

## Impact of Consumer Package Communication on Consumer Decision Making Process

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*The change of traditional direct trade form to self-service form of trade has increased the product assortment in many groups of products. That has determined the intensified competition among brands and the wider application of marketing communication decisions. Because of plenty of brands it has become more difficult to identify them and make the decision. The bigger attention is attached to consumer package, which is integral part of product and its brand for the consumer. That transfers the information to consumer when he or she is active in communication process. Package, communicating with consumer in the selling place, has become essential factor influencing the choice of consumer. Scientific researches have proved that package decisions let to attract consumer attention, transfer the desirable information about the product, position the product in consumer conscious, differentiate and identify it among analogical products. In that way elements of package influence consumer decision making process and can determine the choice of consumer and the package itself can become the sustained competitive advantage. Thus despite of plenty of scientific researches, focused on separate functions of package and importance of its decisions, the package is not analysed as a whole, playing the communication function. Therefore this article is aiming to present the theoretical and empirical study which lets verify and name consumer package factors and their communication importance in the decision making process.*

*The result of theoretical studies is the theoretical model of consumer package communication which illustrates the generalized communication of the package components and features and link between communication and decision making process. The model is verified by empirical research, while evaluating the influence of package components and features in stages of consumer decision making process and missing functions of package communication excluded in the model. Those functions would limit the possibility to estimate the total importance of the package components in stages of consumer decision making process.*

*Seeking to ensure the results reliability, packages of products, which have the biggest influence on decision making process, have been chosen. Two main aspects of products have been selected, i.e., a) consumer is not involved in decision making process of these products; b) the assortment of products is wide and packages are very different. Thus products of casual demand are: milk, shampoo and chewing gum.*

*The results of the empirical research allow to affirm that theoretical package communication model must be complement with the impact of the package form and size in the stage of need perception. That link has to be established in every group of products. The impact of the package graphics, special offers and package ecology communication have to be marked as less significant or not significant in the stage of alternatives' evaluation in the model.*

*Package verbal components have not impact on repeated purchase, i.e. behaviour after the purchase. While evaluating package communication models, it has estimated that the impact of non-verbal package components communication for impulsive purchase products for decision making is bigger than for not impulsive purchase products.*

Keywords: *consumer package, components of package, communication, consumer decision making process*

### Introduction

The change of traditional direct trade form to self-service form of trade has increased the product assortment in many groups of products. That has determined the intensified competition among brands and the wider application of marketing communication decisions. Because of plenty of brands it has become more difficult to identify them and make the decision. The bigger attention is attached to consumer package, which is integral part of product and its brand for the consumer. That transfers the information to a consumer when he or she is active in communication process. Package, communicating with consumer in the selling place, has become essential factor influencing the choice of a consumer.

Scientific researchers related with the package topic are integrating these directions:

1. *The object of scientific researches is a consumer. The approach of consumer to the package exterior, various package components presentation decisions are identified in these researches. Also the link of consumer motivation concerning product purchase and package evaluation is estimated (Ampero, Vila (2006), Lee, Lye (2003), Klevas (2005), Kanajan (2001), Silayoi, Speece (2004), Carl (1995).*
2. *The object of scientific researches is decisions of the package, i.e. the general features of the package*

and the impact of package elements in evaluating products (Kauppinen (2004), Jakupov, Kacalov (2003), Larnanov, Skrilnikova (2000), Wansik, Ittersum (2003), Napolitano (2002), Bellas (2004), Lee, Lye (2003), Parlin (2003), Bone, France (2001), Makely (2004), Rentie, Brewer (2000), Fokes, Matta (2004), Gourville (2003), Mohan (2004), Kuster (2004), Ucherec (2004), Sensbach (200), Rochmanuk (2004), McSarthy, Shapiro, Perreault (1986), Wade (2005), Smith, Taylor (2004), Murazanov (2005), Arnold (2003), Ahmed (2006), Durand (2005). Mostly visual package elements and their impact on consumer attention, product quality evaluation and brand choice are evaluated in these researches.

Scientific researches have proved that package decisions allow to attract consumer attention, transfer the desirable information about the product, position the product in consumer conscious, differentiate and identify it among analogical products. In that way elements of package influence consumer decision making process and can determine the choice of consumer and the package itself can become the sustained competitive advantage. Thus despite of plenty of scientific researches, focused on separate functions of package and importance of its decisions, the package is not analysed as a whole, playing the communication function. Thus the *problem of the article* is formulated as follows: factors of consumer package, which influence effective communication with consumer and influence consumer decision making.

**Research aim** - to verify factors of consumer package theoretically and name their communication importance in decision making process empirically.

**Research object** - consumer package factors and their importance for consumer decision making process.

**Research methods:** comparative analysis of scientific literature, periodical publications, analysis of internet databases, descriptive method and survey employing questionnaires.

## Reasoning of consumer package importance

While choosing effective communication means, trade forms are playing a big role in products market. Rentie, Brewer (2000) affirm that 73 percent of purchase decisions are taking in a the selling place. Thus in many cases the consumers are evaluating different brands alternatives only in selling place. Purchase process is quite complicated and researches indicate that too. Those researches have estimated that the consumer spend about 20 minutes in the shop, inspecting 20 products a second. That means that the consumer has to decide from 24000 brands. There are only theoretical numbers, because in reality consumers are estimating only the part of these brands. Thus the importance of communication in selling place is increasing. That situation stimulates to spend less given for traditional advertising and a greater attention should be given to communication in purchase place. These tendencies indicate the increasing significance of product package as a brand communication and differentiation tool. The package becomes the most important and the last tool which can reach the consumer, transfer the information,

strengthen product positioning in consumer consciousness and influence the process of his/her decision making process.

