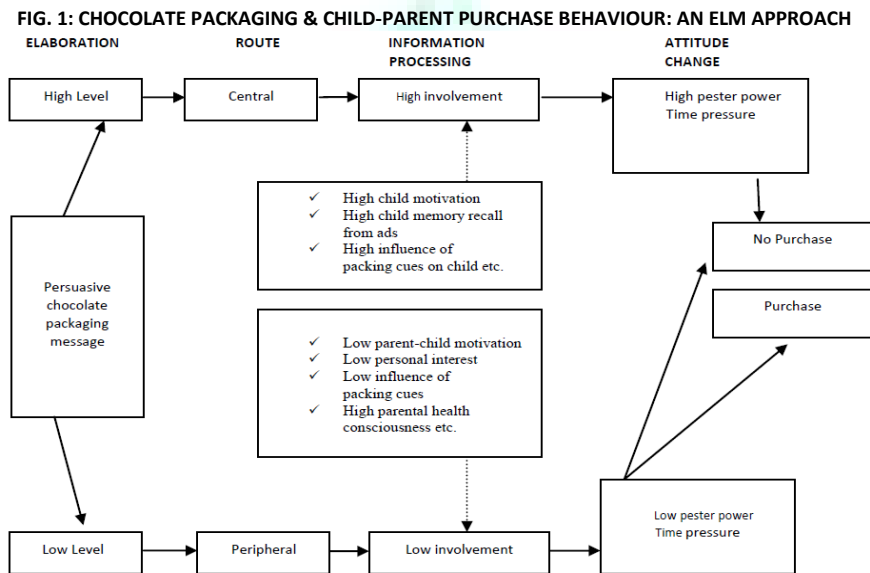
CHILD -PARENT BEHAVIOUR, AN ELM APPROACH

Advertising is used as a 'persuasive' tool to encourage product take up. Nowadays advertising campaigns are linking packaging and advertising together, even though they promote the product, strengthen the brand image and attract the consumers. Hence packaging is equally turning out to be a 'persuasive' tool at the point of sale. This proposition holds true for impulse purchases such as chocolates. The following model details the situation confronting child-parent interaction from the perspective of an ELM.

It is needless to mention that consumers are persuaded by the attractive packages at the point of sales (Ampuero and Vila, 2006; Aziz, Kadir, Rahimah and Yacob, 2011; Barnes, Southee and Henson, 2003; Ogba and Johnson, 2010). Chocolates are product categories which are mostly arranged at the billing counter (checkouts) and thus making it a highly impulse purchase good. An attractive look of a 'chocolate bar' not only attracts children but adults too. When a child or a parent scrolls their eyes at chocolate packages, undoubtedly it is the child who gets motivated to initiate purchase. This persuasive message gets elaborated across two levels: high level and low level. Children normally fall into in the high involvement category because they have a high personal interest and product

involvement with the chocolates. The various ‘eatertainment’ techniques (Roberts, 2005) and packaging cues coupled with the affects of advertising of chocolates on various media makes the child highly vibrant and thus the ‘pester power’ scores over ‘healthy eating’ (fallacy of the parent) in this situation. This is backed up the ‘time pressure’ to leave the billing counter which further makes the parent succumb to the child’s request. From an ELM point of view, the ‘central route’ is used to process information due to high package relevance, high personal motivation and high cognitive communication of the child. Therefore the attitude of the child gets transferred to the parent and thus a purchase is made.

When the child or the parent is less interested in making a chocolate purchase, it is the peripheral route that they take up. In the ‘peripheral route’, child or the parent have low personal interests and low product involvement. Major reason for low product involvement from parent’s point of view can take up the fallacy of ‘healthy eating’ (Gelperowic and Beharrell, 1994). Hence in the absence of a strong pester power, personal interests and the presence of time pressure, their attitude is not certain to be changed even by the product’s packaging cues. The end result can be a ‘purchase’ or ‘no purchase’. However certain peripheral cues such as visual graphics, curiosity etc may engage the consumer to try out new category of chocolates or sometimes ‘chocolate affinity’ factor (Doherty and Tranchell, 2007) may lead to purchase of any chocolate (random pick up) before they leave the point of purchase. This is because consumers do not want to get involved with the information which they do not have the abilities and interests to process. In a nut shell, the ‘peripheral route’ is an alternative way to allow low involvement consumers to be persuaded by the packaging. The conceptual child –parent purchase mechanism through an ELM approach is developed as shown in Fig 1 below



Source: Developed from the present study

LIMITATIONS

As the model takes into account of the involvement levels, the model doesn’t gives a robust explanation of a ‘moderate involvement level’ and the path they follow; central or peripheral. As Bitner and Obermiller (1985) mentioned, when there is no other central cues, a peripheral cue may turn out to be a central cue. This result highlights a limitation of ELM; the model does not clearly specify apriori what will be peripheral cue and what will be a central cue (Bitner and Obermiller 1985).

CONCLUSIONS

A typical child-parent purchase situation was visualized and ELM approach was applied to interpret the purchase behavior. A highly involved and highly motivated child will over score his/her parent’s ‘healthy eating’ fallacy by his/her pester power and take the ‘central route’. This will change the attitude of the parent and they will be succumbed to make a purchase as per child’s request. When the child or the parent is less interested in making a chocolate purchase, it’s the ‘peripheral route’ that they take up. The nullified effects of pester power, absence of a strong peripheral cue, ‘healthy eating’ fallacy may or may not lead to a purchase.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The proposed idea described in the model must be validated and also tested with an empirical research across various product categories making impulse purchases. Theoretically, this study extends the current literature and examines the ELM by pointing the ‘nagging factor’ (Ogba and Johnson, 2010) , ‘time pressure’ (Silayoi and Speece, 2004) etc. However, it will also be interesting to delve into whether ‘consumer decision making models’ can be integrated with this model so as to bring a more robust explanation of the concept explained above. Further studies can also be taken up by using ‘path analysis’ or ‘structural equation modeling’ (SEM), can also be employed to analyze the conceptual model described above. Future studies must also examine the impact of ‘brand loyalty’ and ‘emotional appeal’ on chocolate packaging. Investigating into the effects of packaging and repeated purchase behaviour should also provide some interesting results.

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