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Abstract

In a marketing communication approach regarding the perception of products, a package is by far the most important marketing instrument: its physical appearance plays a considerable role in drawing one's attention to the product. Research suggests that consumers practically always make use of information derived from the frontside of a package. Once attention is drawn, it may lead to taking or not taking the product from the shelf. The frontside of a package is an important source of information. Aspects from packages like stand-out appeal, communication value and the prestige or image desired, can help to attract attention and help to attach meaning to the package. Like packages, covers of books (i.c. fiction books) also play a considerable role in information processing about these books. Technically speaking a bookcover can be seen as a package. Moreover, to take covers of books as a research object is far more interesting than packages of ordinary products because of the wide variety in and large differences between books. Besides a theoretical comparison between the information (communication) aspects on the frontcover of books and the frontside of a package, this paper provides some results of a small pilot study. The question underlying the experiment was whether respondents are able to determine the extent to which a priori formulated attributes are typical for each frontcover varying in genre and publishing period of the book. Genre is regarded as an important information item when buying books. Publishing period could also be important because of the rapidly changing book supply. Data were analyzed by means of Factor Analysis as well as Multidimensional Scaling (MDS). Results indicate that MDS was better able to identify differences in genre and publishing period than Factor Analysis.

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Introduction

From marketing communication perspective, the physical appearance of a package concerning so-called fast moving consumer goods will be compared with the frontcover of books (i.e. fiction for adults). Technically speaking the cover of a book can be seen as a package. Being presented on a display table, frontcovers of books are stimuli to which the consumer can be exposed. Taking into account their function of stimulating the purchase of books to match, covers of books can also be considered as economic stimuli. According to Van Veldhoven (1992) economic stimuli reply to the description that they come into the consumer's field of vision calling over an effect of behavioural intention. The front of a package as well as the frontcover of fiction books respond to this claim, although a frontcover can be considered as a more subtle stimulant for purchase. This is due to several important distinctions between covers of books and packages of ordinary products. These distinctions are discussed in section 1.1. Section 1.2 explains the communication value of a package of ordinary products as well as covers of books (i.e. fiction for adults). In section 2, the research method regarding a small experiment launched for frontcovers of exciting and literary books is discussed. The experiment should be considered as a pilot study indicating the extent to which attributes are typical for frontcovers regarding genre and the period in which the book is published. Section 3 describes the results of the experiment and conclusions are presented in section 4.

The differences between covers and packages

In comparing covers of books to packages of 'fast moving consumer goods', there are some important differences. First of all, the buying frequency. 'Fast moving goods' are bought on a regular base. During the use of 'fast-movers', consumers are exposed frequently to the package of these products. Consequently, the package will be recognized easier the next time the consumer enters the store. Thus, buying these products usually

turns out to be a routine decision. In the case of books, consumers are also frequently exposed to its cover. But no two books are alike and one will rarely buy the same book twice. Therefore, recognizing a book that was very satisfactory the previous time does not facilitate the decision making process as it is in the case of 'fast-movers'. So, it is important that books attract attention every time the consumer enters the bookstore. Secondly, the book supply is huge and changes rapidly (Verdaasdonk 1989). This makes searching for information on new titles necessary. Consequently, buyers of books will buy less books of older publishing periods. Most books are not reviewed or is not advertised for. Consequently, information about a fiction title has to be derived from the frontcover of the book. In addition, buyers of books use knowledge on books, often based on reading experiences (Leemans 1994). A frontcover, however, can and has to be used as a clue to meet those reading experiences.