The summary of Rentie and Brewer (2003), Jakupov, Kacalov (2003), Ampero, Vila (2006), Wade (2005), Voyles (2005) opinions allow to exclude these main reasons which determine the package importance:

- decrease of traditional promotion tools efficiency while communicating with consumer and increase of efficiency of the package as a communication tool;
- redistribution of marketing communication tools importance from traditional advertising to the communication in selling place;
- decrease of brands differentiation in consumer consciousness and increase of the importance of package a differentiation and identification tool;
- increase requirements for product quality and its preservation;
- increase requirements for product safety and consumer safety;
- increase requirements for presentation of information about the product to customer;
- creation of product added value with the help of the package.

These reasons confirm the increase of package importance for producer and consumer. Also that indicates the importance of cognition of the package as the scientific research object. Basing on Ampero, Vila (2006), the package is accepted as one of the most effective marketing communication tool, because: a) it reaches almost all consumers of current product category; b) it communicates with a consumer in essential moment- when the decision of the purchase is accepted; c) consumers are actively involved in communication process, because they study the package, seeking to get the proper information.

The package is considered as an element of communication oriented to the message and to the behaviour in scientific literature (Rentie, Brewer, 2000). Lately, the package as the whole influences stages of consumer decision making process. The influence of the package can be stronger or weaker and it depends on consumer involvement level and time pressure. Thus the package, which is communicating with the consumer and influencing decision making process, is the important marketing communication tool, which is connected with promotion elements (Silayoi, Speece, 2004).

Verbal and non-verbal messages can be transferred to consumer with the help of the package. Visual elements of the package transfer non-verbal information and affect emotions. Verbal information, which is transferred with informational elements, affects cognitive orientation of a consumer. Thus the package as the element of communication, oriented to the message, transfers the comprehensive information about the product, helps to positioning it in consumer behaviour and influence decision making process.

## Theoretical consumer package communication model

Product communication strategy, which is oriented to particular target segment, stipulates the communication of

the package. Product positioning is implemented with the help of decisions of marketing mix elements. Those decisions involve closely connected parts: functions of the package and components of the package, basing on the fact that the package is communicating with the consumer through its features and components of verbal and non-verbal character.

Intermediaries of the package communication message are component of the package: colour, form, size, images, graphics, material, smell, name of the product, brand, country, information about product, special offers, instructions of usage, simplicity and ecology of the package, ergonomics, innovativeness. All these elements of the package play the function of communication. Their transferable messages involve the evaluation of the product in qualitative, quantitative, price view, the formation of the product cognitive and sensorial expectations, the impact to consumer emotions, mood and attention. The communication of the package components is attributed to the communication oriented to the message (Silayoi, Speece (2004). Communication oriented to the message is the background of the communication oriented to the behaviour. Thus components of the package which are communicating with verbal and non-verbal information are influencing consumer's physical response. The physical response of the consumer is consumer's behaviour in decision making.

The scheme of consumer package communication impact to consumer decision making process is presented

in Figure 1.

While communicating the package is influencing stages of consumer decision making process. In the stage of need perception, the package, which is attracting consumer attention, determines not planned need in case of impulsive purchase. In the stage of information search the package becomes the source of information about the product. The stage of information search is very important in the case of high involvement in the decision making process and here the verbal package communication is the most important. Consumer is evaluating alternatives of product according established criteria in the stage of alternatives evaluation. The package impact is the biggest at this stage, because verbal and non-verbal package components are communicating the comprehensive information about the product. Stage of choice is frequently compared with the stage of alternatives evaluation, because the estimation of the best alternative determines the choice of consumer. Therefore the package is influencing the choice stage through alternatives' evaluation stage. At the stage of the behaviour purchase elements of package tell the consumer how to use the product properly, influence quality evaluation while using the product and help to identify the product during the repeated purchase.

Impact of package communication on decision making process is changing. Three main factors influence the level of package communication to consumer behaviour: time pressure, consumer involvement level and type of choice.

