INVESTIGATING THE EFFECT OF PRODUCT PACKAGING CUES ON PRODUCT QUALITY PERCEPTION: DEVELOPING COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. *The study aims to investigate the effect of food packaging cues on the quality perceptions of*

the consumers. The data was collected from Pakistani consumer market through survey. The regions of Rawalpindi and Islamabad were selected for data collection by using self-administered questionnaires. Mall intercept method was applied for collecting the responses and the malls were selected on the basis of popularity and high customer turn out. SPSS and PLS were used in order to carry out descriptive and inferential analysis respectively. The outcomes of the study indicate that both the image variables taken as predictors (Halal label, nutritional label) casts a worthwhile effect on perceptions of quality while consumer knowledge casted no moderating impact on the perceived product quality in Pakistani consumer market. Alike other studies, there are few research limitations to this study as well. Since the data has been collected from the regions of Rawalpindi and Islamabad only, an issue of generalizability can occur. The findings of the study reveal that cues presented on the packaging can cast a meaningful impression on the minds of consumers. The findings of the study also suggest that intelligent placement of the extrinsic cues by practitioners can help in the formation of positive quality perceptions which in turn lead to better sale outcomes. Since there are limited number of such studies in Pakistani context so it provides significant contribution to the literature as well.

Introduction

According to Pearce (2016) the contemporary philosophy of consumer behaviour considers consumer as the ultimate authority and power. Accepting consumer as an eventual authority makes it crucial for the academicians and practitioners to gain unique selling proposition (Ravikanth & Rao, 2016). Consumer behaviour is complex and the choices that are made majorly depend on the attributes of the product. The shape, size, design, color scheme and various other extrinsic elements of the packaging indicate about the quality of the enclosed product (Charlebois et al., 2016; Mugge et al., 2012). Packaging makes the product stand out in the group of related competitive products. Firms in modern days are investing big in the formation of the product packaging comprising most distinguished features (Ghani & Kamal, 2010; Hasenbeck, 2014; Wang & Yu, 2016). Hasenbeck (2014) mentioned that marketers as well as manufacturers spend considerable time and substantial amount of money on packaging products in a manner that will attract consumer attention and enhance the product consumption.

It is generally assumed that the provision of cues on the product packages leads to the perception development regarding the quality of the product. The evidence of has been provided by Teisl et al. (2008) that the consumers' quality perceptions are being altered by taking packaging cues into consideration. The visual elements present on the food package are termed as the cues which give a preconception to buyer at the point of sale regarding the quality. In the recent age where food marketing has shaped up in the form of separate discipline, the manufacturers and marketers are trying their level best to form the packaging labels into quality indicators. Furthermore, taking into consideration the discussion about nutritional label, it has been argued by Muth et al. (2013) that labelling regarding the nutritional content of the product can help in the formation of perception regarding the quality.

Further, it has been stressed upon by Muth et al. (2013) that the labels displaying the nutritional content of the food product aids the consumers in perceiving the product quality before usage or consumption. The outcomes in literature reveal that nutritional labels depict the nutritional composition of the product as well as its quality (Chandon & Wansink, 2007; Trifts et al., 2013). The uncertainty which is related to product quality could be minimized to a certain extent by referring.to the nutritional label. The modern-day scope of consumer behavior and marketing extends around the quality perceptions that are formed by the users. The food labels enable the consumers to use take an informed purchase decision.

Lewis (2007) state that Islam is world's second largest and first fastest growing religion. The Muslims of the world have an elevated sense of religious

identity. Islam prohibits the consumption of unlawful (haram) ingredients like pork, alcohol, blood and its derivatives. According to Ahmed, Al-Kwifi, Saiti, and Othman (2014) Pakistani supermarkets sell Halal packaged food products. Although Pakistan is an Islamic country yet government enforces to place the logo of Halal on packaged food items confirmed by Halal food authority. Due to increased urbanization and changing lifestyles, the demand for the Halal packaged food products has increased (Euromonitor, 2017). Buying pre-packaged foods is becoming a recent trend in Pakistan. As consumption of Halal food products is basic qualifying condition of being Muslim (Penloza, 1994), hence Pakistani consumers consider Halal labelled packaged products as quality wise superior.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Nutritional Label

