

Effect of Product Packaging on the Sales Volume of Small and Medium Scale Bakery Firms in South East Nigeria

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i6/4296>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i6/4296

Published Date: 08 July 2018

Abstract

A successful marketing strategy usually depends on a firm's understanding of its customers, what they need and how it persuades them to buy from it. The study assess the effect of product packaging on the sales volume of small and medium scale bakery firms. Survey research design (with the combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches) was been adopted for this study among 197 management of bakeries in five (5) Eastern States. Data collected using questionnaire was analyzed and presented using linear regression at 5% level of significance. The result of the study revealed that Product packaging has a significantly affect the sales volume of small and medium scale bakery firms in South East of Nigeria ($r = .844$; $F = 449.311$; $t = 21.197$). It was concluded that marketing strategy in form of product packaging adopted in bakery firms influences the performance of small and medium scale bakery firms in south-east of Nigeria and leads to increased sales performance. The management of bakeries within the south east of Nigeria, should engage the services of professionals who are knowledgeable about customer reactions towards images, colours and texts in order to continuously develop and improve on their packaging so as to boost their performance was recommended.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy, Product Packaging, Sales Volume, Bakery Firms

Introduction

The totality of modern marketing activity involves value creation; value communication; and value delivery but first, the value to be created must be well understood. It must be a value that satisfies customers' needs and wants (Kotler, 2003). This exchange process is akin to the blending of the traditional marketing mix elements which is popularly regarded as the McCarthy 4Ps of marketing – Product, Price, Promotion and Place. Successful marketing practices always begin with the customers through extensive marketing research efforts – a process of knowing and understanding the kind of values to create and offer to the customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012); and ends with the customers too – through value delivery to the target customers. Marketing practitioners do blend the 4P elements within this process for marketing of tangible or physical products.

A successful marketing strategy usually depends on a firm's understanding of its customers, what they need and how it persuades them to buy from it. This helps the company to have a focus and also the bearing to attain its destination which enables the company to achieve its marketing objectives (Jain, 1990). Onah and Thomas (2004) postulate that marketing strategy must be specified in terms of: product strategy, pricing strategy, promotional strategy and distribution strategy. Onah and Thomas (2004) see product strategy as containment and packing prior to sale with the primary purpose of facilitating the purchase and use of a product; hence the basic functions of packaging include: protection, utility function, motivation, profitability, and product differentiation. Nwabuko(1998) asserts that packaging is one of the attributes of a product hence products need to be packaged before they are made available to the market place.

In both developing and developed countries, most SMEs, which comprise bakery firms, face a lot of challenges in their bid to remain afloat and continue to satisfy the demands of customers. The situation is very worrisome especially in developing countries like Nigeria where sales volume and profits of most bakery firms have nose-dived to dangerous levels and many have closed down as a result (Euromonitor, 2013). Marketing is a contentious issue among both academics and practitioners when it comes to small and medium scale enterprises (SME's) (Siu and Liu, 2005; Chilya & Ghamr, 2009). The question arises how the big bakery firms like UAC of Nigeria Plc bakers of the nationally popular Gala brand, Yale Foods limited (bakers of Yale bread), Leventis Foods, UTC, etc. are succeeding in the face of such claimed harsh economic environmental factors. Thus, most academics argue that the faulty combination of the marketing mix variables by the small and medium-scale bakeries in Nigeria (South-East inclusive) is behind the dwindling demands in their products, consequent dwindling profits and final liquidation of many (EBSCOhost, 2013). But, operators of the small and medium-scale bakery firms in Nigeria countered that their problems emanate from harsh economic operating environment and dismissed the argument as being too academic, text-bookish and more theoretical than realistic (EBSCOhost, 2013).

EBSCOhost, (2013) report showed that most bakeries are confronted with increasing cost of nylon used in packaging their finished products, low quality products and similarity of products (which are mainly bread with short shelf life, leading to their quick spoilage) without adequately differentiating their products despite consumers' demand for better quality and differentiated products than the artisanal products that they are typically used to. In other words, bakery firms' incapability of hiring astute marketing professionals who could be of immense help in developing appropriate product strategies portend a dire challenge that might lead to lower sales volume in the industry as there are various assortments of bread with different packaging labels in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. It remains to find out how

product packaging does affect the performance of these bakeries in terms of their sales volume. This is part of the tasks this study is set out to investigate.

