

The Effect of Packaging Design on Purchasing Choices in the Packaged Rice Market: A Case of Wilmar Rice Tanzania in Morogoro Municipality

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Abstract: This study examines the influence of packaging on consumers' purchasing decisions in the packed rice industry, taking Wilmar Rice Tanzania in Morogoro Municipality as a case. The study is based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which states that consumers' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control influence their purchase intentions. A mixed method was utilized, consisting of structured questionnaires with consumers and semi-structured interviews with sales and marketing managers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive analyses, and qualitative data were thematically analyzed to identify salient themes and information. Results indicate that package design has a significant impact on consumer liking and that visual attractiveness, professional appearance, distinctive characteristics, and transparency of information have a positive effect on the perception of quality, trust, and brand awareness. The study highlights the importance of packaging as a marketing tool to influence consumers' behavior and recommendable strategies for Wilmar Rice Tanzania to improve packaging design, build brand loyalty, and market competition.

Keywords: *Packaging Design, Consumer Purchasing Behavior, Packaged Rice Market.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Consumer buying behavior is a dominant force in defining market trends globally and within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, which includes staple food products such as rice. Studies have shown that consumers are increasingly price-sensitive, quality-conscious, brand-loyal, and inclined toward convenience (Niazi, 2012). For instance, Baumeister and Tice (2014) observed a growing preference for premium rice brands boasting organic/good farming practices in developed markets as part of a global trend towards health-related consumerism. On the other hand, in developing countries, price is still a prominent factor in purchasing rice (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010), which indicates the difficulty in predicting consumers' needs in different socio-economic environments.

In Africa, consumer patterns differ substantially, reflecting income levels, cultural affinities, and food security issues. Rice: A Platinum Favorite but Buying Choices are Constrained by Availability, Price, and Promotions, finds Peterson-Wilhelm et al. (2023). That same trend can be seen in Lazaro et al. (2010), convenience and affordability motivate consumers to opt for local packaged rice in preference to imported varieties. More significantly

contrasting, though, is the impact of aggressive advertising campaigns targeted to price-sensitive consumers that dictate rice consumption attitudes in the African markets (Oteh et al. 2018).

The starting point for demand for packaged rice in Sub-Saharan Africa is population and income growth, urbanization, and a change of lifestyle. Major factors influencing consumer choice in Ghana and Nigeria are rice quality, packaging, availability, and price (Adams et al., 2024; Gyimah-Brempong & Kuku-Shittu, 2016; Okunlola et al., 2021). Similarly, in East Africa, the city customers prefer packaged rice because of convenience, cleanliness, and good quality of rice expected from a packaged one (Tuli & Houghton, 2018; Nyangasi et al., 2020; Ruto et al., 2017).

In Tanzania, rice is consumed as a staple food and cash crop able to contribute to food security at the household level and rural income (Suleiman, 2018). The packaged rice segment is growing, mainly through supermarkets and urban retail stores, due to rising income levels, convenience, cleanliness, and assured safe quality assurance (Laizer et al., 2018; Sekiya et al., 2020). High quality on packaging and labeling plays an important part in the purchasing decision

(Nyamoga et al., 2021) is gaining popularity among city dwellers, where brand loyalty has already been established.

Wilmar Rice Tanzania, a subsidiary of Wilmar International, has also penetrated the local market with its line of "Caprice" products, which highlight modern packaging and consistent quality that is well supported by supply chain logistics (Wilmar et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the market is confronted with some obstacles, such as price-sensitive consumers, competition from bulk rice, fluctuations in demand, and supply chain uncertainty (Bing et al., 2024; Madhavan & Kaliyaperumal, 2015). Thus, packaging and branding play a pivotal role in defining consumers' perceived quality and their influence on purchasing intention.

With these circumstances, it is crucial to study the impact of packaging design on consumer behavior in the packaged rice industry. The analysis of such issues enables Wilmar Rice Tanzania to obtain fact-based insight to not only develop marketing strategies, but also solidify brand equity, and meet the changing consumer needs in Morogoro Municipality. The purpose of this study is to close the gap between consumer preferences and business strategy, and to further the understanding of the packaged rice industry in Tanzania.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) will serve as a guiding framework. The TPB postulates that an individual's intention to carry out a behavior, such as purchasing a product, is affected by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. In the domain of packaged rice, attitudes are determined by consumers' evaluations of quality, convenience, hygiene, and brand value. For instance, the Tanzanian consumers may have formed a good attitude towards the Wilmar Rice Caprice brand due to a perception of quality and packaging sophistication, thus increasing the chances of purchase.

