



Do Hedonic Cues on Product Packages Influence Consumer Behavior? A Study on Utilitarian Retail Food Products

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Abstract

Brands in retail packaged foods sector, which is characterized with aggressive competition, rely heavily on the influential effect of packaging as an important marketing mix element used to generate competitive advantage. Brands apply different types of cues on packages of utilitarian as well as hedonic products to boost their impact on consumers. Although there are studies focusing on the influence of such applications on consumer behavior, there is a lack of studies in the literature which focus on the effect of hedonic cue applications on utilitarian retail food products. This study contributes to the marketing literature by filling this gap and measuring the influence of hedonic cue applications on perceived quality and purchase intentions of consumers in the context of utilitarian retail food products. An experimental design is implemented, and the experimental condition manipulated was the intensity of the hedonic cue application on the package. Total of 520 questionnaires consisting of 13 questions are obtained in eight group of consumers who are randomly selected as regular supermarket visitors. The sample was composed of consumers who are between twenty and sixty years old (covering, Gen X, Y and partially Z) in Turkey. The results confirmed no significant effect of hedonic cues on utilitarian product quality perceptions and purchase intentions of consumers. Managerial implications and future study suggestions are provided.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary urban life drives people towards packaged retail food products; today food is not only a physiological need but also a gastronomical experience. Once clearly separated fields, gastronomy and retail are merging and retail businesses offer gastronomy-style offerings (Kolb & Hohmann, 2018). Most food brands focus on the packaged products to increase their touchpoints with consumers and consequently engage more effectively with their target market. Even five star hotels enter the retail food sector with their brand to satisfy their customers' needs in various occasions. On the other hand, in today's highly competitive retail food sector, consumers do not have much time to evaluate food products in the market. Food packaging is the first and main attribute which achieves the competitive advantage among other similar category products at point of sale. Food advertising expenditures are declining since more marketing investments are made into packaging development (Vila-López & Küster-Boluda, 2018). Packaging design has long been evaluated by many studies in order to achieve product differentiation and reflect brand personality (Van der Merwe, 2013; Wang, 2013). Consumers utilize mostly visual cues on packaging to make purchase decision for low involvement products (Silayoi & Speece, 2004), such as shape, color (Ares & Deliza, 2010), sensory cues (Liao et al. 2015) and non-sensory, functional aspects (Deliza, Rosenthal & Silva, 2003).

Packaging is the main communication instrument between the marketer and the consumer that makes it critical for marketers to develop a better understanding (Venter et al., 2011). Meeting consumer needs in packaging creates strategic marketing advantage (Rundh, 2005). Consumers perceive and assess stimuli from the packaging and make associations with previous experiences (Mugge et al., 2008, Underwood & Klein, 2002). Especially, when consumer is unfamiliar with the food product, packaging is the first impression and main communication tool for a product that cannot be pre-tested. The consumer, who could be a tourist in a new destination or a newcomer, should be able to make associations with previous experiences or should be able to grasp an idea of the product via packaging cues. Contemporary consumers have many concerns such as health, being fit, following the trends and feeling 'well', which are all effective on product development in retail food sector. Previously categorized utilitarian and hedonic food products in literature (Maehle et al., 2015, Wang, 2017) cannot be distinguished with exact boundaries anymore. Both categories started to intermingle where hedonic and utilitarian cues of food products in general gained more significance. To illustrate, yoghurt used to be considered as a utilitarian food (Kusumasondjaja, 2018) whereas today with various flavors and frozen yoghurt options, hedonic attributes of yoghurt are promoted as marketing tools for gastronomic experience.

In line with these developments, hedonic packaging cues are also applied to construct consumer's perception of food quality and purchase intention (Wang, 2017). There are several studies in the literature which focused on the hedonic and utilitarian benefits on food packaging (Wang, 2017). However, there is lack of studies which mainly focused on the hedonic cue benefits on a utilitarian food product. We believe that to have a better insight into consumer's demand for packaging for utilitarian products, evaluating the effect of hedonic cues could provide valuable information for both theoretical and practical fields. From theoretical perspective, the study provides insight on the effect of various visual cues on consumer response. From the practical point of view, comprehension of the effect of visual cues will guide marketers and managers to direct their product development processes. Even the local utilitarian products can benefit from the right combination of hedonic cues on packaging to attract tourists who are unfamiliar with the products. Thus, this research study aims to answer the following research question: To what

extent are hedonic cues on utilitarian retail food products packaging effective on consumers' perceived quality and purchase intention?

