COLOURS, MUSIC AND PACKAGING AS PSYCHOLOGICAL STIMULANTS WHEN MAKING PURCHASE DECISIONS

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Abstract: Consumer behaviour is influenced by interpersonal, intrapersonal and many internal, personal factors. Each individual has unique needs, motives, perceptions, attitudes, values and personal concept when making buying decisions. In the centre of S-O-R models we find psychological processes. These processes can be divided into two groups: ones that activate cognitive processes and ones that activate psychological processes. Some of these influences are made by usual psychological stimulants such as colour, music and packaging, which are precisely the subject of this research. The aim of this research is to show how these stimulants influence the behaviour of consumers and their decision to make a purchase.

Key words: colour, music, packaging, psychological influences, consumer behaviour, shopping

1. Introduction

Activation of consumers is manifested through a state of inner excitement that stimulates a consumer to be interested in a particular product, and later to buy it. From a psychological point of view, this implies the activation of the central nervous system. The activation induces the necessary energy to consumer’s organism and puts it into working condition and working ability. According to the Lambda hypothesis, or “reverse U-letter hypothesis”, increasing force of activation makes the individual’s activity first grows and then, at certain activation force, it starts to decline. When there is a minimum level of activation, during the sleep, the working ability of the consumer is low. It is higher in a state of relaxed attention, when the level of activation is higher, while the higher working ability is achieved in the state of alert due to the optimal level of activation (Senić & Milojević, 2013; Milojević et al., 2016:60).

If the working ability increases due to higher level of activation, the individual is in the normal activity area (Knežević et al., 2010:34). We speak about excessive activity when the working ability decreases with increasing
activation. If the consumer is in a state of panic, at the maximum level of activity, the working ability significantly reduces (Veljković, 2013:81).

It is often made a difference between non-specific and specific activation. Non-specific or general activation appears when the whole organism is stimulated and placed into the working ability condition. Specific activation refers to certain functions of the organism placed in the state of readiness and ability; it is mostly referred to hearing or sight (Brković, 2011:231). These two types of activation are interdependent. The specific activation of the human organism is connected to individual driving forces, such as hunger, thirst, love or fear. Only after being connected with cognitive processes, they become significant for the individual.

Activation of consumers can be made through internal and external incentives. External incentives are:

- emotional incentives are the key, because they trigger biologically programmed predefined reactions;
- cognitive incentives create thought conflict, opposition or surprise and in that way they stimulate information processing;
- physical incentives have activating power thanks to the special characteristics of an object: size, colour, movements, light, tones, scent, music etc.

Further in the paper it is proposed detailed analysis of the physical incentives such as colour, music and packaging, as well as their direct influence on the consumers’ purchase decisions.

2. Colours

There are colours that attract more consumers’ attention than others. Choosing a colour for a product packaging or a company logo plays a significant role in creating company’s marketing strategy. Further below there is a research presented that explains why colours are so important for selling products.

Yellow inspires optimism and it is used by successful companies such as Ferrar, Best Buy and McDonald’s. Beside the optimism yellow inspires, it simultaneously arouses unrest and it is particularly suitable for advertising credit bureaus. It is the colour of the sun that symbolizes joy, luck, warmth and clarity. People tend to feel comfortable when they see yellow, as they feel cheerful when the day is sunny. It can affect the buyers, because of the positive connotation and moods it is associated with (Bourges, 1997:24). The combination of yellow and red is well known; especially for McDonald’s it has proven to be very successful. This colour is characterized as both optimistic and youthful. It can accelerate our metabolism and inspire creative thoughts.

The red colour causes excitement and it is associated with youth. It is a trademark of Coca-Cola, Kenon, KFC, Virgin, and Kellogg’s ... Red is most commonly used to advertise sales in order to highlight the urgency of the event,
and yellow to attract the attention of passers-by. For example, in DM drugstores, the action prices are highlighted on red papers. Red is one of the most popular colours that naturally attract the human eye. This colour opens the appetite. It is often used in combination with orange and yellow in the food industry in order to open the appetite. Red is a vibrant colour. It has been proven that it accelerates the heart rate. Red can be seen on sales. This colour belongs to the type of warm colours. Some studies show that the red car will receive more traffic penalties and it may be because of two reasons: red car owner drives faster due to adrenaline or the red cars are more visible.

Blue reflects power and trust, and that is why many pharmaceutical companies often choose it (Pfizer among others). Blue colour is also used by HP, Intel, IBM, Dell, as well as banks (American Express, JP Morgan, EFG Euro bank etc). Cosmetic companies take care of the clients’ taste. Male products are usually blue, because it is the favourite colour of a large part of the male population. It creates a sense of stability, such as the sky and the sea. Blue colour encourages the body to produce chemicals that soothe, although that does not apply to all blue colours. Some shades of blue or too much blue can seem too cold. People tend to be more productive in blue rooms. Dark blue symbolizes authority and it can affect customers who want to buy from authority. It belongs to a type of cool, soothing colours.