In the third place, fiction books are considered as 'hedonic' products (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Leemans 1994; Kamphuis 1991): cultural, aesthetic products, just as paintings, musical performances and theatre productions. The hedonic function of a book pertains to attributes indicating reading experience, that is to say the expected pleasure it fulfills. Books can also be considered as intangible products. The core product (Leeflang and Beukenkamp 1987) of 'fast moving consumer goods' can generally be described by concrete attributes (Peter and Olson 1987). The core product of a book refers to the contents of a book, which remains intangible and unknown until one has read the whole book. Important consequences of reading, for instance excitement, have at the most a very complex relation with tangible aspects of the book (Stokmans 1992). Some clues about the contents of the book can be inferred from observable cues of the book, for example its frontcover. This implicates the use of information on the frontcover, conscious or unconscious, in order to define whether the book is appropriate or not. Thus, more than ordinary product packages, a frontcover has the aim to match someone's interest in a certain subject, theme or genre. To arouse that interest, cues on the frontcover should give a first indication about a particular subject, theme or genre.

Actually, consumers make inferences about the observable cues on the frontcover. The process of inference making is part of an elaboration phase regarding information processing of buyers of books (Miesen 1995). An inference can be defined as the outcome of an inference making process (Lee and Olshavsky 1994), which is based on newly searched information (the frontcover) as well as already available knowledge (reading experience). All the more because the decision making process regarding books is an iterative process and you are very insecure whether the book will be the most appropriate. However, it should be noted that an indication for the contents of the book can be derived from genre which is an important information item used when buying books (Leemans 1994). Genre is important because it can be seen as a device to divide the heterogeneous supply of books into categories of similar books. Fiction for adults can be divided in books belonging to literature, exciting and romance. Literature, on its turn, can f.i. be classified in literature aimed at women or biographies. Detectives and thrillers are examples of exciting books and part of romantic books are for instance, the regional novel and the family novel.

In order to understand the influence of the fore-mentioned differences between covers of books and packages of ordinary products on information processing, the next section will deal with the communication value of packages of 'fast-movers' and covers of books.

Communication value of packages

Packages encompass the physical appearance of the container and include design, color, shape, labeling and materials. In designing a package, three factors are important (Bovee 1992). First of all, there is the package appeal. The appeal concerns the appearance on the shelf, what does it look like, what image is being called, will the package be attractive enough to attract attention from customers etc. On average a package on the supermarket's shelf has about one-tenth of a second to make an impression on the consumer (Schiffman and Kanuk 1994). One could think of impressions like recognition, that's my product, the product that will be appreciated by other users of the family or by visitors. So, it is important that every aspect of the package

- its name, color, shape, label and copy - provide sufficient sensory stimulation to be noted and remembered. In other words, its appeal should have arousal potential. Astute marketers usually try to differentiate their packaging sufficiently to ensure rapid consumer attention in order to come up to receive the desired arousal (Schiffman and Kanuk 1994). Consequently, package appeal is created by using color and shape as well as size and texture. Size and texture differ between packages depending on the kind of product within. So, the size of a package and how its 'building' looks could create a particular image that belongs to a specific product (Gershman 1987). The size and texture of the classic bottle of Coca Cola always remain the same as a cause of its manifest association with Coca Cola. Other examples are the size and texture of pocket books, calling over associations of handy, cheap and probably fast readable books.

A second important factor in designing a package are its verbal and non-verbal symbols which are indicating the communication value of the package. Both textual and visual imagery can inform potential buyers about the product's context, features, uses, advantages and hazards (Pride 1989). Therefore, the visual image depicted by the frontcover of a detective differs from the visual image of a literary book. Finally, there is the prestige or image desired. Prestige or image refers to an interaction process between people in which product use is viewed as an indicator of prestige attached to the productuser. In general, reading literature is regarded as more prestigious (Bourdieu 1984; Kraaykamp 1993). On the other hand, reading an unknown author instead of reading a famous author is more prestigious within a minority, irrespective of the genre of the book. The indicators for prestige as illustrated above, are likely to be communicated by the frontcover of the book, especially in the case of literature. However, marketers experience more difficulties in getting across the marketing message or assumed image. Consumers are exposed to an overwhelming amount of visual stimuli, but there are reasons to believe that the consumer is not always motivated, capable and opportune to process these stimuli (Poiesz 1993; MacInnes and Jaworsky 1989; Petty and Cacioppo 1986). Information is no longer in need of active search, one is exposed to it, conscious or unconscious, wanted or not wanted (Pasch en Stolk 1994). All the more

