A Case Study Based On A Focus Group Discussion On The Importance Of Packaging Cosmetics

Abstract

This is an exploratory research done through a real time focus group discussion carried on with the purpose of analysing the expert opinions of the focus group participants and generating more relevant research questions for which the study can be carried out further. The topic was focused on the Packaging of cosmetics. The focus group discussion included the opinions of 7 faculties and the objective of this focus group discussion was to generate more lateral thoughts in this topic. Moreover it also included a small experimental study with a few cosmetics of various brands on display some of which were selected from a few random participants and some were picked up on the spot from the students and faculty who keep these as daily use cosmetics in their bags.

1. INTRODUCTION

A focus group discussion was conducted at the Department of Management Studies as part of the Research Study for a Doctoral Programme in a popular management institute in Bangalore, India. The focus group included 7 faculty of the MBA Department. It was a two way focus group since it included the faculty as participants and the final year MBA students as the observers whose role was to observe the entire discussion. The discussion included a display of cosmetic products at the end of the room at a distance from the participants so that they cannot observe the brand names on the cosmetics. A few products were gathered from the faculty and students as part of the study. The products were segmented and clustered as lip balms, lipsticks, eyeliners, lip liners, creams, moisturisers, nail polish, perfumes, hair oil. The brands included Lip Balms(Nivea, Pataanjali), Petroleum Jelly(Vaseline), Lip sticks(Revlon, Lakme),...
eyeliners (Local brands, Lakme), Lip Balm (Vaseline, Patanjali), Lip Sticks (Revlon, Lakme), Body creams (Vaseline, Nivea, Himalaya), Nail polish (Dazzler, Lakme), Hair Oil (Dabur), Perfumes (International) etc.

Figure 1(a, b): Various Cosmetics Items

2. DISCUSSIONS DURING THE FOCUS GROUP
The Moderator of the group asks the following questions:

**Question 1: What Is The Role Of Packaging In Cosmetics?**

**PARTICIPANT 1:**
“I am of the opinion that packaging does not play any role in cosmetics. Only brands are important. There is no uniqueness in packaging other than for lipsticks for which colour or even flavour matters. The logo on the packaging might be important since it reflects as brand. I believe that the content in the cosmetics is more important than packaging.”

**PARTICIPANT 2**
“I disagree with you. I feel that packaging plays a very vital role, especially when you carry some cosmetics in your handbag. I will definitely look at the date of manufacturing and expiry dates for most of the cosmetic products. I would look into the aspect related to traveling and convenience when it comes to packaging of cosmetics.”

**PARTICIPANT 3**
“I am always bothered about the look of cosmetics, the design especially for nail polish, perfumes, brands and attractiveness of the product. Let’s say, a brand like Lakme is known for its design. Moreover I always prefer a sleek packaging. A golden colour for packaging makes me feel that it is an expensive product. Different contents in cosmetics require different materials in packaging for example nail polishes should be in glass bottles for visibility.”

**PARTICIPANT 4**
“I prefer premium brands. Moreover when it comes to shampoos; I look for Ph content in cosmetics so I go ahead with brands like L’Oreal and Lakme.

**PARTICIPANT 5:**
“When it comes to products like perfumes, packaging is important. Moreover some cosmetics have to be conveniently small; other parameters like transparency of bottles etc are required for certain products.”

**Miriam George, Dr. R.K. Gopal:: A Case Study Based On A Focus Group Discussion On The Importance Of Packaging Cosmetics**
DERIVED OBJECTIVES:

- Packaging is important to identify brands and logos
- Packaging is necessary for customer's convenience
- Packaging attracts customers with their design and colour
- Packaging material varies on the basis of the product.

**Question 2. Do You Think Packaging Is Done For The Convenience Of Manufacturers Or Customers?**

**PARTICIPANT 3:**
“Manufacturers package products for the convenience of the customers. They target on cost effectiveness also. Many a times packaging is based on industry trends and norms.”