The labels depicting the nutritional content being displayed on the packaging are considered as extrinsic cue in order to perceive the product quality (Fenko et al., 2018). As per the findings of (Talati et al., 2016), the informational cues and stimuli which are available for the consumers in the shopping environment possess the potential to form the perceptions of the consumers. Specifically, there are studies of empirical nature for instance Darkwa (2014) and Rundh (2013) show that there exists a nexus between nutritional label and product quality. Various other studies for instance (Bialkova et al., 2016; Grunert & Aachmann, 2016) have approved that significant effect of nutritional label exists on the quality perceptions of the consumers. Similar kind of results have been reported in European countries for instance (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2017). The impact of nutritional labels on quality perceptions of consumers has also been proven by other studies for instance (Bialkova et al., 2016; Rundh, 2013; Walters & Long, 2012) accurate and proper information on the packaging helps in the intention formation of the consumers by fulfilling their need of information seeking for the nutritional information. Hence, the fourth hypothesis which this study presents that

> H1: Product perceived quality is significantly impacted by nutritional labelling.

Halal Logo

It is argued by Ambali and Bakar (2013) that special attention is required for manufacturing and composing of the food products. As the composition of food would describe the degree of religious compliance hence it is crucial to pay attention towards this matter. The consumer who is willing to purchase the product has the right to know about the product they are consuming (Azam, 2016). The power of Halal logo to impact the product quality perceptions has

been endorsed by (Ismail et al., 2016). The argument is further supported by saying that a product on which Halal logo is not being displayed does not impress the Muslim consumers for usage (Anam et al., 2018).

As per the findings of Riaz and Chaudry (2004), Muslims community is increasing in number and they are trying hard to make their presence be felt among the other communities. Due to higher percentage of Muslim community, Halal certification has become immensely important in order to provide the community with the appropriate choices. The trend of eating and consuming Halal has spread in the non-Muslim consumers as they consider it to be higher is taste and hygiene value. Moving on further, based on the previous studies it is evident that there are very few studies which have further flourished the concept of Halal logo (Alam & Sayuti, 2011; Mokhlis, 2009). Halal labelled products has no such clear understanding in the Muslim consumers (Alam & Sayuti, 2011). The number of Muslims all around the world is increasing yet modern marketing is not focusing on the impact of Halal labelled products in marketing theory debates (El-Bassiouny, 2016). Jamal and Sharifuddin (2015) stated that future research should consider the combined effects of different forms of extrinsic information. Hence it can be hypothesized that

H2: Halal logo significantly impacts the product quality perceptions.

Consumer Knowledge
A third variable that can alter the strength of relationship between independent and dependent variable is known as a moderator (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Lindley & Walker, 1993). In modern world the nutritional labels are considered as an effective way of communication the information to the consumers. The information on food labels is displayed on the point of purchase of the packaged food (Campos et al., 2011). In a purchase situation, the consumers pay special importance to the nutritional panel on the packaging but it is highly likely that consumer might be unable to understand the information or label might be unable to comprehend the intended message (Glanz et al., 1998; Hieke & Taylor, 2012). The variable of consumer knowledge has been studied in priory but its usage in consumer behaviour has been studied on limited basis. Based on the cognition procedure, consumers see the food labels, give an attention to it, try to understand and comprehend the food label and store it in the memory. The importance of Halal logo is under investigation in the modern research arena. In the investigation conducted by Wilson and Liu (2010) Halal logo is considered to an important product attribute which is actively sought by the consumer in addition to other attributes like prices and nutritional labels. By understanding of the perception of the consumers regarding these attributes

will help the marketers and manufacturers to advertise and provide the Halal certification on the products which will maximize the acceptance level.

This integration of information results in formation of long-term memory networks (Chiesi et al., 1979; Ericsson & Kintsch, 1995). The impact of consumer knowledge on perceptual process has been studied by several researchers Charness et al. (2020) and based on these studies the consumer knowledge casts an impact on the usage of extrinsic cues in following ways: Firstly, having previous knowledge enables consumers to focus on the important cues given in the form of information and ignore other marketing stimuli which do not indicate the salient features of perceived qualities of the food product. Secondly, having a knowledge base of can help consumers to comprehend the food packaging cues and lastly it could help in the application of the knowledge while making food choices. The consumer knowledge is effective in making healthier food choices as well as the consumer knowledge can be employed as a moderate the relation of food labels and dietary behaviors/ food quality perception/ buying behavior etc. (Petrovici et al., 2012).

Although the theoretical association of product packaging cues, product quality perception and consumer knowledge have been established in few studies for instance (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987, 2000; Veale & Quester, 2008), however the use of consumer knowledge as a moderating variable has not been investigated widely. In order to testify, consumer knowledge has been used as a moderator in the study, following are the hypotheses that have been established

H3: Consumer knowledge acts as a moderating variable between nutritional label and product quality perceptions.