reason to take into account the three factors stand-out appeal, communication value and prestige or image desired. These factors influence the communication impact of packages on a shelf in which 4 levels of processing are distinguished (Donia 1990): the opening level, the identification level, the acceptance level and the confirmation level. Only the opening level and the identification level will be discussed here because they are most relevant in comparing covers of books to packages of 'fast moving consumer goods'. Within the opening level the central issue is about drawing one's attention and calling for a first association with the brand, its function and positioning. Further important issues in this stage are salientness and communication. A package of coffee has to be salient to attract attention among other brands. For books this is even more important because of the infinite number of different books available in the store. Furthermore, the package has to be associated with the correct product class. If beer is sold in a Coca Cola bottle it will attract attention among the other brands of beer but it will probably be associated with Cola. The same is true for bookcovers. As Feldman (1991) says: 'a visitor of a bookstore may be attracted to an author's name, to a familiar series format, to the characters, action, theme or mood presented in the cover's artwork'. During this phase the frontcover may create a first impression of feeling right about the contents of the book. So, the art is to call for such a first association without falling into decay of standard solutions used by other publishers of fiction books. The name of the author on the cover can automatically be considered as a brandname such as brandnames on ordinary packages. Especially in the case of well-known authors, the name of the author is very likely to become a brand (Leemans 1995). Consider for instance authors as King, Grisham, Kinsale and Le Carre. On the frontcover their family names will be sufficient to catch the eye. A title on a frontcover seems comparable to the description of a product type (e.g. genre) and the picture or illustration on the other hand refers to the picture, illustration or figure concerning other packages and may indicate genre as well as publishing period in the case of books. The title 'The Celestine Prophecy' for instance, refers to a certain promise the book will tell and already gives a slight clarification about the contents of the book.

During the identification level, the consumer attaches a more profound meaning to the symbols and signs of the package, in order to understand the position of the brand in its competitive surroundings. Like the authenticity and rich associations of taste concerning a package of regular coffee. In the case of books the associations made on the basis of the frontcover are likely to come up to pre expectations concerning the contents of the book. This can be accomplished by attaching a more profound meaning to the title, the name of the author, the characters depicted etc., for instance an association like 'a breathtaking thriller'.

It can be concluded that giving the right image by means of a package is of great importance; a package is used to attract customer's attention and encourage him/her to examine the product. It can be expected that this also holds true for books. Either the image is provided by the title, the name of the author or the picture conveyed by a frontcover. Attention is likely to be attracted when the attributes on a frontcover are considered salient (salientness) and the frontcover comes up to pre expectations about the contents of the book (clearness).

Hitherto, the communication impact of a package design has been explained, especially concerning frontcovers of books: the extent to which covers of books can be compared to ordinary product packages, the image that could be derived from a package considering factors as 'stand-out appeal', communication value and prestige or image desired and how frontcovers of books are processed during the first two levels of information processing. The genre of a book indicates a bit about what can be expected regarding the contents of the book. It is an important information item as we have seen, and is therefore a reason to draw attention to the frontcover to investigate whether a genre is conveyed. The period in which a book is published could also be of importance when choosing books. Because of the book supply changing rapidly, the consumer is almost obliged to choose new books. Considering the remarks about genre and period regarding covers of books, an important research question that can be posed is whether the extent to which an attribute is judged typical for a frontcover differs between genres and publishing period of the book.

permanent and emotional. These are formulated a priori because it was expected that the attributes are good indicators for genre as well as publishing period.