On the other hand, some banks use green (such as AIK Bank) or orange (such as ING Direct), because they are associated with creativity. Dark green is connected with intimacy. This colour is the most pleasant for the human eye. Light green is used to relax customers in the shops. In addition to these meanings, all the colours can also be interpreted differently, which depends on subculture, tradition and other factors.

Orange is a cheerful and enthusiastic colour. It is a combination of aggressive red and cheerful yellow. It is a call for action. It belongs to warm and exciting colours.

Pink is romantic and feminine, used for products for women and young girls. This colour calms the most. It is interesting that some of the most dangerous criminals are placed in pink cells, because it has been proven that this colour draws energy and calms aggression.

It is not a coincidence that there is a lot of purple packaging for women’s cosmetic products because, according to some researches, it is the favourite colour of most women. It is mainly used for beauty and anti-age products. It is a royal colour, associated with wealth and prosperity. It is a colour that stimulates brain activity and speeds up the problem solving process.

White colour is associated to purity and safety. It is also used as the symbol of neutrality – the absence of colour. However, in some parts of the eastern world, white represents grief. This colour is also associated with creativity.
Black is the colour of power, authority, stability and strength. This colour is used for luxury products. It’s timeless. It is also connected with intelligence. Black clothes make people look thinner, which is why it is popular in the fashion industry. It is also connected with evil. It causes serious emotions.

You go to the store. You know exactly what you’re going to do. But you don’t bring home only what was planned. Do you think this cannot happen to you? Then you should know that behind these situations is science. Have you ever wondered why in one shop you feel calm, and full of energy in another?

The fact is that today sellers have their own techniques to convince the buyers to buy a particular product, even though they wanted something completely different (Ristevska, Jovanovska & Jakovski, 2002:102). The fact that the impulse is the one that buys in almost 75% of purchases speaks enough by itself. There are many factors that influence how and what a buyer will purchase. The first reaction to the product comes from visual signs. One of the most powerful signs is colour. Colour carries meaning and your body recognizes it. Psychologists have proven that the human mind reacts in a certain way to different colours. The field of industrial psychology has a branch that studies the psychology of colours. Angela Wright, a colour psychologist, says: “The brain notices colours before shape or formulation. Since a large percentage of our reaction to colour is unconscious, brands send a message to consumers whether they are aware of it or not” (Wright, 1995:68).

The colour must never be an unknown zone for brands. It can make a difference between growing brands and those who fall. The point was proven in 1996 when Alex Ferguson changed the jersey of the Manchester United at half time because of the wrong shades. He explained that his team was losing 3-0, because his players could not clearly see each other in gray jerseys – it was not a champion’s colour.

Colours are one of the most powerful design tools. Their power, however, is not completely universal. For example, the colour that will attract attention in Serbia will not do the same in Brazil. The colour increases brand recognition in 80% of cases. This is very important, if you know that brand recognition leads to customers trust.

Colour is very important for packaging, because it increases impressions of size or closeness. Warm and lighter colours look closer and bigger than colder ones. Dark colours leave impression of weight, light ones feel exactly light. Colours also give an impression of smell and taste (Holl, 2003:26-27). Green colour looks perfumed and increases appetite. Yellow reduces appetite and is not suitable for food products packaging. Also, the combination of colours is important. Similar colours look calm, while different colours look strong. The colours affect our feelings, which are related with products themselves. Trandafilović’s research (2006), which verifies the
correlation of colours with the contents of the packaging, is shown in the following table.

Table 1: Correlation between colour and content of packaging

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product</th>
<th>Colour Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pasta</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>Reddish-yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>Blue, white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Brown, gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable fats</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal fats</td>
<td>Yellow-green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spices</td>
<td>Green, green-grey, red for strong spices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookies</td>
<td>Yellow, light brown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate</td>
<td>Brown, red-orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frozen food</td>
<td>Blue-green, white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit</td>
<td>Orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing powder</td>
<td>White with blue, green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap</td>
<td>White-blue, pink, silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toothpaste</td>
<td>Blue, white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosmetics</td>
<td>Pink, light blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfumes</td>
<td>Purple, blue, red-brown with gold, silver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitary hygiene</td>
<td>Red, white, dark blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal hygiene</td>
<td>Purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products for children</td>
<td>Light blue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (Trandafilović, 2006:77)

3. Music

Music affects our ability to buy in two ways. First of all, it affects our well-being and our mood. We become ready to spend more money. Also, music, especially if it is loud, distorts concentration and decreases attention. Lack of concentration affects our ability to reason and increases the chance of buying what we do not need. Even the music genre affects purchasing. For example, classical music encourages the purchase of luxury products.