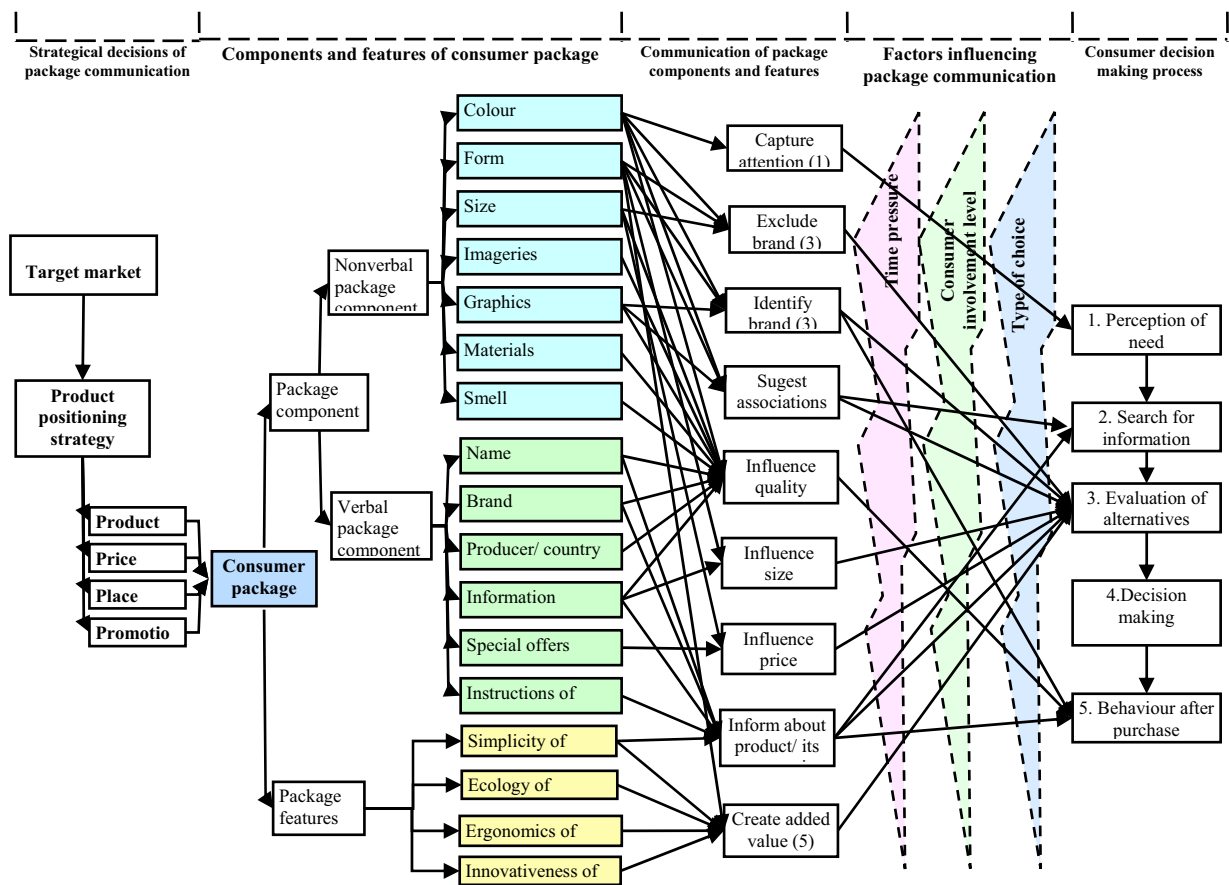


Figure 1. Theoretical consumer package communication model

Jakupov, Kacalov (2003) affirm that the importance of factors, which influence decision making, decreases when the decision making process is limited. The same is happening with the package. That is the situation of low involvement in the purchase process. Low involvement means that the consumer needs little efforts in searching the information about brands and evaluating competitive brands. In the case of limited decision making, the decision to buy the product is taken in the selling place. One type of low involvement into purchase process is not planned purchase when the stage of preparation for purchase is not available in the process. Mostly this type is influenced by unexpected needs and absence of preferential brands.

The impact of the package is lesser in the case of the high involvement. According to Ampero, Vila (2006) opinion, the complex decision making type means that search for information has started before the choice. In order to take the decision, the consumer evaluates different brands and their features in advance. In this case the importance of the package is not big.

In the process of low involvement consumers don't search for comprehensive information, don't evaluate features properly and easily decide about the purchase. That is because of the low risk level- products are not expensive and have not big importance for the consumer. Thus the importance of the package in low involvement categories is more important than in a high involvement level. In the low involvement process the main role is played the visual content of the package which allows to evaluate the product quickly and easily and cause the emotional response. Thus in the the case of low involvement namely the package becomes the essential factor which influences product positioning, product purchase making process and loyalty to brand.

The time factor in this case is very important too. The package is important when the consumer has less time for decision making. If the consumer has more time for decision making, the impact of the package is decreasing.

Ampero, Vila (2006) exclude one more factor which influences the package impact on consumer decision making. The Authors affirm that the choice of the brand can be based on remembrances, stimulus or the combination of both. The choice which is based on remembrances is conditioned by induced remembrances. The choice based on stimulus means that the evaluation of brand and brand attributes is based on visual attributes and descriptions. In this case the evaluation is based on information which is presented in the selling places. Frequently that is the product package. The complex choice is based on remembrances and visual information. Thus the importance of the package is increasing when the choice is based on stimulus. Then the customer is influenced by the visual information in the package and other package attributes.

The result of theoretical studies is the theoretical consumer package communication model. It presents the generalized communication of the package components and features and indicates the link between communication and decision making process. Seeking to specify the model the empirical research of consumer package factors importance has been carried out.

## **Consumer package communication model: specification of theoretical model with results of empirical research**

### **Methodology of empirical consumer package factors importance research**

The model is verified with the help of the empirical research. The impact of the package components and features on the consumer decision making process is verified. Package communication functions, which are excluded in the model, are not verified during this research, because they would limit the possibility to estimate the total package components importance in the stages of consumer decision making.

There are three main factors, which influence package communication, in consumer package communication model. Time pressure is the situation factor and depends on particular conditions so it is difficult to define it in the research. Other two factors, i.e. involvement level and choice depend on the product category. The consumer segment can influence these factors too.