Results

Standard methods to determine perceived attributes are all based on perception analysis. The picture conveyed by a frontcover can be reflected as a point in a multi-dimensional space: the perceptual map (Wieringa and Van Raaij, 1987). The co-ordinates a particular frontcover has on the dimensions reflect the extent to which the frontcover possesses the perceived attributes. Perception analysis is usually carried out with the help of Factor Analysis or Multi Dimensional Scaling (WS) (Snelders and Stokmans 1994). Both analyses can be based on explicit attribute ratings; an indirect measurement of similarities. In this study, both analyses are performed on the data. In the perceptual map resulting from Factor Analysis, the dimensions are estimated on the basis of the correlations between the frontcovers and the attribute ratings. These ratings are considered metrical and the analysis is across respondents. Furthermore, no differences in the use of the ratingscale across respondents is taken into account. When applying MDS, respondents are usually asked how similar products are to each other. However, in this case similarity between frontcovers is determined on the basis of typicality regarding the a priori attributes. On the basis of these attributes, a similarity score is calculated (Euclidean distance). These scores are ordinal and the analysis is also across persons but differences in the use of scales by subjects are taken into account (conditioned by ppn). Thus, less assumptions on data are made by Multidimensional Scaling.

Factor Analysis was conducted on the correlation matrix between the frontcovers derived from the super matrix ppn * attributes by frontcover.

Considering an eigen value > 1 and the scree-test, a three factor solution was chosen, which explained 56.4 percent of the variance (final statistics). The three factor solution was varimax rotated. The resulting factor loadings are given in table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Results Factor Analysis and Multidimensional Scaling

Research method

In order to get an indication of the image of a frontcover, research was done during a post graduate course on Tilburg University. This research encompassed a small experiment regarding the extent to which attributes applied to frontcovers of books are judged typical. Subjects

A total number of 11 subjects, participating in a post graduate course called 'Statistics' (May 2nd and May 3th, 1996), took part in the experiment. Somehow, all the subjects were related with the arts and can be considered experts regarding books. Design and procedure

To all participants of the course, 12 colored copies of frontcovers together with a questionnaire were send to their homes. Although, an instruction was added, the subjects were responsible for the order in which they performed the experiment. The experiment has to be considered as a pilot study, part of a general research problem regarding attributes of front bookcovers as clarification for preferences and choises towards fiction books. The frontcovers could be divided into two genres: literature and exciting books. The first were in dutch and the exciting books were in english. For every category, a front bookcover was taken from the years 60 till 90. The aim was to take unknown books because well-known authors or book titles could have an effect on the image derived from the frontcover. In order to verify whether the selected books were known in advance, each subject has to answer four questions by marking yes or no:

1. Have you read the book depicted by its cover
2. Have you read or have you heard *about* the book
3. Have you read other work of the author

4. Have you read or heard something *about* the author.

Next, the subjects were asked if they could indicate to what extent they considered an attribute typical for each of the 12 frontcovers. The following attributes had to be scored on a 5-point scale (from definitely typical to definitely not typical): Quality, absorbing, topicality, timeless, exciting, passivity, romantic, literary, symbolic, prestige, ambiguous,

Erreur! Signet non défini.	Factor	NDS	1	2	3	1	2
3							
1. Exc'91 .03	.78	-.11	.47	-1.78	-.27		
2. Lit'89 .18	.12	.71	.89	.96	-1.18	3. Lit'74 -.00	.65 .43 1.20
.14 1.29 4. Exc'74 .76 .02 .01				-1.46	-.45	-.82	
5. Lit'79 .19 .59 -.06			.19	-1.00	1.28	6. Exc'83 .61	.28 -.07 -.99
-1.08 -.92							
7. Exc'60 .76 .01-.06			-1.72	.53	.73	8. Lit'69 -.30 -.24 .69	.61
.97 -1.43							
9. Lit'63 -.08 .45 .64	1.48	.46	-.35				
10. Exc'70 .83 -.04 -.07	-1.57	.83	.35				
11. Exc'65 .54 .05 .39	-.36	1.14	.99				
12. Lit'91 -.01 .66 .40	1.26	-.73	.33				