Purpose of Study

To ascertain the effect of product packaging on the sales volume of small and medium scale bakery firms.

Research Questions

How does product packaging of small and medium scale bakery firms in South East of Nigeria affect their sales volume?

Research Hypotheses

Product packaging does not significantly affect the sales volume of small and medium scale bakery firms in South East of Nigeria.

Review of Literatures

A product is anything the purchaser gets for his money, including the associated services such as guarantee, free delivery as well as the physical product itself (Anyago and Uduji, 2012). Onah and Thomas (2004) define a product as anything that has capacity to give satisfaction. Nwabuko (1998) defines product as anything that has value and can be exchanged for money to satisfy given needs and wants of the consumer. Wilson et al (1996) have noted that a product has a distinct life cycle which is called the "product life cycle". During this life cycle, they pass through a series of different stages which poses different challenges. The heart of the marketing mix, the starting point, is the product offering and product strategy. It is hard to design a distribution strategy, decide on a promotion campaign, or set a price without knowing the product to be marketed. According to Weckman (2009), in order for a company to have an absolute competitive advantage, it needs to have a superior product to that of its competitors. Core competencies are the driving force behind this product superiority and these competencies can make considerable contributions to perceived customer benefits.

This view was corroborated by Fifield (2007), that products' core competencies are those capabilities that are critical to an organization achieving competitive advantage in the market place. In addition, a core competence has applications in a wide variety of markets and is difficult for competitors to copy. This is because the core product is often not tangible. It is the benefit the customer receives from the product and is what differentiates the product from those of the competitors (Weckman, 2009; Mehta, 2007). The actual product includes the brand name, features, capabilities, qualities, designs, and packaging (Weckman, 2009).

The outer shell of the product concept is referred to as the augmented product which involves the post-sales stages such as warranty, personnel, installation, after sales services, delivery and credit, as well as the customer service offerings (Weckman, 2009). In the views of Levitt (2006) an augmented product is the combination of the core product and added attributes. It also includes the tangible elements of a product and the accompanying cluster of image and service features (Evans & Berman, 1997). Once the product core competencies have been determined, core marketing comes in as the key process of promoting the product to the customer. The core marketing concept must therefore include the basic instincts of people (the consumers).

The first step would be to appeal to the basic needs, wants, and demands of customers. Satisfying the felt need is also referred to as the core benefit (Baker, 2006). The next step is

to present the marketing offerings, in other words “some combination of services, products, information, or experiences offered to a market to satisfy a need or want” (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004). The product’s core concept also share the belief that the customer is the king and for any organization to realize its marketing goals/objectives, the marketing managers must advise the production department to factor into their product offerings the feelings, opinions, needs and wants of the current and potential customers (Yudelson, 2003; *Mindtools.com*, 2013). That is the key message of the core product concept.

Furthermore, Kotler (2003) notes that product strategy calls for making coordinated decisions on: product mixes, product lines, brands, packaging and labelling. But Achumba and Linus, (1994) argue that in developing product strategy, a company has to consider the environment, the economy and the political setting of the country. Different companies adopt different product strategies; but the issue remains selecting the one that is viable and best suits the peculiar situation of the company. Also, Kotler (2003) asserts that many marketers have elevated packaging to be called a “fifth P” alongside the traditional “4 Ps” of the marketing mix. There are various assortments of bread with different packaging labels in the South Eastern part of Nigeria. It remains to find out how the product strategies do affect the performance of these bakeries. This is part of the tasks this study is set out to investigate.