**PARTICIPANT 1:**
“Mostly packaging is for convenience of customers and they prefer going for larger sizes since it is cost effective but as indicated by participant 2 size matters and you can put around 10-15 items/cosmetics in your handbags if it is compact. Brand awareness and identification is also important when you identify the packaging related to that brand.”

**PARTICIPANT 5:**
“With regard to perfumes, now days, they have testers so I feel big bottles would be a wastage for customers, they might go in only for small sizes.”

**PARTICIPANT 3:**
“The small size packages are convenient while travelling.”

**DERIVED OBJECTIVES:**
- To understand whether packaging is mostly important for customer's convenience, identification of brands and visibility.
- Does manufacturer's package cosmetics based on industry trends and norms

**Question 3: Does Colour Matter In Packaging Of Cosmetics?**

**PARTICIPANT 3:**
“Packaging also indicates gender with light colours like pink and blue for the feminine gender and dark colours like dark blue and denim colours for masculine gender. Face washes should always indicate a lighter colour.

**PARTICIPANT 4:**
“True, However I would like to bring to your notice that Ponds has launched a fairness facewash packaged in black colour.”

**PARTICIPANT 1:**
“There might be cultural influences on packaging. Light colours for baby talcum powder to indicate a softer use.”

**PARTICIPANT 3:**
“Black colour might not be accepted culturally since they might feel that the face might turn black. For example food package have palatable colours like yellow indicating turmeric.”

**DERIVED OBJECTIVES:**
- To identify whether colour in packaging of cosmetics indicate contents
- To identify whether colour in packaging of cosmetics associated with gender
- To identify whether colour in packaging of cosmetics has any cultural influence

**Question 4.Why Do You Think The Displayed Products Have Been Selected And Hand Picked By Consumers**

**PARTICIPANT 6:**
“Many of them are frequently or daily use products.”

**PARTICIPANT 2:**
“These products are easy to carry and are also basic cosmetic products.”

**PARTICIPANT 5:**
“They are in attracting sizes and shapes, specially the nail polishes are attractive because of their colours.”

**DERIVED OBJECTIVES:**
- Do customers prefer convenience in packaging or the products themselves while buying daily use cosmetics?

**Question 5 : Can You Identify The Brands From A Distance Purely By Their Color?**

The cosmetics were set in such a manner that participants could not see the brand name or content but could only identify the cosmetics by the colour, shape and size.

![](image)

**Figure 2 : Percentage of Product & Popular Brands Identified**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Popular Brands Identified</th>
<th>Percentage who Identified the Brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body Cream</td>
<td>Nivea</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lip Balm</td>
<td>Vaseline</td>
<td>92.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lip Stick</td>
<td>Revlon</td>
<td>64.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nail Polish</td>
<td>Lakme</td>
<td>52.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Product & Popular Brands Identified**

**Question 6: Does Packaging Enhance Brand Image?**

**PARTICIPANT 3:**
“I would prefer a black base and golden rim which indicates that it is an expensive brand. The packaging can indicate the dearness of a product or the price. The shape of the package as in any perfumes indicates how elite and exclusive the product is “.

**PARTICIPANT 1:**
“The packaging can create awareness of a brand and help in identifying the brand. Moreover it catches the eye of the consumer.”

**PARTICIPANT 3:**
“I feel that petroleum jelly might not require any creative packaging nor coconut oil so irrespective of packaging people might still not bother about the packaging for some cosmetics/contents.”

**Derived Objectives:**
- To analyse whether packaging helps in brand identification
- To analyse whether packaging enhance brand value of a product.

**Question 7: What Kind Of Packaging Should Be Used For Cosmetics?**

**Table 2: Type of Packaging Preferred**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Type of Packaging Preferred: A survey was done and the percentage of preference is indicated in brackets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lip Gloss</td>
<td>Tubes (75%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body Lotion</td>
<td>Tubes (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creams</td>
<td>Squeeze’s ((75%))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hair Oil</td>
<td>Bottles (90%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfumes</td>
<td>Aerosols (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 8: Does Written Content In Packaging Affect Purchasing Of Products?