On the other hand, subjective norms denote family members and peers or trends in society that influence consumers' decisions. In Morogoro Municipality, rice brand selection may at times be guided by social recommendations or preferences of households, with consumers tagging purchases along similar lines favored or recommended by their social circles.

Perceived behavioral control is the consumer's belief in their own ability to buy a certain product, namely in terms of affordability, accessibility, and availability. If packaged rice

is believed to be very available and cheap, consumers will be willing to purchase it (Ajzen, 1991). Hence, TPB is indeed very relevant for the study as it provides an understanding of how packaging design, brand visibility, and availability enable consumers to form purchase intentions in the local packaged rice industry.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a mixed-method approach to survey how consumer purchases are influenced by the packaging design of the packaged rice in a company named Wilmar Rice Tanzania situated in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania. The study area comprises one of the major rice-producing and consuming areas in Tanzania. The estimated population of the area in 2024 is about 347,409. The study adopted a single-case study design that sought to make an in-depth analysis of consumer behavior within this particular context, whose target population comprises packaged rice consumers and sales and marketing professionals of Wilmar Rice Tanzania. The sample involved 100 respondents. Sampling techniques involved purposive (sales and marketing professionals) and convenience (packaged rice consumers) sampling methods. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires for consumers and semi-structured interviews for the professionals. The secondary data were sourced primarily from industry reports and academic literature. Descriptive analysis was done for quantitative analysis, and qualitative analysis was whisked away to a consideration of thematic analysis, which meant that the reviewers analyzed the patterns and insights of market dynamics. Validity was ensured using expert reviews and pilot testing, while reliability was tested by using Cronbach's Alpha (0.845) for the questionnaires. Ethics were partly addressed via informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality in accordance with the institutional framework. The methodology shows how much the package affects consumers' choices, thus providing a basis for the marketing strategies and operational decisions of Wilmar Rice Tanzania. The analysis, interpretation, and reporting of any analytical methods would take this methodological study into consideration.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings and discussion in this section are on the packaging design influencing consumer choice in the packaged rice market. Findings in Table 1 show the influence of packaging attributes on consumers' preferences and choice decisions.

Table 1 Effectiveness of Packaging Design on Purchasing Choices in the Packaged Rice Market

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The packaging design of packaged rice influences my purchasing decision.	51	53.1	33	34.4	3	3.1	7	7.3	2	2.1
I am attracted to packaged rice with colorful and visually appealing packaging.	53	55.2	29	30.2	6	6.3	7	7.3	1	1.0

I trust packaged rice with professional and neat packaging.	34	35.4	32	33.3	11	11.5	17	17.7	2	2.1
The design of the packaging communicates the quality of the packaged rice.	36	37.5	35	36.5	13	13.5	8	8.3	4	4.2
I am more likely to buy packaged rice if the packaging is innovative.	25	26.0	38	39.6	16	16.7	14	14.6	3	3.1
Packaging design plays an important role in my choice of packaged rice.	27	28.1	34	35.4	21	21.9	12	12.5	2	2.1
The design of packaged rice makes it easier for me to recognize the brand.	30	31.3	37	38.5	14	14.6	12	12.5	3	3.1

Source: Field Data (2025)

➤ *Influence of Packaging Design on Purchasing Decisions*

The majority of respondents (87.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that packaging design influences their purchasing decisions, while only 9.4% expressed indifference or disagreement. This provides strong evidence of the significant role packaging plays in consumer choice. Well-designed packaging is said to draw attention and create a favorable first impression, thus increasing the probability of actual purchases. For Wilmar Rice Tanzania, serious investment in attractive and functional packaging would at least establish an avenue of competitive advantage along which consumer preference could be cultivated.

