

Green Packaging and Its Influence on Impulse Buying in Retail Stores

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Abstract: Over the past years, the increased interest in sustainability in the world has dramatically changed the way consumers behave and retail strategies. Green packaging, which is defined by the use of materials that are environmentally friendly, recyclable designs, and the least environmental effects, has been a potent marketing approach in shopping premises. This is a conceptual paper that examines how green packaging affects impulse buying habits of consumers in the retail stores. Although the necessity of impulse buying has been conventionally influenced by emotional appeal, product exposure and marketing tactics, green packaging brings in a new element of psyche. Environmentally responsible packaging is becoming more and more correlated with ethical consumption, positive self-image and social responsibility in the eyes of consumers. The paper is a synthesis of the literature on consumer behavior studies, green marketing literature, and literature on retail psychology to conceptualize the role of green packaging in triggering unplanned buying behavior. It suggests that green packaging does not only meet the requirements of environmental consciousness but also increases product appeal, trust and perceived value hence affecting the impulse buying behavior. The paper identifies possible managerial implications that retailers should use sustainable packaging policies as a two-fold weapon of encouraging eco-friendly actions and making more sales.

Keywords: Green Packaging, Impulse Buying, Retail Marketing, Consumer Behavior, Sustainable Marketing, Eco-Friendly Packaging

1. Introduction

The increased focus on sustainability has transformed the consumer markets forcing the retailers to pursue environmental responsibility. Among the most obvious effects of this change, we can distinguish the appearance of green packaging, when recyclable, biodegradable, and environmentally friendly materials are used that should minimize the impact on the environment (Prakash & Pathak, 2017). Green packaging is not only an instrument of environmental sustainability but also a marketing approach that shapes the perceptions of the consumers and determinants of purchase. Consumer behavior research has also shown that product design, colour, labelling, and environmental certifications are all potent aspects of attraction in the mind of consumers (Magnier and Crié, 2015). In addition to making rational decisions, the cues tend to elicit emotional reactions that result in impulse buying, which refers to the need to make spontaneous purchases because of instant fascination or psychological gratification (Verplanken and Sato, 2011). Impulse buying in the retail case has always been related to display promotions, product placement, and aesthetics. Nevertheless, a new twist is the introduction of green packaging to the previously dominant psychological dimension. The consumers are more willing to realize that environmentally friendly packaging is a way of expressing personal values, ethical consumption, and social responsibility (Biswas and Roy, 2015). Such perception can make goods look more appealing on shelves and develop a feeling of necessity or reason to buy them at the impulse. Consequently, green packaging is not only able to play its protective and informational purpose, but also is a somewhat hidden form of persuasion that modulates the purchase behavior. The proposed conceptual research aims at investigating the crossroad between sustainable packaging and retail psychology, and specifically the role of green packaging in influencing impulse purchasing in retail outlets. Combining the research findings with the findings on sustainable marketing and consumer behavior, the study offers a theoretical backdrop to the perception

of how environmentally friendly packaging can serve as a motivator to ethical consumption as well as a stimulus to the impulsive buying behavior.