Literature Review

Packaging consists of many extrinsic visual and sensory product cues which are expected to influence consumer behaviour by creating consumer expectations (Piqueras-Fiszman & Spence, 2014). These visual and textual cues on the packaging play a critical role on consumer purchase decision (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). According to Gunaratne et al (2019), emotional attachment to the food product and purchase decision are associated with packaging. Packaging design effects decision of consumers by attitude toward the package, beliefs about brand attributes and brand evaluation (Underwood & Klein, 2002). In this perspective, it can be argued that packaging is highly effective in consumer's mind that it can change product perception and change product positioning (Rundh, 2005). Thus, packaging can be considered not only a sales tool, but also a source of desire for consumers (Siahdashti, 2019) which at the end its design manipulates not only consumer choice but also product category (Marques de Rosa, Spence & Tonetto, 2019). Considering its importance in the marketing mix, marketers need to focus on packaging as a strategic tool that facilitate to direct consumers (Gómez, Martín-Consuegra & Molina, 2015).

When food products are considered, consumers are categorized as health oriented and taste oriented according to various studies in literature (Saba et al., 2019, Luomala et al, 2015, Mai & Hoffmann, 2012). Expectations of consumers from a product packaging differ according to the orientation of the consumer (Luomala et al., 2015); health oriented consumer focuses more on the nutrition facts and utilitarian benefits of the product whereas taste oriented consumer focuses more on the hedonic cues providing joy, entertainment, fun and pleasure (Wang, 2017). Hedonic consumption is related to emotions rather than sensorial aspects (Çağlıyan, Gültekin & Gelmez, 2018). Contemporary consumer is finicky; with the effect of empowerment of global gastronomy and increase in intercontinental traveling modern day consumer wants to be fulfilled for both aspects (Suhartanto et al., 2017).

Food sector used to categorize products as hedonic and utilitarian as well, where former is the food that is consumed for sensory pleasure rather than hunger and physiological needs and the latter is the food of which the main reason of consumption is functionality and satiation (Maehle et al., 2015). Today, distinction between aforementioned categories started to dissolve since consumer orientations are changing with global changes. Marketers need to target both taste lovers and nutrition fact seekers to make their product competitive in the market (Mai & Hoffmann, 2012). Due to the global food related issues such as obesity, malnutrition, coronary diseases and taste related consumers tend to focus more on the health issue, as health-oriented consumers seek for high quality products (Wang, 2017) and satisfactory taste. Local food gained significance, authentic food of countries satisfying both health and taste concerns have become mainstream market products. For instance, 'ayran' and 'kefir' are two utilitarian products that used to be homemade products for rural Turkish people and unknown for Americas for decades. Today, both are packaged and sold in both markets with flavored versions and both products are part of a hedonic experience while maintaining health attributes.

Retail food packaging that contains the basic food product is considered as sales packaging (Mohebbi, 2014) and mostly serves for marketing purposes. The sales packaging consists of various extrinsic hedonic cues that are named as commercial attributes (Vila-López & Küster-Boluda, 2018), and are effective on quality perception and purchase intention (Van der Merwe et al., 2013). This study focuses on visual cues, such as color, graphics and aesthetics that

stimulate emotional responses from consumers that determine consumer evaluation (Aagerup, Frank & Hultqvist, 2019).

Color is a dominant stimulus on many contexts in food and food related sectors, from spatial colors of a hotel room (Siamionava, Slevitch & Tomas, 2018) to color of plate in a fine-dining restaurant (Chen et al., 2020). Color is an organic feature, altering by gender, demographic traits (Altın & Çiçek, 2019), age (Chen et al., 2020) and psychology (Jeon et al., 2019). Color is also the main stimulus on a food packaging since consumers are primarily exposed to the hues of packaging among other similar items (Huang & Lu, 2015). Marketers benefit from color psychology to design products and target right consumer group (Siahdashti, 2019). According to Tijssen et al (2017) color is a strong indication for sensory expectations of the product and manipulative concerning attractiveness and healthiness. Colors convey a specific message to the consumer that defines product positioning in the market. For instance, colors like black and gold are associated with premium products whereas pink and purple are more feminine product colors (Labrecque & Milne, 2012).

