

PACKAGE MATERIAL AND BEVERAGE BRAND AWARENESS AMONG HOUSEWIVES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

Macaulay Onovughakpo Augustine (PhD)¹ and Ewhrudjakpor Oke Thomas²
Department of Marketing, Delta State Maritime Polytechnic, Burutu,
Delta State, Nigeria

¹Email: mclaugustine@gmail.com
²Email address: okeokay@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: Package material attributes consist of package quality, durability, safety, sophistication, and perceived cost. These attributes function as intrinsic quality signals that consumers use to identify and categorise brands at the retail shelf, making them potent brand awareness drivers. This study examined the influence of package material attributes on beverage brand awareness among housewives in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. 346 housewives participated in a cross-sectional survey. Five material attribute items were regressed against brand awareness. The model achieved the highest R² in the packaging-awareness series (R² = 0.434, F(5, 340) = 52.051, p < 0.001). Material durability ($\beta = 0.417$) and sophistication ($\beta = -0.392$) were dominant. The null hypothesis was rejected. In conclusion, Package material is a more powerful predictor of brand awareness than design, with durability as the primary positive driver. Manufacturers should invest strategically in durable packaging materials as a brand awareness lever.

Keywords: package material, brand awareness, material durability, material quality, beverage packaging, Nigeria, FMCG

Introduction

The physical substance from which a beverage package is constructed communicates distinct brand signals that complement and extend those generated by graphic design. Material quality, durability, safety, and perceived cost each function as intrinsic quality cues. This signals derived from the physical product itself is what consumers use to evaluate brand standing and make awareness-level brand distinctions at the point of purchase (Smith, 2004). Material quality functions as a first-order heuristic for brand tier identification where consumers encounter both locally produced and imported brands in informal retail settings.

Housewives, as frequent and discerning beverage purchasers, are particularly likely to have developed well-calibrated material quality heuristics through repeated purchase experience. This study tests the null hypothesis that package material has no significant relationship with brand awareness in this segment.

Background and Research Problem

Material quality variation in the Nigerian beverage market is substantial. Multinational brands typically invest in premium packaging materials that clearly differentiate them visually and physically from domestic competitors, which often use lower-specification materials due to cost constraints. This material quality differential is directly legible to informed consumers like housewives and this makes material cues an important contributor to the brand recognition and recall dimensions of brand awareness (Oghojafor et al., 2012).

Literature Review

Package Material as a Brand Quality Signal

Ulrich, Campana, and Malkewitz (2010) established that packaging material attributes directly influenced consumer price expectations, with higher-quality materials triggering higher price

expectation formation. Material-to-value perception pathway suggesting that material quality anchors brand tier positioning in consumer memory. Lynsey (2013) compared consumer perceptions of glass, plastic, and cardboard packaging for dairy beverages, establishing that glass generated the most favourable quality associations and that these material-level distinctions contributed to clear brand differentiation in consumer memory and does directly facilitating brand awareness.

Durability, Sophistication, and Safety

Material durability communicates manufacturing investment and supply chain quality commitment, thereby building positive brand memory structures through consistent positive product encounters (Vernuccio et al., 2010). Material sophistication which is the perceived premium of the packaging material serves as a brand positioning signal that enables consumers to identify premium brands more readily on the shelf. Material safety is particularly salient in the food and beverage category, where consumers actively evaluate packaging for product protection integrity before committing to purchase (Coggins, 2001).

Empirical Review

Hess et al. (2014) provided the most directly relevant precedent in this regards, by demonstrating that packaging material quality (bottle thickness in bottled water) was a significant positive predictor of brand quality perceptions and brand attribute assessments. Their finding extends naturally to brand awareness. Meaning that consumers who associate specific material qualities with specific brands build stronger brand recognition cues anchored in tangible physical properties. Topoyan and Bulut (2008) found that material quality was among the most important packaging dimensions for consumer brand evaluations in cosmetics, with direct cross-category applicability. Syed and Muhammad (2009) documented that packaging-related quality signals significantly influenced brand evaluations among female consumers, comparable to the housewife segment. Oladele et al. (2015) confirmed in the Nigerian context that packaging quality signals which includes material-based indicators, strongly influenced consumer patronage patterns, providing direct regional precedent for material-driven brand awareness effects.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey of 346 South-South Nigerian housewives was conducted via clustered convenience sampling. Package material was measured using five Likert-scale items: quality, durability, safety, sophistication, and perceived cost (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.76$). Brand awareness ('I have adequate knowledge of my choice beverage brand') served as the primary dependent variable (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.74$). SPSS Version 26 was used for multiple regression.

Analysis of Data

Table 1: Model Summary — Package Material and Brand Awareness

R	R ²	Adj. R ²	F	Sig.
0.658	0.434	0.425	52.051	0.000

Table 2: Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	B	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.874	0.279	—	6.709	0.000
Material quality	0.191	0.040	0.208	4.790	0.000
Material durability	0.344	0.042	0.417	8.114	0.000
Material safety	-0.090	0.044	-0.107	-2.040	0.042

Material sophistication	-0.357	0.041	-0.392	-8.729	0.000
Perceived cost	0.148	0.055	0.130	2.700	0.007

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

The model achieved $R^2 = 0.434$, $F(5, 340) = 52.051$, $p < 0.001$ — the highest awareness R^2 across all packaging dimensions. Material durability ($\beta = 0.417$) and material quality ($\beta = 0.208$) were positive predictors. Material sophistication ($\beta = -0.392$) was the dominant negative predictor. H4 is rejected at $p < 0.001$.

Discussion of Findings

The R^2 of 0.434 exceeding that of package design (0.301), indicates that material attributes are more potent brand awareness drivers than visual design elements in this Nigerian market context. This finding extends Hess et al.'s (2014) laboratory evidence to a field setting and suggests that tangible physical material properties constitute more diagnostic brand awareness signals than aesthetic design cues. Durability's dominance ($\beta = 0.417$) is coherent with the Nigerian informal retail distribution reality. This mean that packaging that visibly survives multi-intermediary distribution chains communicates quality commitment that reinforces brand recognition. The negative coefficient for sophistication ($\beta = -0.392$) likely reflects an inverse relationship between sophistication sensitivity and brand familiarity. Consumers most attentive to premium material cues may be more exploratory and less brand-familiar, resulting in lower awareness scores.

Conclusion

Package material attributes are powerful and significant predictors of beverage brand awareness among South-South Nigerian housewives. Material durability is the primary driver, with the model's explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.434$) exceeding that of design-based awareness effects. The null hypothesis was rejected at $p < 0.001$. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to establish the cumulative contribution of material quality encounters to brand awareness accumulation over time.

Recommendations

Nigerian beverage manufacturers should invest strategically in packaging material durability as a brand awareness lever, recognising that physically robust packaging that survives distribution and retail handling communicates brand quality and builds recognition. Material durability credentials should be communicated through packaging design elements that visibly signal robustness. Premium material investments should be targeted at tier-positioning strategies for segments where awareness is most competitively contested.

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