PARTICIPANT 1:  
“I never read the content; I always prefer a branded product”

PARTICIPANT 2:  
“For certain products content have to be read, especially for new and unknown products. If it’s the known product we tend to ignore written content.”

PARTICIPANT 4:  
I strongly believe that content in packaging has no influence and only the brand name reflecting in the packaging might be read and nothing else. Mostly people might even identify the brand with the design and color rather than any written content.

Derived Objectives:
- To analyse whether customers identify brand through written content or design and colour of packaging
- To identify whether customer's read written content for new products.

Question 9. What are the challenges in packaging?

PARTICIPANT 3:  
“I feel that the packaging of shampoo dispensers not appropriate, It oozes out too much.”

PARTICIPANT 4:  
“Sometimes the right information is not provided. When you try buying nail polishes with code numbers you end up buying the wrong shade so I feel it is a bit confusing.”

PARTICIPANT 6:  
“A lot of wastage happens in the packaging like not being able to squeeze out the shaving cream fully, so we cannot fully utilize the product”

Derived Objectives:
- To identify whether there is wastage in cosmetic content due to packaging.

Figure 3: Percentage of Type of Packaging Preferred
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used is the focus group discussion. It is a data collection method through a semi-structured group interview moderated by a group leader.

4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FOCUS GROUP

- **Standardization of questions:**
  The moderator of the group who is a research scholar has already done a literature review on the topic packaging in cosmetics and the questions were identified based on the literature review done.

- **Number of participants per group:**
  It includes 7 members who are faculty dealing with management subjects in the Department of management studies and 5 of them are Doctorates and two are research scholars hence they are a homogenous group.

5. ANALYSIS & RESEARCH OBJECTIVES DERIVED FROM THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

This focus group was conducted to a certain perspectives and experiences from people on this topic and derives valid research objectives for the topic Packaging in Cosmetics. The focus group discussion, a research tool was conducted and moderated by Mrs Miriam George to arrive at research objectives for packaging of cosmetics. The discussion points have been recorded and an experimental study was also conducted to arrive at a conclusion relevant to the study of packaging in cosmetics.

- Packaging is important to identify brands and logos
- Packaging is necessary for customer's convenience
- Packaging attracts customer's with their design and colour
- Packaging material varies on the basis of the product.
- To understand whether packaging is mostly important for customer's convenience, identification of brands and visibility
- Does manufacturer's package cosmetics based on industry trends and norms
- To identify whether colour in packaging of cosmetics indicate contents
- To identify whether colour in packaging of cosmetics associated with gender
- To identify whether colour in packaging of cosmetics has any cultural influence
- Do customers prefer convenience in packaging or the products themselves while buying daily use cosmetics?
- To identify whether there is a wastage in cosmetic content due to packaging

6. LIMITATION

- The focus group members have contributed their personal perspectives, experiences and opinions which may not be the ultimate research opinion. However it triggers research objectives to be framed for the topic.
The video recording included in this paper does not include the full conversation since it is a topic still being researched.

There were a few distractions during the focus group which might affect the quality of the verbal conversation.

Every focus group participant has not contributed their opinions to all questions. Some have only contributed to questions which they had valid opinions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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7. REFERENCES


AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY

1st Author Mrs Miriam George is an Assistant Professor with the Dept. of Management Studies and Research Centre. She has around 10 years of work exposure in the corporate world. She has worked in the capacity of a Marketing Coordinator, Entrepreneur and her previous stint was with American Express as a Regulatory Business Assurance Analyst. She has completed her engineering degree from College of Engineering, Trivandrum and her Master’s from Cochin University. An avid blogger and content writer. She is currently pursuing her PhD from VTU.

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