H4: Consumer knowledge acts as a moderating variable between Halal logo and product quality perceptions.

Theoretical Framework
The scope of the present study is to consider the effect of nutritional label on product quality perceptions of packaged food consumers in consumer market of Pakistan. The food packaging cues have been argued to posit an effective impact as the packaging is the marketing tool which a consumer keeps on encountering even when the product is taken home (Dorado et al., 2016). According to Peters-Texeira and Badrie (2005), packaging is a marketing tool which frequently interacts with the consumer even after purchase. It conveys messages about the quality of the product which is enclosed in the packaging. The container of the product in modern marketing philosophy is termed as one of the most effective marketing mean for the consumers. It is an evident fact that the informational cues present of the product packages convey a meaning

about the excellence of the enclosed item yet there are few number of scholars who have specifically focused on this area (Garber et al., 2000; Underwood et al., 2001).
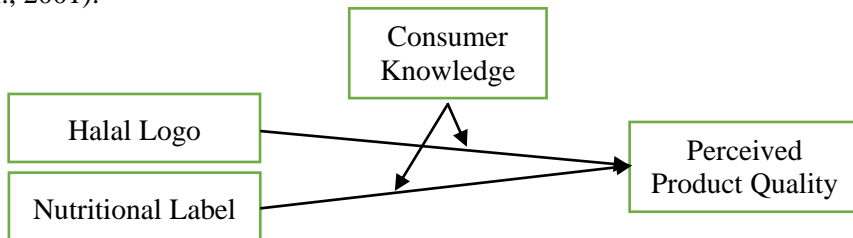

Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

Research Methodology

In order to collect the data, Islamabad and Rawalpindi have been selected because of the diversity. Since Islamabad is the capital city so it has maximum diversity from all over the provinces and areas of the country. Rawalpindi is also one of the big cities with people of diverse cultures.

Data Collection

The data for the study was collected from the shopping malls located in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The mall selection was based on popularity, and customer turnout. A random sampling technique was used is order to make the results more generalizable and reliable (Alkaed et al., 2018). The data was collected using mall intercept method from the selected shopping malls of both cities. Considering general consumer as unit of analysis, systematic random sampling method has been applied for data collection. The sampling involves the method of selecting every nth element of population ranging from any number between 1 and n (Sekeran, 2003).

Table 1: *Selected Shopping Malls*

City of Selectio	Shopping Mall Name	Selection Criteria
Islamabad	Centaurus Mall	
Islamabad	Beverly Center	
Islamabad	Kohsar Market	Geographical coverage, High customer turnout, Popularity
Rawalpindi	CSD Mall	
Rawalpindi	CSD Super Mall	
Rawalpindi	Green Valley Premium Hyper Mart	
Rawalpindi	Rafay Mall	

Data Analysis

The analysis of data done in the study used a combination of descriptive and inferential analysis. The statistical package of social sciences (SPSS) was used for descriptive analysis in order to comprehend the respondent profile, summarizing of data and making tabulations. On the other hand, Smart PLS was used to carry out the inferential analysis.

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive analysis has been performed in order to explain the features of the collected data. The descriptive analysis is performed by considering the variables as well as the dimensions of the model under investigation. Following Sekaran and Bougie (2010), means, standard deviation and variance of the study are used to get an overview of the data.

Table 2   *Descriptive Analysis*

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Nutritional Label	478	1	5	3.74	0.66
Halal Logo	478	1	5	4.08	0.64
Consumer Knowledge	478	1	5	4.09	0.64
Product Quality Perception	478	1	5	4.07	0.67

The values of mean and standard deviation are shown in Table 2. The mean values lie within the range of 3.74 to 4.07 which are within the satisfactory limits. The values of standard deviation also lie in tolerable range of 0.66 and 0.67.

Reliability Test

The strength of every item respective to its construct is demonstrated in factor loading significance. The items showing values of 0.50 and higher are fit for multivariate analysis (Fornell & Larker, 1981).