Theoretical Framework

The Marketing Mix Theory

The term "marketing-mix" was first coined by Neil Marathi, the president of the American Marketing Association in 1953 (Boom and Bitner, 1981). Though, it is still used today to make important decisions that lead to the execution of a marketing plan but Professor Jerome McCarthy propounded the popular traditional marketing 4Ps theory in 1960 [i.e. Product, Price, Place and Promotion], which eventually turned today to marketing mix theory (Schultz *et al.*, 1993). Marketing practices had witnessed a profound impact with these McCarthy’s 4Ps thereby, becoming a classic marketing theory for achieving marketing effectiveness (Boom and Bitner, 1981; Kotler *et al.*, 1999). The marketing mix theory therefore represents a concretized framework for marketing strategy development for most marketing practitioners in this present dispensation. Through the marketing mix elements are marketing strategies such as product strategies, pricing strategies, promotional strategies, and distribution strategy. Thus, the marketing mix is the set of controllable, tactical marketing tools that a company uses [as strategy] to produce a desired response from its target market.

In applying this theory to the purports of this current study, this can be well explained from the customary marketing mix strategies that the bakery firms combine in order to achieve their desired marketing goals. Ideally, some bakery firms may have product strategies involving – bread packaging designs, bread flavours, bread types [like whole wheat breads, cassava flour bread, garlic-flavored bread e.t.c], pricing strategies involving – discount giving, low pricing or high pricing strategies, promotional strategies involving – the use of integrated marketing communication tools [advertising, sales promotion, publicity, etc], and distribution strategies involving – selective, extensive or exclusive distribution strategies. This marketing mix theory is the bedrock of this current study.

Empirical Review

Kiumarsi *et al.*, (2014) also did a study titled *Marketing Strategies to Improve the Sales of Bakery Products of Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia* using survey research design methodology. The study was premised on the notion that SMEs in Malaysia are striving hard

to achieve growth in the business of bakery products. Findings reveal that SMEs have unstructured marketing strategies and needs enhancements in the areas of packaging, value addition to the bakery products, focus on promotion and appropriate advertising strategies. Findings revealed that more coverage of selling points for bakery products, increased number of distribution centers and proper incentives to the agents may definitely improve the marketing of bakery products.

Methodology

Survey research design (with the combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches) was been adopted for this study. This method of research is normally applied in administrative and social sciences research, because of the complex relationships that exist between variables. Osuala (2001) affirmed that survey research is intended to investigate a cause and effect relationship, an administrative fact on some aspects of public life or to throw a new light on some aspects of sociological and psychological variables.

Area of the Study

This study will be carried out in the South-East geo-political zone of Nigeria, specifically among the registered bakery firms situated at the major cities in the South-Eastern states. The South-East geopolitical zone consists of five (5) states – Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The major cities in these states are as follows: **Abia:** Umuahia and Aba, **Anambra:** Awka, Onitsha, and Nnewi. **Ebonyi:** Abakiliki and Afikpo. **Enugu:** Enugu and Nsukka, and **Imo:** Owerri, Orlu and Okigwe.

These major towns in these states have been selected primarily because majority of the bakery firms are situated there and this would assist the researcher in capturing the bakery firms. See the Appendix 111 for the list of registered bakeries in the South-Eastern states of Nigeria.

Sources of Data

The data required for this study will be sourced from the primary data source through the use of questionnaire. The questionnaire would be designed to source data from owners of bakery firms. The researcher adopted the questionnaire method due convenience, cost advantage, spread and coverage as well as affording respondents greater confidence and freedom to express their views.

Population of the Study

The population of this study is made up of top management staff of registered bakery firms in major cities of South-Eastern states of Nigeria, this gives a total population of 397.

Sample Size Determination

According to Bartlett, Kotrlik and Higgins (2001), in order to draw the required sample size from the above defined target population groups, the statistical approach stated below would be used:

$$n = \frac{z^2pq + e^2}{e^2 + (z^2pq/N)}$$

Where;

n = sample size

Z = standard error of the mean (usually 95%, corresponding to 1.96 in the Z_{score} distribution table).

p = proportion of the population likely to be included in the sample (50% or 0.5 is assumed).

q = proportion of the population unlikely to be included in the sample (50% or 0.5 is assumed)

e = tolerable error margin or level of significance (assumed to be 5% or 0.05)

N = population size (established at 397).