Graphics on packaging are effective part of packaging design (Underwood et al, 2001). They contribute to the attractiveness and emotional attachment, hence create a positive product perception (Venter et al, 2011). Such graphics can be icons, symbols, illustrations, or photos (Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2012) regardless of type they all have significant effect on consumers' emotional responses. Especially, visual imagery of the product itself on the packaging communicates with the customer as creating an expectation about its sensory aspects (Vergura & Luceri, 2018). According to the study executed by Underwood et al. (2001), well presented product picture on the packaging creates a more entertaining experience for the consumer and more positive association. From tourism perspective, attractive packaging design reflecting the cultural identity and authenticity appeals tourists (Suhartanto et al., 2018). Food becomes a souvenir and a tangible experience for the consumer who is at a destination for touristic purposes.

According to Dalziel & Bevan-Dye (2018), 'entertainment aspect' of the retail products is a motivational aspect for hedonic shopping. Emotional packaging designs enhancing entertainment, fun, pleasure, and joy involve hedonic visual cues for consumers (Wang, 2017). All visual cues congregate to form aesthetics of the packaging (Azad & Masoumi, 2012) and aesthetics of the product positions it in the market. According to study conducted by Vila-López & Küster-Boluda (2018), aesthetics of the packaging is far more significant for attitudes and purchase intention compared to technical cues as health and other related information. Thus, aesthetics designs the first impression that is directly effective on purchase intentions.

Current trends of the market are also regarded as one of the hedonic cues for the consumer. Contemporary consumers define products according to the way the products make them feel (Mihaela, Corneliu & Alina, 2010). Present trends indicate the current consumer needs and preferences (Horvat et al. 2019), helping for product success by making consumers feel good. Innovation offers social gain to the consumer creating greater value (Cloughton, 2019). Food is a low involvement consumer good that does not require in depth evaluation (Wang, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial for marketers to differentiate their products among many others at the point of sale. Van der Laan et al. (2012) posit that hedonic visual attributes such as color and graphics are the most significant aspects for consumer attitudes since many retail products, such as food products, cannot be tested before purchase. Therefore, consumers evaluate quality of product utilizing cues on the packaging (Wang, 2017). Perceived quality is measured by superiority of a product compared to the other alternatives (Keller, 2008). Extrinsic cues of the product packaging

consist of various elements that support each other to form a positive attitude. Studies in literature focus on different attributes, as color (Labrecque & Milne, 2011), aesthetics (Honea & Horsky, 2011), emotional design (Liao et al., 2013) and graphical design (Ampuero & Vila, 2006). According to Wang (2013), visual cues have direct influence on quality perception of consumers. Thus, it is strongly believed that visual hedonic cues on utilitarian retail food packaging will have a positive effect on quality perception and the combination of different cues will enhance the level of quality perception in consumer's mind. In the light of the existing studies and findings in the literature, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H1. Utilization of visual hedonic cues on utilitarian retail food packaging have positive effect on quality perception.

H2. Intensity of various visual hedonic cues on utilitarian retail food packaging have proportional relation with increasing level of quality perception.

According to Guaratne et al. (2019), higher emotional attachment with a product is related to packaging design rather than sensory attributes of the food product. Product packaging is the visual communication of brand message influencing consumer feelings to a great extent. According to the study made on ready to eat food products, sales performance of a product depends on the correct choice of combination of visual packaging elements (Vardhan & Amulya, 2017). Visual features of packaging comprise of aesthetic aspects that are significant for positioning the product (Lopez & Boluda, 2018). Jugger (1999) alleges that packaging plays a great role for brand purchases as last five seconds are most significant in purchase decisions. Ahmad and Lakhani (2012) discovered that consumers cannot separate packaging from the product. Color is found to be the most significant cue, followed by the graphics on the packaging. It is also found that emotional design differentiates the product from others (Underwood, Klein & Burke, 2001). Similarly, Guaratne et al (2019), suggest that affinity toward packaging is significantly associated with willingness to purchase by creating emotional engagement. Thus, it is strongly believed that visual hedonic cues on utilitarian retail food packaging will have a positive effect on purchase intentions and the combination of combination of color, graphics and emotions will increase the influence of hedonism. In the light of the existing studies and findings in the literature, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H3. Utilization of visual hedonic cues on utilitarian retail food packaging have positive effect on purchase intention.

H4. Intensity of hedonic cues on utilitarian retail food packaging have proportional relation with level of purchase intention.