The finding corroborates the study conducted by Karedza and Sikwila (2017), whereby the printed information on the packaging greatly affects the purchase behavior, followed by the design aspects such as color and font style. Kosgei (2018) also found a strong relationship between attributes of packaging, including graphics, size, and information, and consumer buying behavior. All these studies emphasize that packaging can be an effective way of communication and creates consumer perception and purchase decisions. For Wilmar Rice Tanzania, this implies that the information packaging that is communicated should be transmitted clearly in an engaging manner.

➤ *Attraction to Colorful and Visually Appealing Packaging*

From the findings, over 85% were attracted to packaged rice with colorful and visually appealing packaging, while only 8.3% disagreed. This implies that aesthetics need greater emphasis as a consumer interest factor. Bright recoloring designs can bring the product out on a shelf packaged with competing items, and can induce positive feelings. Wilmar Rice Tanzania should ensure that vibrant and appealing packaging works to grab attention for an extended customer base.

• *A Marketing Manager Offered Insights into this Trend:*

“Packaging is often the first touch with the consumer. A colorful design creates an immediate emotional connection and distinguishes the product from its competition.”

Logo design and visual elements contribute much to consumer preference, as mentioned by Worawattanatam and Jitkuekul (2022), thus supporting this finding. Label components contribute to shaping the purchase decision by grabbing visual attention, which works not only for wine but also in the case of rice packaging, as shown by Escandon-

Barbosa and Rialp-Criado (2019). These observations magnify the role of highly appealing visuals in consumer choices, thus suggesting that Wilmar Rice Tanzania should invest in attractive and bright designs, which would have a strong impact on its target consumers while ensuring clarity and brand adherence.

➤ *Trust in Professional and Neat Packaging*

Almost 68.8% of respondents associated professional and neat packaging with trustworthy products, while nearly 20% were not so convinced. This indicates that packaging quality communicates product reliability. Well-designed packaging conveys to consumers the quality standards inherent in its products. Hence, neat packaging not only builds brand credibility but also engenders consumer trust for Wilmar Rice Tanzania over lengthy periods.

Widayanti (2020), for instance, revealed that clarity in package information- like expiration dates and product data- instills trust among consumers. On the other hand, Aghasafari and Karbasi (2017) demonstrated that favourable attitudes toward packaging would greatly enhance purchase intentions, thus strengthening the link between professional presentation and perceived quality. Thus, for Wilmar Rice Tanzania, great packaging standards, such as a clean aesthetic, right material choice, or proper labelling, would gain consumer confidence and thus enhance its differentiation from competitors.

➤ *Packaging as a Communicator of Product Quality*

Approximately 74% of respondents summed up their opinion that packaging design communicates the quality of packaged rice. Packaging stands to be a silent salesman that creates intended value before purchase. The use of good quality materials to differentiate the goods, suitable labeling, and elegant package design shall increase consumer confidence in the product. Wilmar Rice Tanzania should have packaging aesthetics that correspond with the product quality so that consumers' expectations may be met.

• *A Sales and Marketing Expert Emphasized:*

“Packaging isn't just about looking good; it's the first impression of quality. If the packaging feels premium and informative, customers are more likely to trust the product inside.”

- *He Also Added:*

“Clear labels and quality packaging materials reduce hesitation at the shelf. It builds trust even before the consumer tries the product.”

Kosgei (2018) and Bairagi et al. (2021) have noted that packaging attributes, such as its material and clarity of information, have a direct bearing on the quality perception of a consumer. Also, Agbas and Ceballos (2019) established that detailed information on packaging had a positive impact on consumer preferences. These studies indicate that Wilmar Rice Tanzania should be careful about packaging transparency so that its design features do justice to the quality of the product, especially concerning consumer assurance on food safety and authenticity.

➤ *Preference for Innovative Packaging*

Innovation in packaging cut 65.6% of respondents, while 17.7% expressed neutrality or disagreement. This shows that though a majority of the consumers who appreciate innovative packaging, a section of them is still not convinced of its importance. Innovative designs such as resealable bags or biodegradable materials would appeal to progressive buyers. Wilmar Rice Tanzania can consider developing creative approaches to packaging, adapting to modern consumer trends, while not neglecting cost-effectiveness.