Substituting in the formula, we obtain:

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{(1.96^2 \times 0.5) + 0.05^2}{0.05^2 + (1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 / 397)} \\ &= \frac{(3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5) + 0.0025}{0.0025 + (3.8416 + 0.5 + 0.5 / 397)} \\ &= \frac{0.9604 + 0.0025}{0.0025 + (0.9604 / 397)} \\ &= \frac{0.9629}{0.0025 + 0.0024191436} \\ &= \frac{0.9629}{0.0049191436} \\ &= 195.7 \\ &= 196 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the sample size for this study is 196 managers of bakery firms in major cities of South-Eastern Nigeria.

Sampling Technique and Questionnaire Allocation

Proportionate stratified sampling method will be adopted for this study. This is to give a proper representation to the management of bakery firms in South Eastern Nigeria. In order to get the quantity of questionnaire to be distributed/allocated in each of the five (5) states, the sample size has to be broken down using Bowley's population allocation formula. Bowley's population allocation formula is stated below:

$$nh = \frac{nNh}{N}$$

nh = Number of units allocated to each category

Nh = Number of items in each group

n = sample size

N = the total population size understudy

Thus

Abia

Number of units allocated to each category

$$nh = \frac{196 * 92}{397} = 45$$

Anambra State

$$nh = \frac{196 * 79}{397} = 39$$

Ebonyi State

$$nh = \frac{196 * 41}{397} = 20$$

Enugu State

$$nh = \frac{196 * 103}{397} = 51$$

Imo State

$$nh = \frac{196 \times 82}{397} = 41$$

Table 3.2

Questionnaire Allocation/distribution to five (5) South-East States

S/No	States	Population of top management staff of registered bakeries	Sample Size
1	Abia	92	45
2	Anambra	79	39
3	Ebonyi	41	20
4	Enugu	103	51
5	Imo	82	41
	Total	397	196

Validity of the Instrument

Content and face validity was established in the study by giving research instrument to 3 marketing experts who pointed out some short-comings and directed the researcher to effect the corrections accordingly. This was done and the instrument was adjudged and certified okay for the main field survey.

Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was pre-tested through authority-vetting and a pilot survey to ensure it meets reliability and validity standards. Then, statistical package for the social sciences was applied for a further test of the reliability by using the Cronbach Alpha statistical tool on the results of the pilot survey. Therefore, issue-based questions in Appendix I were served to the 30 respondents in our pilot survey. The 30 of them filled and returned their questionnaire copies. Upon testing the reliability of responses to the issue-based items in the test instrument, an Alpha of 0.92 and an inter-item (standardized) coefficient of 0.96 were obtained. Since these are greater than 0.7, it indicates that the reliability of the test instrument is very strong. (See Appendix II for the detailed result of the reliability test analysis/statistics).

Method of Data Presentation and Analysis

The aim of the study is to assess the impact of marketing strategy on performance of small and medium scale bakery firms in the South Eastern Nigeria. Each of the responses from questionnaire or data collected from the field will be first of all sorted to pick out those wrongly filled, then collated and presented in tabular forms. Subsequently, they will be fed into a computer software programme. As soon as the data has been captured on the system, analyses will be conducted using Multiple Regression Analysis (MRA) and correlation coefficient with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). These statistical methods are adopted because they can predict the dependent variable more accurately if more than one independent variables are used.

Findings

Table 4.1

Distribution and collection of questionnaire

Options	Abia	Anambra	Ebonyi	Enugu	Imo	Total (%)
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Number distributed	45	39	20	51	41	196 (100.0)
Number returned	42	37	19	46	39	183 (94.4)
Number not returned	3	2	1	5	2	13 (6.6)

Source: Fieldwork 2017

In the table 4.1 above, 196 copies of questionnaire were distributed, 183 were returned, while just 13 were not returned and were declared invalid for the study. Thus a 94.4% of return was recorded.