Research Methodology

Research Design

An experimental design was implemented in this study to explore the effects of visual hedonic cues applied on quality perceptions as well as purchase intentions of consumers. A type of saturated fat product, namely margarine, from utilitarian food product category was selected and hypothetical margarine brands were employed to understand the effect of hedonic cues on utilitarian product packaging. Hypothetical brands served to eliminate prejudice, positive or negative inclination towards a product related to previous product experiences. Participants were presented four different food product brands in total and were asked to evaluate them in terms of their quality and

their intention to purchase the presented product. All the product designs are created by Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop programs adhering to the existing packaging standards, sizes, and shapes in the market. In the experimental design, size and shape of the product were kept constant for control measures but only visual design of the products was manipulated. An online survey consisting of thirteen questions and statements is conducted to gather data from subjects. A total number of 520 questionnaires were collected for the research between October and December 2019. The subjects of this study are random selected as regular supermarket visitors and consumers who are between twenty and sixty years old (covering, Gen X, Y and partially Z) in Turkey. Before proceeding with the field study, the approval no 2020/8 of the University Ethics Committee dated May 20th, 2020 was obtained. The experimental design of this study is composed of two sections.

Section 1: The Effect of Hedonic Cue Applications on Consumers of Margarine Products

In the first section of the study, four different margarine user groups were formed which were composed of participants ranging between 30 and 40 subjects with similar demographic characteristics. Each group was administered an online survey which is composed of thirteen questions and statements to gather data from subjects. The first part of the questionnaire was consisted of questions to collect demographic information. Groups were exposed to a different levels of manipulations in the second section of the questionnaire.

The first experiment group, Margarine(Control), was employed as the control group and was exposed to statement measuring their general quality perception and purchase intentions of margarine products in the future. The second experiment group, Margarine(Sprea), was employed as the group which exposed to a hypothetical margarine brand called Sprea. The product consisted of basic features of a margarine packaging design according to the existing brands in the national chain supermarket shelves. A splash of milk was the main visual detail on the packaging as an informative aspect rather than contributing to aesthetics since it was a stand-alone graphic rather than an associative combination of graphics. In the second section of the questionnaire administered to this group, the brand Sprea was presented visually and participants were asked to evaluate the quality of the product as well as provide their feedback regarding their purchase intentions. The evaluation of the second experimental group was used in manipulation checks by comparing with the first experimental group, the control group. The third experiment group, Margarine(Creme), was employed as the group which exposed to a hypothetical margarine brand called Creme. The product involved the current trend design features obtained from 2020 graphic design trend reports by several online sources. Repeating pattern design and overlapping patterns consisting of watercolor leaves and geometric patterns were utilized. Watercolor leaves were expected to provide visual information to the consumer communicating that the product is plant-based and natural. Also, watercolor designs created depth due to changing intensity of hues on packaging, combined with geometric pattern, were expected to create a sense of feel and texture by three dimensionality with light-shadow play between the pattern layers. Involving more sensory details were expected to be appealing as part of emotional design and support the visual affluence. The use of patterns created a dimensional surface and was expected to have an impact on consumer's imagination to create a unique perception. Color spectrum of Creme packaging was almost monochromatic referring to the monochrome trend. Teal being the dominant color was expected provide sense of tranquility and healing properties of natural. In the second section of the questionnaire administered to this experiment group, the brand Creme is presented visually and participants are asked to evaluate

the quality of the product as well as provide their feedback regarding their purchase intentions. Finally, the fourth experiment group, Margarine(Marge), was employed as the group which exposed to a hypothetical margarine brand called Marge. The package of this hypothetical brand included high level of hedonic cues. It combined both the equivalent visual design features with Creme by overlapping two patterns and repeating stars and the effect of historical impact on consumer perception. The use of a slogan as ‘a heritage from our mothers’ is portrayed to evoke emotions as longing and emotional attachment. The semi-illustrative semi-photographic (the design is created by application of illustrative filters of Adobe Photoshop on a vintage style photo) depiction of a mother and a daughter was intended to support the slogan as being a vintage style depiction involving current design trends. Similarly, as part of current and future design trends, vintage seamless pattern background was expected to contribute to the emotional responses of consumers by association of seamless patterns with childhood products. Color spectrum of the package also obtained from the vintage packaging design elements gathered from the trend reports. In the second of the questionnaire administered to this experiment group, the brand Marge was presented visually, and participants were asked to evaluate the quality of the product as well as provide their feedback regarding their purchase intentions. The details of the four experimental design groups and manipulation levels applied in each group are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Experimental Design

Group	Brand	Code	Cue Intensity	Explanation
1	No Brand	Margarine _(Control)	-	No Visual Presentation
2	Sprea	Margarine _(Sprea)	No Cues	Generic Design
3	Crème	Margarine _(Creme)	Moderate	Overlapping Pattern Design
4	Marge	Margarine _(Marge)	High	Overlapping Pattern Design, Vintage Design, Historical Impact.