2. Review of Literature

The concept of green packaging has become one of the powerful drivers of consumer choices, and recent research shows that sustainable packaging is strongly positively correlated with purchase intentions, with eco-friendly cues positively affecting the perceived product value and brand trust significantly (Petkowicz, 2024). In addition to material selection, researchers have emphasized several features, including recyclability, biodegradability, appearance, and labeling, each of which has a specific impact on the way consumers assess the sustainability of packaging (Oloyede, 2021). Other studies based on behavioral theories also indicate that environmental concern, knowledge, and trust are moderating factors of consumer responsiveness, which means that green packaging operates more efficiently amongst consumers with high environmental concern (Panopoulos, 2022). Meanwhile, the very design of packaging has a direct impact on influencing impulse buying; such aspects as beautiful graphics, novelty, and touch has been found to provoke unplanned purchases, which is why it means sustainable designs may have both ethical and emotional significance (Cahyorini, 2011). This impact is enhanced by eco-labels and reputable certifications, as they increase the consumer beliefs in legitimacy and effectiveness, facilitating the impulse purchase of a product in the shopping cart (Panopoulos, 2022). It is also emphasized by researchers that perceived green value is a mediating factor, because customers tend to rationalize unplanned buying behavior and present it as an environmentally friendly option that is consistent with personal ethics (Amani, 2024). Nonetheless, the risk of skepticism is identified by the issues of greenwashing, when packaging statements are unclear or misleading, consumer trust is decreased, and impulse buying is not positively influenced (Quoc et al., 2025). According to category-specific research, hedonic products like snacks or cosmetics are more susceptible to impulse buying in response to the presence of green packaging than utilitarian products, where rational judgment usually prevails (Das, 2023). Point-of-sale research introduces a third layer which reveals that packaging effects can be enhanced through the application of shelf placement and display methods, especially when sustainable products are placed close to the checkout counters (BPC Works, 2024). It has also highlighted the symbolic value of the packaging, which is frequently used as an identity-forming process by consumers because it allows them to demonstrate the pro-environmental attitudes by making an impulse buy (Prakash, 2024). Functionality and convenience is also important; a sustainable and convenient packaging should be used, where resealability and convenience is considered, as it promotes trial and impulse purchasing by reducing the perceived risks (Duarte, 2024). The results of the generational comparisons indicate that consumers of younger age groups, and especially Gen Z, react to cues of green packaging more intensely, which supports the significance of developing demographic segmentation when studying this correlation (AJMRI, 2025). Impulse buying researchers also underline the importance of differentiating between trait and situational triggers of impulsivity, and packaging belongs to the latter, which proves the necessity of combined methods of measurement (Mandolfo, 2021). This is supplemented by the visual communication research, demonstrating that graphic clarity, simplicity of design, and unique eco-symbols promote cognitive fluency, which makes it less time-consuming and more likely to make impulse purchases (Wang, 2025). Lastly, the message framing in a packaging communication is essential, because altruistic frames (help the planet) and utilitarian ones (less waste, same quality) will engage different psychological pathways, both of which may lead to the unplanned purchasing (Das, 2023). All of these studies, in common, reinforce the idea that green packaging is not only a practical requirement but also a psychological stimulus that is capable of forming consumer attitudes, supporting impulse purchases, and playing a major role in creating impulsive buying in the retail context.

3. Research Gap

Although extensive studies have been conducted to investigate the influence of sustainable packaging in determining consumer attitudes and purchase intentions, very little has been done concerning the effects of green packaging on impulse buying behavior. The majority of the available research on sustainable packaging is conducted on the planned purchasing behavior, the attitude of consumers toward the environment, or their readiness to pay a price to obtain greener products (Petkowicz, 2024; Oloyede, 2021). Though packaging design and labeling is also examined as stimulant to impulse buying (Cahyorini, 2011), the literature seldom deals with the distinct psychological processes induced by green stimuli, including the feeling of moral justification, identity-indication or the perception of social responsibility. In addition, a significant portion of the literature focuses on the functional features of the packaging, such as biodegradability, recyclability or the labelling credibility without understanding how these dimensions can interplay with situational retail responses such as

point-of-sale displays, product category, or consumer impulsivity characteristics. On the same note, very little information exists on whether hedonic and utilitarian types of product types mediate the effectiveness of green packaging in arousing unplanned purchases. Lastly, it is still common in the literature to note the adverse impact of greenwashing and consumer distrust, but not many have empirically examined the effect of trust or perceived genuineness of green claims on the propensity to impulsive purchase. Therefore, there is evident gap in research in the relationship between green packaging as independent variable and impulse buying as dependent variable in the presence of mediators which include perceived green value, eco-label trust. Filling this gap will not only offer both theoretical information on sustainable consumer behavior but also practical advice to retailers who want to strike a balance between environmental responsibility and sales development.