Seeking to ensure results reliability, packages of products, which have the biggest influence on decision making process, have been chosen. Two main aspects of products have been selected, i.e., a) consumer is not involved in decision making process of these products; b) the assortment of products is wide and packages are very different. Thus products of casual demand have chosen: milk, shampoo and chewing gum.

Seeking to ensure results reliability, the general population was women, because they make decisions in purchasing casual demand products. Fiedman (2006) has estimated that women influence almost 95 percent and take 85 percent of all purchase decisions.

**Research problem** - the importance of consumer package components and features influencing women's casual demand products decision making process

**Purpose of the research** - estimate the importance of consumer package factors impact to consumer decision making process.

#### **Objectives of the research:**

- ascertain the impact of casual demand products package communication to women purchasing behaviour;
- exclude importance of verbal and non-verbal package components to consumer choice;
- estimate the importance of consumer package components and features in every stage of decision making.

#### **Hypotheses of the research:**

**1. Hypothesis:** Non-verbal components of the package are the most important at the stage of need perception while the purchase is impulsive. Colour is the main non-verbal element of the package which is attracting the attention of women.

**2. Hypothesis:** Verbal information in the package is the main information source. The importance of the package to women depends on product category at the stage of information search.

3. **Hypothesis:** Package features are the main and non-verbal information is less important at alternatives' evaluation stage.

4. **Hypothesis:** Ergonomics is the main important feature of the package for women in alternatives evaluation process. The high quality of the product is mostly correlating with essential package non-verbal elements: colour, form and material. The most important verbal elements are brand and producer.

5. **Hypothesis:** The evaluated product quality mostly influences the repeated product purchase. The impact of the package is not important for the repeated purchase.

The information presented in purposes of the research is collected using the quantitative research, because this research allows to evaluate importance of elements. Information is collected from the primary data, because consumers' opinion and their practice of package choice are needed.

The descriptive research is used in collecting information about the importance of consumer package elements to consumer behaviour. 109 women have been surveyed and their priorities proportions have been evaluated, conclusions about general consumer behaviour tendencies have been made.

On has been collected with the help of survey method. Non-probability quota sampling has been chosen for the research because respondents have been divided into age groups, which correspond to the proportions of general population. Data have been collected in April, 2006.

### Comparison of empirical research results with theoretical package communication model

109 women have been surveyed. The characteristics of the average respondent of the research: a woman, age is over 35 years old, having higher education, average incomes of family per month for one person- from 1000 to 2000 Lt.

The analysis of the research has made it possible to evaluate the empirical research with the theoretical model. Neither one hypothesis has proved in all groups of products. Thus empirical results are compared with theoretical model in every group separately.

Results of empirical research of milk package communication impact to decision making process are presented in Table 1.

Package features are not important in need perception and information search stages. That is why they have not valued in the research (grey fields in the Table).

Summarized data of the research about milk package communication impact on decision making process allowed to evaluate the importance of the package elements in all stages. Basing on these data, the correctness of theoretical package model can be verified.

The comparison of theoretical package communication model with empirical milk package research data is presented in Figure 2.

According THE results of the research, not only communication of milk package colour but also package size, graphics and material is important at the stage of need perception. These are new links of package communication which are complementing the theoretical model.

Table 1

Relative importance of milk package components in decision making stages, %

		Stages of decision making			
		Perception of need	Search for information	Evaluation of alternatives and decision making	Behaviour after purchase
Components and features of package	Colour	28%	20 %	5%	0%
	Form	15%		6%	
	Size	15%		6%	
	Imageries	20%		5%	
	Graphics			2%	
	Material	15%		6%	
	<b>Relative importance of non-verbal package elements, %</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>0%</b>
	Name	7%	80%	7%	0%
	Brand			6%	
	Producer/Country of origin			7%	
	Information about product			8%	
	Special offers			2%	
	Instructions of usage			4%	
	<b>Relative importance of package verbal components, %</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>0%</b>
	Simplicity of package			14%	100%
	Ecology of package			1%	
	Ergonomics of package			16%	
Innovativeness of package			6%		
<b>Relative importance of package features, %</b>			<b>37%</b>	<b>100%</b>	
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

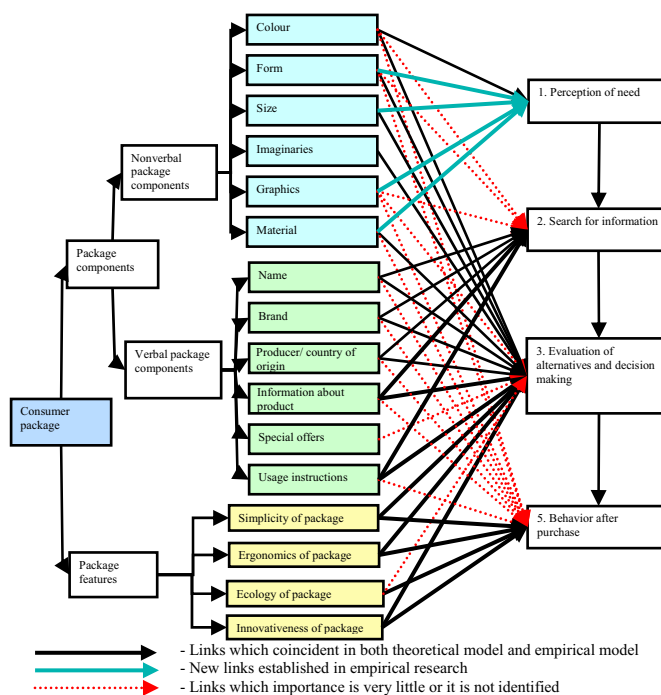


Figure 2. The comparison of theoretical package communication model and the results of milk package empirical research

Results of the research have indicated that communication of the milk package non-verbal components at the stage of information search is not significant. The most important is information of verbal elements. Thus links of package non-verbal communication elements are not essential in the milk package communication model.