The designs applied for the packages of the three hypothetical margarine brands, namely Sprea, Crème and Marge, are presented in Picture 1.



Picture 1. Package Designs for Margarine Brands

Section 2: The Effect of Hedonic Cue Applications on Non-Users of Margarine Product

In the second section of the study, four different butter product users which do not prefer to use margarine products were formed, each consisted of 70 subjects. The objective of this section was to explore the effects of hedonic cue applications on margarine product packages on the consumer group who does not prefer to consume margarine products. In line with the first section of the study, each group was administered an online survey which is composed of thirteen questions and statements to gather data from subjects. The structure of the questionnaire as well as the experimental design employed was identical to the one which is applied in the first section. Thus, the first group of this section, Butter(Control), was employed as the control group and was exposed to statement measuring their

general quality perception and purchase intentions of margarine products in the future. The second experiment group, Butter(Sprea), was employed as the group which was exposed to a hypothetical margarine brand called Sprea. The package of this hypothetical brand included no hedonic cues. It consisted of basic features of a margarine packaging design in line with the existing brands in the national chain supermarket shelves. The third experiment group, Butter(Creme), was employed as the group which exposed to a hypothetical margarine brand called Creme. The package of this hypothetical brand included moderate level of hedonic cues which are explained in the experimental design of the first section. Finally, the fourth experiment group, Butter(Marge), was employed as the group which exposed to a hypothetical margarine brand called Marge. The package of this hypothetical brand included high level of hedonic cues which are identical to those applied in the first section of the study. The details of the four experimental design groups and manipulation levels applied in each group are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Experimental Design

Group	Brand	Code	Cue Intensity	Explanation
1	No Brand	Butter _(Control)	-	No Visual Presentation
2	Sprea	Butter _(Sprea)	No Cues	Generic Design
3	Crème	Butter _(Creme)	Moderate	Overlapping Pattern Design
4	Marge	Butter _(Marge)	High	Overlapping Pattern Design, Vintage Design, Historical Impact.

Operationalization of Variables

The variables in this experimental study were measured by employing scales which were employed from the corresponding literature with necessary alterations made for the purpose of this study. Perceived quality scale was borrowed from the studies of Sichtmann and Diamantopoulos (2013). The authors confirmed the reliability and validity of the scale and reported internal reliability scores (Cronbach Alpha's) of .86 and .87 in two different studies. The seven points scale is composed of three statements measuring the evaluation of the consumer regarding the quality of products which is offered by a brand. For the purpose of this study, the scale items are translated into Turkish language, some text adjustments are applied, and transformed into the five points Likert-Type scale. The scale statements are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Perceived Quality Scale

Items	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I believe that the quality of	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
2 margarine is a high-quality	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
3	The quality of margarine is	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)

Purchase intention scale was borrowed from the study of Rodgers (2004). The authors confirmed the reliability of the scale and reported internal reliability score (Cronbach Alpha) of .73 in their study. The five points semantic differential scale is composed of three statements measuring the purchase intention of consumers regarding a product. For the purpose of this study, the scale items are translated into Turkish language, and transformed into the five points Likert-Type scale. The scale statements are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Purchase Intention Scale

Items	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I am likely to purchase margarine.	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
2	I would like to have more information about margarine.	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
3	I am interested in margarine.	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)

The modifications made to the scales borrowed by the corresponding literature required to re-check the reliability of perceived quality and purchase intention scales. In order to make the necessary checks, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was conducted. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of .872 and significant result of the Bartlett’s test of Sphericity confirmed a satisfactory sampling adequacy as well as the existence of strong correlation between the initial variables. The results of the PCA confirmed the formation of two components in line with the employed scale characteristics and items. The computation of Cronbach Alpha scores for each component resulted in satisfactory levels of reliability scores of 0.949 for perceived quality and 0.776 for purchase intention. Thus, the internal reliabilities of scales employed was confirmed. The results of the PCA is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of the Principal Component Analysis