4. Problem Statement

Today, the retail world has transformed the traditional functions of packaging to protection and information delivery to play a significant part in marketing that affects consumer behavior. As the focus on environmental issues increases, retailers and manufacturers are switching to green packaging as a sustainable option with the aim of attracting the attention of environmentally friendly consumers. Although the relationship between sustainable packaging and consumer attitudes, purchase intentions and brand perception has already been broadly investigated in previous literature, its contribution to impulse buying behavior has not been investigated. Impulse buying, a retail sales foundation based on sexual stimulus and circumstances at the point of sale is a huge factor in retail sales, and most of the times created by visual appeal, labelling, and packaging layout. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether the use of green packaging with its values of responsible attitude to the environment and ethical consumption can be seen as a stimulus to impulse buying just like traditional packaging. Moreover, the connection between green packaging and impulse buying might not be that easy. This relationship may be moderated by consumer trust in eco-labels and perceived authenticity of green claims, and generational distinctions and product category differences may be a factor influencing this relationship, mediators such as perceived green value or moral justification may be essential. Without empirical data, retailers may find themselves to ignore the potential of green packaging as a motivator of impulse buying and view it as a compliance factor or even a branding affair. The existing gap provokes an urgent necessity of both the conceptual and empirical research, which should investigate the effect of green packaging on impulse buying behavior and thus connect the sustainability objectives with the retail performance outcomes.

5. Research Objective

To analyse the impact of green packaging on consumers' impulse buying behavior in retail stores.

6. Research Methodology

Current research design is a conceptual and descriptive research design to investigate the effect of green packaging in impulse buying behavior at the retail outlets. Being a conceptual study, the methodology mainly is based on an extensive review of the secondary data obtained through journals, books, reports, and online databases on the subject of sustainable marketing, consumer behavior, packaging design, and impulse buying. Synthesized are the relevant theories to construct the framework. The research critically examines the existing literature, comes up with the new trends, and incorporates variables like eco-labels, visual design, and functional convenience as the independent variables to affect the dependent factor, which is the impulse buying. Although this stage does not involve any empirical testing, the framework created provides a solid basis of future quantitative validation by way of surveys or an experimental design.

7. Conceptual Framework

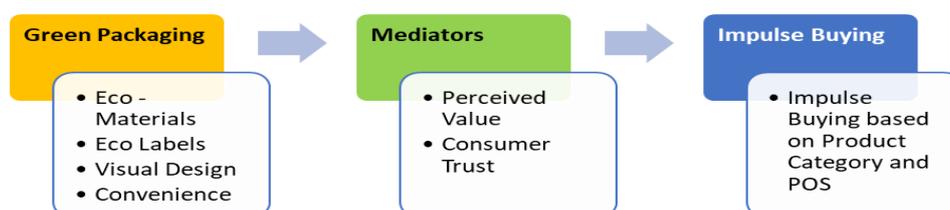


Fig 1 – Conceptual Framework

The theoretical framework of the research paper points to the connection between green packaging and the impulse buying behavior in shopping establishments. The independent variable is green packaging which includes aspects like use of environmentally friendly material, eco-labels and certifications, appealing outward look, and convenient functionality. The attributes are likely to create favourable perception and interest in consumers, which, in its turn, can trigger impulse buying. Other mediating variables facilitated by the framework include the perceived green value, consumer trust on environmental claims, and moral justification or identity signalling which determine the impact of packaging on consumer psychology. Moreover, it is suggested to moderate the variables like the product category, the generational cohort, and the point-of-sale factors to change the power of this correlation. Impulse buying behavior is the dependent variable that reflects the tendency of the consumers to make impulse purchases. This model underlines that even though green packaging can directly influence impulse purchase, the influence depends on values, trust, and contexts of consumers in retail shops.