Table 3   *Reliability Co-efficient*

#	Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items	Items	Alpha if item is deleted
				NL1	0.631
				NL2	0.663
1.	Nutritional label	0.707	7	NL3	0.690
				NL4	0.733
				NL5	0.650
				NL6	0.668

				NL7	0.672
				HL1	0.899
				HL2	0.897
				HL3	0.888
				HL4	0.901
				HL5	0.890
2.	Halal logo	0.903	11	HL6	0.900
				HL7	0.894
				HL8	0.891
				HL9	0.894
				HL10	0.893
				HL11	0.894
				CK1	0.912
				CK2	0.900
				CK3	0.902
				CK4	0.898
3.	Consumer knowledge	0.911	10	CK5	0.903
				CK6	0.902
				CK7	0.897
				CK8	0.903
				CK9	0.904
				CK10	0.904
				PQ1	0.874
				PQ2	0.872
				PQ3	0.867
				PQ4	0.870
4.	Perceived quality	0.851	9	PQ5	0.862
				PQ6	0.863
				PQ7	0.860
				PQ8	0.869
				PQ9	0.875

SEM Path Analyses

The technique of structural equation modelling has been utilized in study in order to analyze the hypothesized relationships. SEM could be variance based or covariance based. The variance-based SEM is prediction oriented however covariance-based approach CBSEM is confirmatory in nature. SEM possesses an ability to run complex structural models as well as simple frameworks. The frameworks comprising of mediators and moderators are also tested with effectiveness by using structural equation modelling SEM approach (Chin et al., 2003). The relationship among the variables of the model is measured by

using the indicators as well as the variables (Vinzi et al., 2010). Table 4 shows the values of path coefficients

Table 4   *Path Co-efficient*

	Coefficient	**T- Statistics**	**P values**
HL > PQ	0.298	5.287	0
NL>PQ	0.083	1.748	0.081
Moderating effect 1 (HL>CK>PQ)	0.008	0.158	0.875
Moderating effect 2 (NL>CK>PQ)	0.036	0.568	0.57

The significant relationship between nutritional label, Halal logo and perceived product quality is shown by T- Statistics and P values. On the other hand, the interaction effect of consumer knowledge has not shown any on any of the relationship.

Results and Discussions
In the recent days, the food packaging is considered to one of the major marketing tools which play the most vital role in shaping up the consumer behaviour. The packaging cues make it easier for consumers to perceive the quality of the product. In order to get responses from the customers, questionnaire was floated among the respondents coming out from the selected shopping malls. The outcomes of the study show that Halal logo shows a positively significant relationship with perceived product quality. Even though the previous studies on Halal logo and its effect on quality perceptions are very less, yet obtained outcomes are in line with findings of (Hanzaee & Ramezani, 2011; Ismail et al., 2016). The variable of nutritional label shows a strong impact on the quality perceptions of the consumers, hence confirming the second hypothesis of the study. The outcomes are in accordance with the findings of (Appelhans et al., 2017; Huang & Lu, 2016). The findings state that moderating impact of consumer knowledge did not hold in both cases (Halal logo and nutritional label) hence disapproving the third and fourth hypotheses of the study. The results are in accordance with some previous studies (e.g., Javeed et al., 2017; Norazlanshah et al., 2013). The interaction results are opposite to the outcomes of the European countries in which the users are at a higher degree of awareness (Drichoutis et al., 2008; Groeppel-Klein, 2005).

Limitations

Alike other research works, this study also possesses certain limitation which could be the future horizons for the upcoming researchers. This study was confined to the major two cities of Pakistan only, however the future studies could add more cities in order to make the generalizability of the study better.

Implications

The variables of intention to use Islamic Banking are included in this particular study under the influence of innovation diffusion theory. The results propose that awareness casts insignificant association on adoption of IB systems. Prime outcome of study is listed as the lack of awareness among Pakistani bank customers regarding Islamic banking system which hinder the adoption of this system. Furthermore, no study is without limitations which become an avenue for the upcoming researchers. This study is restricted to narrow geographical location, which could be further broadened in order to expand the scope of study. Various other factors could also be included in the study such as age, social influence etc. in order to strengthen the understanding further.

Theoretically, finding of the study has several implications of theoretical and practical nature. Primarily, the study backs diffusion theory and its application in the literature of Islamic Banking. Some other research for instance, Aziz et al. (2015) have studied the variables in almost similar context. Secondly, this study examines the Pakistani Banking industry customers' intentions. The lack of awareness calls on to the bank managers and policy makers to develop awareness among the Pakistani customers which will furthermore attract customers. This suggestion is specifically given by various scholars which suggest that diffusion of innovation is determined by integrated marketing communication activities (Rogers, 2003; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). This suggestion highlights the fact that Islamic banks need to develop proper and effective marketing strategies and tools (Khan et al., 2018). Along with marketing efforts, promotional activities should also be done in order to develop the culture of Islamic marketing in this Pakistan.

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