Component	Item	Coverage	Loadings	α
Perceived Quality	1	I believe that the quality of margarine is superior.	.905	.949
	2 margarine is a high-quality product.	.898	
	3	The quality of margarine is far above average.	.889	
Purchase Intention	1	I would like to have more information about margarine.	.922	.776
	2	I am interested in margarine.	.620	
	3	I am likely to purchase margarine.	.507	

Findings

Normality Checks

Before conducting manipulation checks as well as testing the proposed hypothesis, normality assumptions related to the data were checked in order to be able to process with the required statistical tests. The collected data for each experimental group were checked with numerical and graphical normality tests in order to confirm that there is no violation of the normality assumption in the data set. The normality assumption for all groups were checked numerically by conducting the Shapiro-Wilk test as well as computing z scores for each experimental group. In some experimental groups, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated a violation of normality assumption. As the sensitivity of Shapiro-Wilk test is high depending on the sample size, normality assumption for all groups were checked also with the calculation of z scores based on the skewness and kurtosis values and the associated standard error values. Moreover, distributions of the group data were checked with graphical methods by analyzing normal Q-Q plots. The results of z score calculations as well as graphical assessments confirmed that there were no normality assumption violations in the data set since all z scores were within the range of ± 2.58 .

Manipulation Checks

In order to confirm that the subjects of the study have similar perceived quality and purchase intentions regarding the margarine products before they are exposed to hedonic cues in product packages, participants of experimental groups Margarine_(Control) and Margarine_(Sprea) in section one of the study, and participants of experimental groups Butter_(Control) and Butter_(Sprea) in section two of the study were compared in terms of their scores in these two variables. The results of these comparisons are expected to confirm that the scores were not different for the consumers who were not exposed to the hedonic cues in the beginning of the experimental study. The results of the average score computations for the associated groups in section one and section two are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. The Results of Manipulation Checks

Groups	Perceived Quality		Purchase Intention	
	M	SD	M	SD
Margarine _(Control)	2.46	0.75	2.66	1.00
Margarine _(Sprea)	2.80	0.63	3.11	1.03
Butter _(Control)	2.37	1.17	2.55	1.10
Butter _(Sprea)	2.34	0.91	2.28	0.93

Independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of Margarine_(Control) and Margarine_(Sprea) as well as Butter_(Control) and Butter_(Sprea) experimental groups on perceived quality and purchase intention variables. The results of the independent samples t-test confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference between the perceived quality scores of Margarine_(Control) (M=2.46, SD=0.75) and Margarine_(Sprea) (M=2.80, SD=0.63) groups, $t(44)=-1.650$, $p=.106$. Similarly, there was also no statistically significant difference between the purchase intention scores for Margarine_(Control) (M=2.66, SD=1.00) and Margarine_(Sprea) (M=3.11, SD=1.03) groups, as it is confirmed by independent samples t-test results, $t(69)=-1.832$, $p=.071$. The same tests were also conducted to compare the Butter_(Control) and Butter_(Sprea) experimental groups. The results of the independent samples t-test confirmed that there was no statistically significant difference between the perceived quality scores of Butter_(Control) (M=2.37, SD=1.17) and Butter_(Sprea) (M=2.34, SD=0.91) groups, $t(119)=0.194$, $p=.846$. Similarly, there was also no statistically significant difference between the purchase intention scores for Butter_(Control) (M=2.55, SD=1.10) and Butter_(Sprea) (M=2.28, SD=0.93) groups, as it is confirmed by independent samples t-test results, $t(119)=1.432$, $p=.155$. In the light of these results, it is confirmed that the experimental groups which were not exposed to hedonic cues have similar scores in terms of perceived quality and purchase intentions.

Section 1: The Effect of Hedonic Cue Applications on Consumers of Margarine Products

The effects of hedonic cue application on margarine product packages is measured by comparing the average perceived quality and purchase intention scores of consumers for the three experiment groups, namely Margarine_(Sprea), Margarine_(Crema), and Margarine_(Marge) using One-Way ANOVA test.