Table 4.2

Personal information of the respondents

n = 183

Items	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	121	66.1
	Female	62	33.9
Age	less than 20 year	58	31.7
	20 – 29 years	53	29.0
	30 – 39 years	39	21.3
	40 – 49 years	17	9.3
	50 years and above	16	8.7
Educational qualification	FSLC	5	2.7
	WAEC/NECO/GCE	70	38.3
	ND/NCE/HND/B.Sc	50	27.3
	MBA/M.Sc/MA	46	25.1
	Ph.D	12	6.6

Source: Field survey 2017

The table above shows the personal information of the respondents. It shows that 121 (66.1%) of the respondents are males while 62(33.9%) are females. 58(31.7%) of the respondents are less than 20 years, 53(29.0%) are between 20 – 29 years, 39(21.3%) are between 30 – 39 years and 17(9.3%) of them are 40 – 49 years while 16(8.7%) are 50 years and above. It also shows that 5(2.7%) of the respondents have first school leaving certificate, 70(38.3%) of the respondents have secondary school certificate, 50(27.3%) have their ND/NCE/HND/B.Sc, 46(25.1%) of them have master's degree, and 12(6.6%) have Ph.D.

Table 4.3a

Responses to Questions on Sales Volume

n = 183

Items	Options	Frequency	Percentage
How well has your bakery performed in terms sales	Very Adequately	75	41.0
	Adequately Not so well	68	37.2
	Somewhat Adequate	24	13.1
	Not Adequate	16	8.7
Has your bakery firm over time been achieving its target sales	Yes	132	72.1
	No	51	27.9
If no, what are the likely challenges hindering the achievement of the target sales	Finance	42	48.6
	Inadequate sales personnel	28	15.3
	Lack of government support	34	18.6

Inadequate demand for product	32	17.5
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Source: Field survey 2017

Table 4.3a shows the responses of respondents as regards their sales volumes. It shows that 75(41.0%) of the respondents indicated that their bakery firms have performed very adequately with regards to its sales, while 68(37.2%) said that their own have not performed adequately so well with regards to its sales. Also the result of the study shows that 132(72.1) of the participants shows that their bakery firms over time have achieved their target sales. Meanwhile only 51(27.9%) of the participants indicated that their bakery have not achieved their sales targets over time. Reasons suggested as the main cause of bakery not achieving its sales target included, finance 42(23.0%); lack of government support 34(18.6%) and inadequate demand for products. 32(17.5%).

Table 4.4

Respondents' opinion regarding their bakery firms' product strategies n = 183

Options	SA Frq (%)	A Frq (%)	U Frq (%)	D Frq (%)	SD Frq (%)
Prior to adoption of a product packaging, the bakery firm engages in a well-researched packaging strategy	133(61.7)	36(19.7)	17(9.3)	10(5.5)	7(3.8)
In order to enhance sales in the bakery, emphasis is placed on the colours and images used in packaging their product	105(57.4)	46(25.1)	16(8.7)	12(6.6)	4(2.2)
The bakery engages in strategic design that ensures repeat purchase and leads to higher sales	65(35.5)	95(51.9)	12(6.6)	6(3.3)	5(2.7)
The bakery ensures product's design that consistently meets the expectations of target market	99(54.1)	63(34.4)	8(4.4)	7(3.8)	6(3.3)
The bakery's product design reinforces and strengthens its reputation	54(29.5)	102(55.7)	19(10.4)	6(3.3)	2(1.1)
The product packaging strategy often adopted reinforces a message of confidence in the bakery's product	68(37.2)	98(53.6)	5(2.7)	7(3.8)	5(2.7)
The packaging strategy is geared towards unique identification of the bakery's product in the market place	92(50.3)	56(30.6)	15(8.2)	13(7.1)	7(3.8)

Source: Field survey 2017

Table 4.4 shows the respondents' opinion regarding their bakery firms' product strategies. It shows that 133(61.7%) of the respondents strongly agree that prior to adoption of a product packaging, their bakery firms engage in a well-researched packaging strategy. 105(57.4%) strongly agree that in order to enhance sales of their bakery, emphasis is placed on the colours and images used in the packaging their product. 95(51.9%) of the respondents agree that their

bakery engages in strategic design that ensures repeat purchase and leads to higher sales. 99(54.1%) of them strongly agree that their bakery ensures product's design that consistently meet the expectations of target market. 102(55.7%) agree that the product design of their bakeries reinforces and strengthens its reputation. And 98(53.6%) of them agree that the product packaging strategy often adopted reinforces a message of confidence in their bakeries' product. Furthermore, 92(50.3%) of the respondents strongly agree that their packaging strategy is geared towards unique identification of their bakeries' products in the market place.