At the stage of alternatives evaluation and decision making the impact of component and features of the package are important according to the theoretical model. The empirical research has indicated that while choosing the milk graphics in the package, special offers and package ergonomics are not significant.

It is important to stress that theoretical package communication model is created basing on conscious and unconscious communication of package elements. While evaluating respondents' replies with the quantitative research, it is possible to estimate only the package information which respondents perceive consciously. Furthermore, women have been analysed while theoretical model is general and not depending on the segment. Thus limits of the research and chosen women segment could influence differences between the theoretical model and practical results of the research.

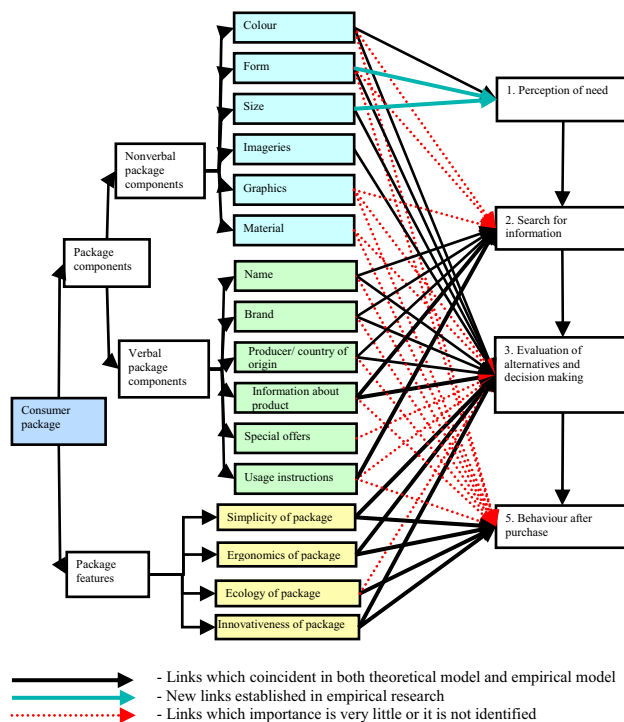
Parallel the impact of shampoo package communication to decision making process is evaluated and theoretical and practical results are compared (Table 2).

**Table 2**

Relative importance of shampoo package components in decision making stages, %

		Stages of decision making			
		Perception of need	Search for information	Evaluation of alternatives and decision making	Behaviour after purchase
Components and features of package	Colour	25%	30%	6%	0%
	Form	33%		7%	
	Size	14%		7%	
	Imageries	13%		6%	
	Graphics			3%	
	Material	5%		3%	
	<b>Relative importance of non-verbal package elements, %</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>0%</b>
	Name	10%	70%	6%	0%
	Brand			7%	
	Producer/Country of origin			8%	
	Information about product			8%	
	Special offers			2%	
	Instructions of usage			4%	
	<b>Relative importance of package verbal components, %</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>0%</b>
Simplicity of package			11%	100%	
Ecology of package			1%		
Ergonomics of package			13%		
Innovativeness of package			7%		
<b>Relative importance of package features, %</b>			<b>32%</b>		<b>100%</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

The importance of communication of shampoo package elements is similar to the milk package, but some priorities differing at need perception and alternatives evaluation stages. Detailed comparison of theoretical package communication model and research results is presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3.** The comparison of theoretical package communication model and results of shampoo package empirical research

According to the results of the research, colour, form and size are very important at the stage of need perception. Graphics and material of the package also communicate but their importance is less than the average and not indicated in the model.

Communication of non-verbal components of the package is less important at the stage of information search as in case of milk. Here the most important source of information for women is information in shampoo package.

At the stage of alternatives the evaluation of the importance of elements is almost the same as in milk case. The impact of graphics, material, usage instructions and ecology of the package is low in case of shampoo.

The importance of factors which influence behaviour after purchase is the same as in milk case. Thus links of verbal and non-verbal components of shampoo package are not important.

The impact of components and features of chewing gum package at the stage of need perception is presented in Table 3.

The impact of components and features of chewing gum package in decision making process differs from milk and shampoo package communication. It has estimated by the research that communication of impulsive products packages do not differ from impulsive products at stages of information search and behaviour after purchase.