The first analysis was conducted in order to measure the effect of hedonic cue applications on perceived quality of the margarine products. The comparison of mean scores for the three experimental groups showed that the quality perceptions of margarine brand Marge, which is presented with the experimental group Margarine_(Marge) and includes high level of hedonic cues employed on the product package, resulted in higher level of perceived

quality score ($M=2.84$, $SD=0.99$) compared to margarine brand Sprea, which is presented with the experimental group $Margarine_{(Sprea)}$ and includes no hedonic cues employed on the product package ($M=2.80$, $SD=0.63$). Surprisingly, it is also found that perceived quality score of $Margarine_{(Sprea)}$ is higher than the score of margarine brand Crème ($M=2.52$, $SD=1.11$), which is presented with the experimental group $Margarine_{(Creme)}$ and includes moderate levels of hedonic cues intensity employed on the product package. Although there are differences observed between the means scores of the groups, the results of One-Way ANOVA test confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental groups, $F(2,73)=0.89$, $p= 0.415$.

The second analysis was conducted in order to measure the effect of hedonic cue applications on purchase intentions of consumers towards the margarine products. The comparison of mean scores for the three experimental groups showed that the purchase intentions of consumers towards margarine brand Marge, which is presented with the experimental group $Margarine_{(Marge)}$ and includes high level of hedonic cues employed on the product package resulted in higher level of purchase intention score ($M=3.06$, $SD=0.98$) compared to margarine brand Crème, which is presented with the experimental group $Margarine_{(Creme)}$ and includes moderate levels of hedonic cue intensity ($M=2.88$, $SD=1.28$). On the other hand, it is also unexpectedly found that purchase intention score of $Margarine_{(Sprea)}$ is the highest one among the groups ($M=3.11$, $SD=1.03$). Although there are differences observed between the mean scores of the groups, the results of One-Way ANOVA test confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental groups, $F(2,80)=0.34$, $p= 0.713$.

Section 2: The Effect of Hedonic Cue Applications on Non-Users of Margarine Product

In the second section of the study, the effects of hedonic cue application on margarine product packages is measured by comparing the average perceived quality and purchase intention scores of butter product consumers (non-users of margarine) for the three experiment groups, namely $Butter_{(Sprea)}$, $Butter_{(Creme)}$, and $Butter_{(Marge)}$ using One-Way ANOVA test.

The first analysis was conducted in order to measure the effect of hedonic cue applications on perceived quality of the margarine products. The comparison of mean scores for the three experimental groups showed that the quality perceptions of margarine brand Crème, which is presented with the experimental group $Butter_{(Creme)}$ and includes moderate level of hedonic cue intensity employed on the product package resulted in higher level of perceived quality score ($M=2.74$, $SD=1.03$) compared to group $Butter_{(Sprea)}$ ($M=2.34$, $SD=0.91$) and group $Butter_{(Marge)}$ ($M=2.64$, $SD=0.88$). On the other hand, as expected, it is also found that perceived quality score of $Butter_{(Marge)}$ group ($M=2.64$, $SD=0.88$) is higher than the score of $Butter_{(Sprea)}$ group ($M=2.34$, $SD=0.91$). Although there are differences observed between the means scores of the groups in terms of perceived quality, the results of One-Way ANOVA test confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental groups, $F(2,161)=2.57$, $p= 0.079$.

The second analysis was conducted in order to measure the effect of hedonic cue applications on purchase intentions of consumers towards the margarine products. The comparison of mean scores for the three experimental groups showed that the purchase intentions of consumers towards the margarine brand Crème, which is presented with the experimental group $Butter_{(Creme)}$ and includes moderate level of hedonic cue intensity employed on the product package, resulted in higher level of purchase intention score ($M=2.39$, $SD=1.10$) compared to group $Butter_{(Sprea)}$ ($M=2.28$, $SD=0.93$) and group $Butter_{(Marge)}$ ($M=2.16$, $SD=0.99$). On the other hand, it is also

unexpectedly found that purchase intention score of Butter(Sprea) group ($M=2.28$, $SD=0.93$) is higher than the score of Butter(Marge) ($M=2.16$, $SD=0.99$) group. Although there are differences observed between the mean scores of the groups in terms of purchase intentions, the results of One-Way ANOVA test confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference between the scores of the experimental groups, $F(2,186)=0.87$, $p= 0.421$.

In the light of the analysis conducted in section 1 and Section 2, the results confirmed that there are no statistically significant differences between the perceived quality scores of consumers between the experiment groups. Thus, H1 and H2 are not supported. Parallel to these findings, there are also no statistically significant differences confirmed between the experiment groups in terms of purchase intention scores. In the light of these findings, H3 and H4 are also not supported.