8. Research discussion on factors relationship

Green packaging as the independent variable is the one that creates a considerable impact on consumer attitudes and buying behavior. Sustainability can be promoted by the use of environmentally-friendly materials, including recyclable or biodegradable packaging, which increases the awareness of consumers about sustainability and promotes feelings of moral responsibility. Research indicates that green value is more perceived when using environmentally responsible packaging, and it enhances the purchase intentions of consumers (Magnier and Crié, 2015). Simultaneously, viable eco-labels and certifications create trust in the consumers, decreasing the level of doubts about green marketing statements and creating a favourable impression of buying products (Atkinson & Rosenthal, 2014). The visual design features of natural colours, minimalistic design, and eco-symbols appeal to consumers and arouse emotional response. The studies show that aesthetics of packaging is the critical part of identity signalling which helps consumers to demonstrate personal values due to unplanned buying (Steenis et al., 2017). The element of functional convenience, including the ability to reseal and reuse products, also increases consumer satisfaction by harmonizing the positive effect with environmental gains, which effects positive attitudes towards impulse buying (Prakash and Pathak, 2017). These mediating variables are perceived green value, trust, and moral justification that do form psychological channels through which packaging is related to behavior. To illustrate, the more people trust eco-labels, the greater the impact of the packaging design on a purchase decision (Delacroix et al., 2014) and perceived green value allows people to feel that the impulsive purchases made can be justified as socially responsible (Biswas and Roy, 2015). The reduction of cognitive dissonance, in its turn, is made possible with the help of moral justification, which enables shoppers to structure spontaneous buying as both ethical and desirable (White et al., 2019). These dynamics are also determined by moderating factors. The packaging behavior connection greatly depends on the kind of product because hedonic goods with sustainable packaging have higher chances of causing impulsive behavioral change relative to utilitarian ones (Groening et al., 2018). Demographic aspects, particularly generational, are also crucial, though younger generations, including Gen Z and Millennials, are more sensitive to eco-packaging (Naderi and Van Steenburg, 2018). Besides, green packaging is more noticeable to consumers in the retail setting, which is promoted by shelf placement, in-store promotions, and display visibility, which promotes impulse buying (Mehta et al., 2013). Eventually, the interplay of these variables leads to impulse buying behavior which is the dependent factor. Green packaging creates preliminary appeal, mediators form cognitive and emotional rationalization and moderators define the intensity of the relationship in various scenarios. These factors combined allow showing that green packaging is not only a tool of sustainability but a business driver of impulsive buying in contemporary retail, combining moral and consumerist concerns.

9. Future Scope of the Study

This research paper presents various research gaps that can be pursued in future in the field of sustainable marketing and consumer behavior. First, it can be empirically tested that the conceptual relationship between green packaging and impulse buying in various product categories, i.e. food, cosmetics, and household goods, can be strengthened or weakened by hedonic or utilitarian products in the future. Second, longitudinal and experimental studies may investigate the effect of consumer attitudes of authenticity, trust, and greenwashing on the sustainability-impulse buying relationship, providing further information on the influence of eco-labels and certifications on impulsive purchasing behavior. Third, the findings can be expanded by cross-cultural and generational research, which will investigate the reaction of demographic groups, especially Gen Z and millennials, to the cue of green packaging in the retail setting, and contribute to assisting retailers to

develop more tailored sustainable marketing strategies. As a whole, these future directions can help not only develop the theoretical base of consumer psychology but also apply it to retail sustainability.

10.Limitations of the Study

Being a conceptual study, the current research has weaknesses because it uses literature as opposed to empirical validation. The arguments that are crafted are highly theoretical and they do not entirely reflect the complexity of consumer behavior in store retail environments. The other weakness is that the consumer perceptions are situation specific; the reaction to green packaging can differ greatly depending on the culture, demographics, and the type of product and this research does not explicitly cover it. Also, the research fails to consider external conditions like pricing, promotion, or store environment, which tend to interact with cues in packaging to induce impulse purchase. Consumer cynicism or opposition to green claims especially where there is greenwashing is noted but not practically examined in this case. Hence, the results can be considered as the basis of an empirical investigation and not final findings.

11.Conclusion

This theoretical paper makes use of the centrality of the concept of green packaging to influence consumer impulse purchasing in retail outlets. Green packaging that incorporates the following components, including environmentally-friendly materials, eco-labels, aesthetic design, and practical convenience does not only positively influence the perception of value and trust on the part of the consumer but also gives them moral reason to make impulsive purchases. This relationship is also reinforced by the presence of the mediating factors and contextual moderators which demonstrate that sustainable packaging strategies are able to affect both ethical and emotional aspects of the buying process. In general, green packaging becomes one of the two forces of environmental responsibility and unthought-out consumer buying in contemporary retail.

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