Liu et al. (2017) and Dewi et al. (2018) draw attention to the increasing consumer orientation toward sustainable and functional packaging based on environmental and convenience grounds. Similarly, Worawattanatham and Jitkuekul (2022) ascertained that vacuum packaging and similar features have been crucial for boosting consumers' preferences. Insights from these studies may create a window of opportunity for Wilmar Rice Tanzania in obtaining a competitive advantage through an innovative yet practical packaging solution, focusing on modern consumer values of sustainability and usability.

➤ *Role of Packaging Design in Brand Choice*

Most consumers, 63.5% of them, agreed that packaging design plays a crucial role in their choice of packaged rice, while 14.6% disagreed. Thus, the inference is that packaging is a major differentiator in a competitive market. Unique and consistent packaging is known to create brand identity and loyalty. Wilmar Rice Tanzania should focus on differentiating designs that will resonate with its target market to build stronger brand recall.

- *Reinforcing this Perspective, a Marketing Leader Noted:*

“The best packaging is not just good-looking; it is a way of making consumers remember and connect to the brand. Consistency is the only way to build great loyalty.”

Utomo et al. (2021) and Omari et al. (2018) both support the view of packaging in the direction of brand preference, with the former stating that effective branding instills consumer loyalty towards packaged products. An even greater emphasis is put further by Escandon-Barbosa and Rialp-Criado (2019), describing how cohesive and consistent design elements give a push to enhancing brand recognition.

A packaging design characterized by memorable and eye-catching colors or logo-cues has a chance to enhance Wilmar Rice Tanzania's brand differentiation and create long-lasting consumer loyalty.

➤ *Ease of Brand Recognition Through Packaging*

Almost 70% of respondents found the package design helpful in entering the world of brands, while only 15.6% did not know or disagreed. That brings it to mind that logos, colors, and typefaces are important distinguishing features. The customer buys repeatedly through consistent and memorable packaging. So for Wilmar Rice Tanzania, this can improve their market visibility and consumer retention.

Karedza and Sikwila (2017) and Kosgei (2018) found consistency in the appearance of the packaging materials through their colors, fonts, and logos build brand recognition. Likewise, Utomo et al. (2021) recorded the observation that strong brand identity directly influenced consumer choices. All these facts demonstrate that Wilmar Rice Tanzania should put more concentration on uniformity of packaging design across all product lines, for instance, brand identification and trust reinforcement by consumers in the retail environment.

V. CONCLUSION

The study shows that the packaged rice market lifestyle quite heavily dependent on the design of the surrounding packaging. Consumers are innately attracted to bright colors, aesthetic designs, and professional packaging, which communicate quality, reliability, and brand identity. Innovation elements, like resealable bags or eco-friendly materials-are added preferences by consumers. Packaging also creates an image for brand recognition and loyalty, strengthening its perceived value when juxtaposed with competitors. All in all, good packaging becomes then a weapon to affect buyer behavior-and Wilmar Rice Tanzania-more so in Morogoro Municipality-gains an advantage based on this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study indicate that design plays a major role in influencing consumer purchasing behavior for packaged rice. The main attraction of packaging to consumers is bright colors, beautiful presentation, and professional design, reflecting quality, reliability, and brand status. Other added features, such as being resealable or environmentally friendly, enhance the preference for the product. Packaging is equally important in building brand awareness and loyalty so that it adds value and differentiates the product from the competition. Effectively, therefore, packaging becomes one of the key tools in determining consumer behavior, which gives Wilmar Rice Tanzania a competitive edge in Morogoro Municipality.

➤ *Invest in Visual Appeal:*

Wilmar Rice Tanzania should pride itself on packaging that is bright, attractive, and professionally designed to capture consumer attention and increase perceived product quality.

➤ *Maintain Consistency Across Brands:*

All brands should present consistent packaging elements- likewise logo, color, and fonts- to strengthen brand recognition and loyalty.

➤ *Adopt Innovative Features:*

Marking off package innovations that are functional and sustainable, such as resealable or biodegradable, will satisfy modern consumer expectations while distinguishing products in the competitive market.

➤ *Clear Information:*

Packaging quality, date of expiration, nutritional value, and origin must be glaringly specified for consumer trust and reliability.

➤ *Marketing Strategy by Packaging:*

Package design should be a part of the wider marketing strategy that appeals to consumer interest, builds brand equity, and influences sales performance.

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