Discussion and Implications

The objective of this research study was to measure the possible effect of the hedonic cues applied on utilitarian retail food product packages in terms of perceived quality and purchase intention of consumers. Although there were some studies in the literature which measured the effect of hedonic and utilitarian benefits on food packaging (Wang, 2017), the lack of studies which measures the effect of hedonic cues applied on utilitarian retail food products packages, led to the necessity to shed light on this uncovered investigation area in the marketing and gastronomy literature. Thus, this study contributed to the literature by filling this gap and guide managers in gastronomy and tourism areas to attract domestic and foreign consumers who are unfamiliar with the local market products.

In line with the previous findings in the literature which confirms the positive effect of hedonic cues on hedonic products in general (Van der Laan et al. 2012) and on the food products specifically (Van der Merwe et al., 2013), this study hypothesized that application of hedonic cues on utilitarian food products will be also effective on consumer behavior. As it is confirmed by many authors in the respective studies, extrinsic cues of the product packaging such as color (Labrecque & Milne, 2011), graphical design (Ampuero & Vila, 2006) as well as emotional design (Liao et al., 2013) were expected to generate a positive influence on perceived quality and purchase intentions of consumers also in case of utilitarian retail food products. However, testing of the hypothesis yielded contradictory results compared to the previous findings in different contexts by confirming that there is no statistically significant influence of hedonic cue applications on product packages regarding consumer quality perceptions and purchase intentions. In the first section of the study, three intensity levels of hedonic cue applications in three experiment groups were compared in terms of perceived quality and purchase intentions of margarine consumers. Applying the same methodology, in the second section of the study, three intensity levels of hedonic cue applications in three experiment groups were compared in terms of perceived quality and purchase intentions of butter (non-margarine) consumers. In contrast to the suggestions of the previous studies in the literature (Vardhan & Amulya, 2017; Guaratne et al. 2019), it is found that there was no significant difference between the scores of three experiment groups both in terms of perceived quality and purchase intentions in both sections of the study.

The results of the study may lead to several academic and managerial implications. First of all, in the context of this study, the results confirmed that hedonic cues did not generate any influence on consumers who consume utilitarian food products. As these products are utilitarian in nature and consumers generally require intrinsic cues

to evaluate these type of products (Lee & Lou, 1996), hedonic cues are found to be not supportive on changing consumer quality evaluations and purchase intentions. However, it is believed that this does not require to totally eliminate the possibility of such influence since a correct combination of intrinsic and hedonic extrinsic cues applied on packages may be still influential

Another important factor which may play a role in the success of hedonic cue applications may be the type and intensity of hedonic cues applied. Marketing, brand, and product managers in food and food related sectors need to explore and understand the sensory and emotional factors which may motivate their target segments and design their packages of utilitarian food product packages in line with these motivational patterns. We strongly believe that the findings of this study are not conclusive since the literature reports many studies which confirm the effect of hedonic cues on consumer perceptions and behaviors related to non-utilitarian products. Thus, the application of correct type of hedonic cue with the right level of intensity combined with the intrinsic cues, may lead to favorable influences on consumers regarding perceived quality and purchase intentions.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As an experimental study, this study has also several limitations. Since the package design of three different brands are generated for the purpose of this study, the results may be affected due to the choice of hedonic cue types and their intensity levels. Thus, one important limitation of this study is the generalization of the results due to the different types of hedonic cues applicable in different studies. Another important limitation is related with the existence of external factors which may alter the influence of such cues. One of such external factors, which we believe to be influential on the results, is the health sensitivity of consumers regarding the margarine products. This may be especially true when we consider the participants of the second section, who do not consume margarine products at all. Thus, the results of this study in the context of fat products, may not be generalizable for all food products.

Taking into consideration the results of the study, it is strongly recommended to conduct future studies by implementing different types of hedonic cues with different intensity levels. Additionally, it is also recommended to conduct studies in different utilitarian retail product contexts to have a more generalizable result. Especially, tourists do not have sufficient time and expertise to judge the quality of local low-involvement products as food at a new destination; so, extrinsic cues of a product representing quality become vital for preferences (Ho et al., 2020). According to previous studies by Ilbery & Kneafsey, 2000; Weatherell et al., 2003) in the literature, attractive packaging and specific designs become significant in consumers' purchase intentions and quality ratings. According to Altintzoglou et al. (2016), food quality is the most critical aspect in food souvenir preferences. Ho et al. (2019) deduced that quality of food souvenirs is directly related to packaging graphics that appeal to emotional and nostalgic feelings for tourists. Hence, further experimental research may be conducted focusing on local food products.

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