Due to the epidemic of ads, some people developed a defence system and became insensitive to powerful trick-words and references from celebrities. Research has shown that customers are much more inclined to impulsive shopping when there is loud music in the store (Gojković et al., 2014). Music strongly stimulates our senses, resulting in self-control weakening. Different types of music stimulate different consumers’ reactions. With its pace, verses
and country of origin, music encourages us to buy or spend. For example, if in the store plays French music, most buyers will choose precisely French wines, according to the survey.

On the other hand, slow music makes us walk slower; people become calm, look around slowly, buy slowly and spend more money.

In the following table it is shown the way it is necessary to adjust music to the type of the product that is being sold.

Table 2: Interconnection of music and product type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Product Type</th>
<th>Music Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth clothing</td>
<td>Music listened to by teenagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elegant clothing</td>
<td>Soothing and slow music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxury goods</td>
<td>Classical music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Rhythmic and dynamic music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports clothing and shoes</td>
<td>Fast and rhythmic music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

4. Packaging

Packaging is a material that, by its unique composition, protects the product and extends the life of the product. Quality and attractive packaging is a part of modern trade and although its primary objective is the protection of products, it is an important factor when it comes to sustainability, sales performance and product prices. Marketing experts use the term neuromarketing to examine and describe these and similar phenomena, (Bogosavljević, 2016:13-17).

5. Methodology and Research Results

The survey was conducted in the territory of Belgrade in the period from September 1st, 2017 to November 11th, 2017. The research tool used is the questionnaire and the number of validly filled questionnaires was 160. The survey was anonymous, even though there are questions related to the general demographic characteristics of the respondents. The questionnaire also included questions related to the influence of the packaging on the product selection when buying. In the research participated 54% of men and 46% of women. According to the age of the respondents, 37.5% of them are from 20 to 30 years old, 22.5% are between 31 and 40 years old, 20.63% of the respondents are in the age from 41 to 50, 9.37 % of them are between 51 and 60 and 10% of them are from 61 to 65 years old. In the following text we are showing the results of the research.
Figure 1: The importance of packaging
As it can be seen in Figure 1, the largest number of respondents, 38% of them, considers the packaging is important when choosing a product to purchase, while 37% of the respondents said that this decision depends on some other factors, such as product quality and the like. 25% of the respondents consider that packaging has no impact on purchasing decision.

Figure 2: Decisive factors for purchasing.

Every buyer seeks to get the best price possible when shopping, regardless of purchasing power, because the tendency for saving is innate to all people. This is proven by the data shown in Figure 2: 45% of the respondents state that they primarily pay attention to the price of products, then to quality (35%), and they put the packaging in the last place (20%).
Figure 3: Impact of packaging on product quality

To the question ”How much quality of the packaging affects the quality of the product?” the respondents generally answered positively. Figure 3 shows that 62% confirmed that there is a significant impact, while 14% answered negatively; 24% of respondents think that the quality of the product depends on the way the product is packed. Whether a packaging is able to qualitatively and quantitatively protect a particular product depends largely on the material the packaging is made of.

Figure 4: The most important data on the packaging

There are many signs, mostly abstract ones, so most consumers do not understand them. Figure 4 shows that 37% of the respondents state that the most important thing on the packaging is the first information about the product.
(shelf life, composition, etc.); for 26% of the respondents the important elements is practical usage of the product, while 22% of the respondents look for the domestic origin of the product; 15% of the respondents expect the packaging to look good.

Packaging suggestively describes the characteristics of the products and offers a promise that the product will satisfy all the wishes and needs of the customer. Data from the survey show that the respondents think that the shape, colour and type of packaging have a big role in getting the customer’s attention. From all the elements on the packaging, the first one that a respondent notice is the label on the packaging, after that colourful illustration and only then the logo of the manufacturer.

5. Conclusions

In these modern times sellers use various promotional tools in order to increase the sale of their goods. There are a number of factors that influence purchasing decisions and consumers’ subconscious, especially in the society we live in. With this research we have confirmed that colours, music and packaging are definitely factors that significantly affect the behaviour of consumers and their purchase decisions.

Research suggests that colours able to increase sales will be those that inject a little magic into the market in the future. These are colours that will persuade, soften and astonish, restore and recharge. When the atmosphere in the retail facility is completed with the appropriate music, the results will be even more convincing. Finally, the packaging has proven to be an important influencing factor in the relationship between the buyer and the market. Well-designed packaging, whose creation requires a lot of effort, research and work, will be recognized on the market and the product will definitely reach its target groups, at least through design. Necessary and very important for producers is the fact that customers’ expectations need to be satisfied when consuming the product, even though the research has pointed to other factors, such as price and product quality.

References


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