Hypothesis

H₁: Product packaging has a significantly affect the sales volume of small and medium scale bakery firms in South East of Nigeria.

H₀: Product packaging does not significantly affect the sales volume of small and medium scale bakery firms in South East of Nigeria.

Table 4.12

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.844 ^a	.713	.711		.58603	.134

a. Predictors: (Constant), Product packaging

b. Dependent Variable: Sales volume.

Table 4.13

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	154.309	1	154.309	449.311	.000 ^b
	Residual	62.161	181	.343		
	Total	216.470	182			

a. Dependent Variable: Sales volume.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Product packaging

Table 4.14

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.235	.101		-2.328	.021
	Product packaging	1.041	.049	.844	21.197	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Sales volume.

R = .844; R² = .711; F = 449.311; T = 21.197; DW = .134

Interpretation of the Result

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine how product packaging of small and medium scale bakeries in the South East of Nigeria affects their sales volume. The result shows

that there is strong positive relationship between product packaging and sales volume (R-coefficient = .844). The R square, the coefficient of determination, shows that 71.1% of the variation in sales volume can be explained by product packaging with no autocorrelation as Durbin-Watson (.134) is less than 2. With the linear regression model, the error of estimate is low, with a value of about .58603. The regression sum of the square 154.309 is more than the residual sum of the square 62.161 indicating that the variation is due to chance. The F-statistics = 449.311 shows that the model is significant. The extent to which product packaging affect sales volume with .844 value indicates a positive significance between product packaging and sales volume which is statistically significant (with $t = 21.197$) and $p = .000 < 0.05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted accordingly.

Discussion of the Major Finding

In an attempt to find out the influence of product packaging on the performance of small and medium scale bakeries in south eastern Nigeria, the study found that product packaging influences the sales volume of bakery firms in South Eastern Nigeria. This finding agrees with previous studies findings. In a finding by Pourhosseini and Shahrokh (2013) on effect of marketing strategy on sales performance: the moderating effects of internal and external environment, it was reported that marketing strategy has a positive and meaningful relationship on sales performance. The study finding closely relates to Sajuyigbe et al., (2013) packaging has significant effect on sales turnover and an important part of the branding process because it plays a role in communicating the image and identity of a company. In another related study, by. Obigbemi (2010) on the impact of product price changes on the turnover of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria, it was reported that there is a relationship between change in cost of sales and turnover. Within the South East region of the country, bakery managers and owners over time have continued to place much emphasis on the design of the bread by utilizing colourful images and objects. This might be in an effort to increase the attractiveness of the product.

Conclusion

Marketing strategy implies the art of determining the nature, strength, direction, and interaction between the marketing mix elements and the environmental factors in a particular situation, becomes very relevant especially in any bakery firm's effort to establish, build, defend and maintain its market share and competitive advantage in the bakery industry. With respect to the findings of the study, it is concluded that marketing strategy adopted in bakery firms influences the performance of small and medium scale bakery firms in south-east of Nigeria. However, the level of influence is dependent on the type of marketing strategy that is deployed in the business. Bakery firms that adopted product packaging as a marketing strategy are seen to be recording increased sales performance. Thus product packaging remains a significant determinant of bakery firms' performance.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended for the advancement of bakery performance within the south east of Nigeria: The management of bakeries within the south east of Nigeria, should engage the services of professionals who are knowledgeable about customer reactions towards images, colours and texts in order to continuously develop and improve on their packaging so as to boost their performance.

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