**Table 3**  
Relative importance of chewing gum package components in decision making stages, %

		Stages of decision making			
		Perception of need	Search for information	Evaluation of alternatives and decision making	Behaviour after purchase
Components and features of package	Colour	31%	72%	8%	40%
	Form	19%		7%	
	Size	20%		8%	
	Imageries	14%		6%	
	Graphics	3%		4%	
	Material	3%		4%	
	<b>Relative importance of non-verbal package elements, %</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>40%</b>
	Name	10%	28%	8%	0%
	Brand			8%	
	Producer/Country of origin			6%	
	Information about product			4%	
	Special offers			4%	
	Instructions of usage			0%	
	<b>Relative importance of package verbal components, %</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>0%</b>
	Simplicity of package			11%	60%
Ecology of package			2%		
Ergonomics of package			17%		
Innovativeness of package			7%		
<b>Relative importance of package features, %</b>			<b>36%</b>	<b>60%</b>	
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>101%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

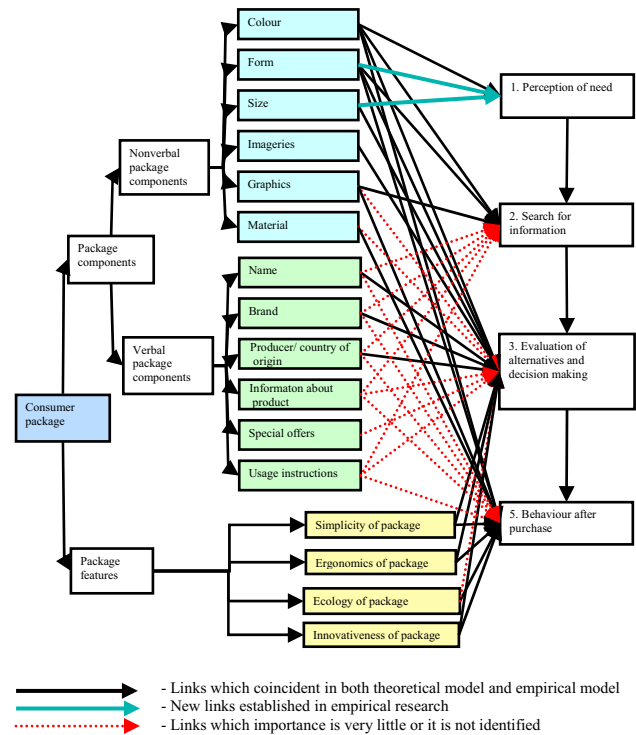
Detailed comparison of theoretical package communication model and research results, which allow to evaluate differences of communication of impulsive and no impulsive products package, is presented in Figure 4.

It has been estimated by the research that the package communication corresponds to shampoo package communication at the stage of need perception. Thus the theoretical communication model is complemented with links of package form and size and the stage of perception need doesn't differ from the need of not impulsive products perception (when purchasing of products is not planned).

It has been estimated by the research that the importance of communication of impulsive purchasing products' package is opposite. Here the communication of non-verbal package components is the most important. The communication of verbal components is not significant at information search stage.

The distribution of the importance of communication of package components at stages of alternatives' evaluation and decision making stages is the same like in cases of chewing gum and shampoo. The only difference is that information about the product is not much significant for impulsive purchasing products.

Not only features of chewing gum package but also non-verbal components are important at the stage of decision making. That link has not been estimated in the cases of shampoo and milk packages.



**Figure 4.** The comparison of theoretical package communication model and results of chewing gum package empirical research

In summary we can affirm that theoretical model of package communication has to be complemented with the impact of package form and size in the need perception stage. This link has been established in every group of products. The impact of communication of package graphics, special offers and package ecology in alternatives evaluation stage have to be marked as not very significant or insignificant in the model. At the stage of behaviour after purchase, the communication of verbal components of the package is not significant if the impact of the package to the repeated purchase is evaluating.

While evaluating the models of package communication, it has been estimated that the importance of communication of non-verbal components of impulsive purchase products to decision making is bigger than that for products of impulsive purchase.

It is important to indicate that theoretical model of package communication is created basing on conscious and unconscious communication of package elements which have been excluded in scientific literature. While evaluating respondents' replies with the quantitative research, it is possible to estimate only the package information which respondents perceive consciously. Furthermore, women have been analysed while theoretical model is general and not depending on the segment. Thus limits of the research and chosen women segment could influence differences between the theoretical model and practical results of the research.

## Conclusions

1. The package becomes the most important and the last tool which can reach the consumer, transfer the information, strength product positioning in consumer

consciousness and influence the process of his/her decision making process. These reasons are revealed by the relevance of the package as the scientific research object:

- decrease of traditional promotion tools efficiency while communicating with consumer and increase of efficiency of the package as a communication tool;
- redistribution of marketing communication tools importance from traditional advertising to the communication in selling place;
- decrease of brands differentiation in consumer consciousness and increase of the package as differentiation and identification tool importance;
- to increase requirements for product quality and its preservation;
- to increase requirements for product safety and consumer safety;
- to increase requirements for presentation of information about the product to customer;
- creation of product added value with the help of the package.

2. Visual elements of the package transfer non-verbal informational and affect emotions. Verbal information, which is transferred with informational elements, affects cognitive orientation of consumer. Thus the package as the element of communication, oriented to the message, transfers the comprehensive information about the product, helps to positioning it in consumer behaviour and influence decision making process.

3. The result of theoretical studies – theoretical model of consumer package communication illustrates the place of the package in marketing decisions and the communication of package components and features, indicating the link between this communication and decision making process.