'91 etc.: Publishing period

Exc: Frontcovers belonging to exciting books

Lit: Frontcovers belonging to literary books

Table 3.1 reveals that Factor 1 can be regarded as the dimension exciting books because all the exciting books rate high (> 0.40) on this dimension (except the first one), and no literary book has a high loading on this first factor. On factor 2, most literary books have a high loading, except cover 2 and 8 which belong to literature but have a negative loading on the second factor. Cover 1 on the other hand is an exciting book and loads also high on the second factor which is possibly due to its confusion with literature. So, factor 2 mainly represents literary books. Factor 3, however, is difficult to interpret as far as period is concerned; the dimension does not distinguish a ranking along period. Probably Factor 3 could be labeled a color dimension. As with package design of ordinary products, using a particular color on a frontcover attracts attention. A color seems also typical for a particular genre. Consider for instance the color red which will be used more often in case of exciting books, like thrillers. Within literature, color use seems to be more ambiguous.

Within Multidimensional Scaling, 3 dimensions are extracted on the basis of the scree-test as well as comparability to the results of Factor Analysis. A three dimensional solution revealed a stress of .241 and an R of .334. This solution is also presented in table 3.1. The first dimension can be considered genre in which the highly negative loaded scores belong to exciting books and the highly positive loaded scores belong to literature. This is true for all frontcovers, except frontcover 1, an exciting book with a positive score and frontcover 5, a literary book with a small positive score. The second dimension possibly reflects period, in which the negative loadings are to be considered more recent books than the positive loadings. The third dimension remains unclear because genre and period are part of dimension 1 and 2.

Conclusions

The issue of this paper was about the communication aspects on the frontside of packages, in particular frontcovers of fiction books for adults. Three factors have been considered relevant regarding their importance within the presentation towards the buying public: stand-out appeal, communication value (verbal and non-verbal) and prestige or image desired. All three factors have an influence on the communication impact of packages on a shelf and the effect of books presented on a display table. Considering the communication impact of a package, a distinction is made between the opening level, in which attention is drawn and the identification level, in which meaning is attached to the front of a package. Whether a frontcover rates high on both levels is probably due to the utmost care by which the three mentioned factors are performed. Important aspects of a frontcover during the two levels are salientness and clearness. Salientness to attract attention (opening level) and clearness to determine which genre the book reflects (identification level).

In order to investigate the image of a frontcover, a small experiment was conducted in which experts were asked to indicate to what extent particular attributes are typical for each frontcover varying in genre (i.c. literature and exciting) and publishing period of the book. From the results regarding Factor Analysis it can be concluded that frontcovers are

judged typical for literature as well as for exciting books. However, a ranking along period could not be distinguished. Within Multidimensional Scaling a period dimension aside a genre dimension could be distinguished. It seems that MDS is more appropriate to convey dimensions on which the image of frontcovers is based.

Limitations

This research has some important limitations. First of all, there is the theoretical part of this paper which remains just a broadly investigation to provide some understanding towards the communication impact of packages regarding frontcovers of fiction books for adults. Further research is needed (and is already partly in progress) to investigate to what extent these levels are important in the information processing regarding frontcovers; which attributes on frontcovers are significant in which level. Probably, other levels of information processing regarding decision making should be added to indicate the communication impact of frontcovers of fiction books.

Secondly, there are shortcomings regarding the experiment. A major limitation concerns the stimuli which were chosen. Because of the huge supply of books, the 12 frontcovers are just a tip of the veil to do research with. If other frontcovers were taken, different results are very likely to appear. This problem can not be solved easily because perception research analyzed with Factor Analysis or Multidimensional Scaling can only handle a small number of products. Besides, frontcovers of books in different languages were taken which coincide with a difference in genre. The books in english were all exciting and the books in dutch belong to literature. This could also have an effect on the results. In order to get a better understanding of how the consumer perceives a frontcover, attributes should be formulated by consumers themselves and not by the researchers. In that case comparability between consumers diminishes, which can affect the perceptual mapping of the frontcovers. Finally, the respondents are all considered experts regarding the arts. They can all be considered as buyers of books on a regular base. It would be interesting to investigate the classification process of consumers who are less involved or

buy books incidentally, for instance as a present. This may give different interesting results, at least for the typicality according to genre.

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