4. The empirical research of the importance of consumer package factors allows to indicate the following aspects:

- the theoretical model has to be complemented with the impact of the package form and size in the stage of need perception. This link has been established in every group of products;
- the impact of communication of package graphics, special offers and package ecology in alternatives evaluation stage have to be marked as not very significant or insignificant in the model;
- at the stage of behaviour after purchase, the communication of verbal components of the package is not significant if the impact of the package to the repeated purchase is evaluated;
- the importance of communication of non-verbal components of impulsive purchase products to decision making is bigger than that for products of impulsive purchase.

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## Vartotojiškos pakuotės komunikacijos įtaka vartotojo sprendimų procesui

Santrauka

Tradicinę tiesioginio pardavimo formą pakeitus savitarnos prekybos forma, daugelyje prekių grupių prekių asortimentas išaugo. Tai lėmė intensyvėjančią konkurenciją tarp prekės ženklų ir platesnį marketingo komunikacijos sprendimų taikymą. Dėl jų gausos, vartotojui tampa sunku identifikuoti prekės ženklus ir priimti sprendimą. Vis daugiau dėmesio skiriama vartotojiškai pakuotei, kuri vartotojo požiūriu yra neatskiriama prekės ir jos ženklo dalis bei perduoda informaciją vartotojui jam, aktyviai įsitraukus į komunikacijos procesą. Pakuotė, komunikuojama su vartotoju pardavimo vietoje, tapo esminiu veiksniu, darančiu įtaką vartotojo pasirinkimui.

Pakuotės tematika atliekami moksliniai tyrimai apima šias kryptis :

1. *Moksliniai tyrimai, kurių objektas yra vartotojas.* Šiuose tyrimuose identifikuojamas vartotojo požiūris į prekės išorę, į skirtingas pakuotės sudedamųjų pateikimo sprendimus, taip pat nustatomas vartotojo motyvacijos dėl prekės pirkimo ir pakuotės vertinimo ryšys (Ampero, Vila (2006), Lee, Lye (2003), Klevas (2005), Kanajan (2001), Silayoi, Speece (2004), Carl (1995)).
2. *Moksliniai tyrimai, kurių objektas yra pakuotės sprendimai, t.y. tiriamos bendrosios pakuotės savybės ir pakuotės elementų įtaka vertinant prekes* (Kauppinen (2004), Jakupov, Kacalov (2003), Larionov, Skripnikova (2000), Wansik, Ittersum (2003), Napolitano (2002), Bellas (2004), Lee, Lye (2003), Parlin (2003), Bone, France (2001), Makely (2004), Rentie, Brewer (2000), Fokes, Matta (2004), Gourville (2003), Mohan (2004), Kuster (2004), Ucherec (2004), Rochmanuk (2004), Wade (2005), Smith, Taylor (2004), Arnold (2003), Ahmed (2006), Durand (2005)). Šiuose tyrimuose daugiausiai vertinami vizualūs pakuotės elementai ir jų įtaka vartotojo dėmesiui, prekės kokybės vertinimui bei prekės ženklo pasirinkimui.

Šių tyrimų rezultatai įrodė, kad pakuotės sprendimai leidžia patraukti vartotojo dėmesį, perduoti jam norimą informaciją apie prekę, pozicionuoti prekę vartotojo sąmonėje, diferencijuoti bei identifikuoti ją tarp analogiškų prekių. Tokiu būdu pakuotės elementai veikia vartotojo sprendimo priėmimo procesą ir gali nulemti vartotojo pasirinkimą, o pati pakuotė gali tapti ilgalaikiu konkurenciniu pranašumu. nepaisant mokslinių tyrimų gausos, orientuotos į atskiras pakuotės funkcijas bei jos sprendimų reikšmę, pakuotė nėra nagrinėjama kaip visuma, atliekanti komunikacijos funkciją. Todėl formuluojama tokia **straipsnio problema**: vartotojiškos pakuotės veiksniai, lemiantys efektyvią komunikaciją su vartotoju bei darantys įtaką vartotojo sprendimo priėmimui.

**Straipsnio tikslas** – teorine studija įvardyti ir empiriniu tyrimu patikrinti vartotojiškos pakuotės veiksnius bei įvardyti jų komunikacijos reikšmingumą sprendimo priėmimo procese.

**Tyrimo objektas** – vartotojiškos pakuotės veiksniai ir jų reikšmingumas vartotojų sprendimams priimti.

Mokslinėje literatūroje pakuotė yra vertinama kaip komunikacijos, orientuotos į žinutę, ir komunikacijos, orientuotos į elgseną, elementas (Rentie ir Brewer, 2000). Pastaruoju atveju, pakuotė kaip visuma veikia vartotojo sprendimo priėmimo proceso etapus. Pakuotės įtaka gali būti stipresnė arba silpnesnė priklausomai nuo vartotojo įsitraukimo lygio, vartotojo prekės pasirinkimo tipo bei laiko spaudimo. Taigi pakuotė, komunikuojama su vartotoju bei veikdama jo sprendimo priėmimo procesą, yra svarbi marketingo komunikacijos priemonė, glaudžiai susijusi su rėmimo elementais (Silayoi ir Speece, 2004).

Pakuote vartotojui gali būti komunikuojamos tiek verbalinės tiek ir neverbalinės žinutės. Pakuotės vizualiniai elementai perduoda neverbalinę informaciją bei veikia emocijas, o informaciniais elementais perduodama verbalinė informacija, kuri veikia vartotojo kognityvinę orientaciją. Taigi

pakuotė, kaip komunikacijos, orientuotos į žinutę, elementas vartotojui perduoda išsamią informaciją apie prekę, padeda ją pozicionuoti vartotojo sąmonėje ir tokiu būdu veikia sprendimo priėmimo procesą.

Komunikuojama pakuotė veikia vartotojo sprendimo priėmimo proceso etapus. Poreikio suvokimo etape pakuotė, patraukdama vartotojo dėmesį, lemia neplanuotą poreikio atsiradimą impulsyvaus pirkimo atveju. Informacijos paieškos etape pakuotė tampa informacijos apie prekę šaltiniu. Kadangi informacijos paieškos etapas yra reikšmingas aukšto įsitraukimo į sprendimo priėmimo procesą atveju, didžiausią reikšmę šiame etape turi verbalinė pakuotės komunikacija. Alternatyvų vertinimo etape vartotojas pagal nustatytus kriterijus vertina prekės pasirinkimo alternatyvas. Pakuotės verbalinės ir neverbalinės sudedamosios ir savybės komunikuoja išsamią informaciją apie prekę, todėl pakuotės įtaka šiame etape yra didžiausia. Pasirinkimo etapas dažnai tapatinamas su alternatyvų vertinimo etapu, kadangi vartotojo pasirinkimą lemia geriausios alternatyvos nustatymas. Taigi sprendimo priėmimo etapą pakuotė veikia per alternatyvų vertinimo etapą. Elgsenos po pirkimo etape pakuotės elementai komunikuoja vartotojui, kaip tinkamai vartoti prekę, veikia jos kokybės vertinimą vartojant prekę bei padeda identifikuoti prekę pakartotinio pirkimo metu. Pakuotės komunikacijos įtaka sprendimų priėmimo procesui kinta. Tai, kaip stipriai pakuotės komunikacija paveiks vartotojo elgseną, lemia trys pagrindiniai veiksniai: laiko spaudimas, vartotojo įsitraukimo lygis bei pasirinkimo tipas.

Po teorinės studijos sudarytas teorinis vartotojiškos pakuotės komunikacijos modelis pateikia apibendrintą pakuotės sudedamųjų ir savybių atliekamą komunikaciją bei parodo ryšį tarp šios komunikacijos ir sprendimo priėmimo proceso. Siekiant šį modelį patikslinti, atliktas empirinis vartotojiškos pakuotės veiksnių reikšmingumo tyrimas. Tyrimo rezultatų tikslumui užtikrinti vertintos prekių pakuotės, turinčios didžiausią įtaką sprendimo priėmimo procesui, t.y. pasirinktos prekės: a) į kurių sprendimo priėmimo procesą vartotojas yra mažai įsitraukęs; b) kurių yra platus asortimentas ir ryškiai skiriasi pakuotės. Taigi pasirinktos kasdieninės paklauso prekės: pienas, šampūnas ir kramtomoji guma. Siekiant užtikrinti tyrimo rezultatų patikimumą, tiriama visuma pasirinktos moterys, nes jos dažniausiai priima sprendimus dėl kasdieninės paklauso prekių pirkimo (Friedman (2006) tyrimu nustatė, kad moterys veikia 95 proc. ir priima 85 proc. visų pirkimo sprendimų). Informacijai apie vartotojiškos pakuotės elementų reikšmingumą vartotojų elgsenai rinkti naudotas aprašomasis tyrimas. Tyrimo metu išsiaiškintos 109 moterų nuomonės, įvertintos jų išskirtų prioritetų proporcijos bei padarytos išvados apie bendras vartotojų elgsenos tendencijas.

Svarbu pažymėti, kad teorinis pakuotės komunikacijos modelis sudarytas remiantis teoriniuose šaltiniuose išskirta sąmoninga ir pasąmonine pakuotės elementų komunikacija. Kiekybiniu tyrimu vertinant respondentų atsakymus, nustatyta tik respondentų sąmoningai suvokiama pakuotės komunikacija. Be to, tyrime buvo tiriamos tik moterys, o teorinis modelis sudarytas bendras, nepriklausomai nuo pasirinkto segmento. Taigi skirtumus tarp teorinio modelio ir praktinio tyrimų rezultatų galėjo lemti ir tyrimo apribojimai bei pasirinktas moterų segmentas. Atlikus empirinį vartotojiškos pakuotės veiksnių reikšmingumo tyrimą, padarytos tokios išvados:

- teorinis pakuotės komunikacijos modelis turi būti papildytas pakuotės formos ir dydžio įtaka poreikio suvokimo etapui. Šis ryšys nustatytas kiekvienoje tirtose prekių grupėje;
- kaip mažai reikšminga arba nereikšminga teoriniame modelyje turi būti žymima pakuotės grafikos, specialiųjų pasiūlymų bei pakuotės ekologiskumo komunikacijos įtaka alternatyvų vertinimo etape;
- elgsenai po pirkimo, kai vertinama tik pakuotės įtaka pakartotiniams pirkimams, pakuotės verbalinių sudedamųjų komunikacija yra nereikšminga;
- impulsyvaus pirkimo prekėms neverbalių pakuotės sudedamųjų komunikacijos svarba sprendimui priimti yra didesnė nei ne impulsyvaus pirkimo prekėms.

Raktažodžiai: *vartotojiška pakuotė, pakuotės sudedamosios, komunikacija, vartotojų sprendimų priėmimo procesas.*

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