



Glossy or Matt? When it is a package of attractive enhancing products

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Product appearance is often the first piece of information consumers are exposed to, which helps them make quick judgments about the product, so it's important to understand how the visual elements of the product affect product evaluation. Packaging has been called the "silent salesman" due to its powerful but often underestimated influence on purchasing decisions at the point of sale. Marketers' view of the role of product packaging has evolved from focusing on its functional role in the value delivery chain to focusing on its communicative role, implicitly expressing certain product attributes through the color, shape, transparency, and texture of the package. Meert, Pandelaere, and Patrick (2014) found that consumers prefer glossy surfaces because of an innate preference for clean water. Also, products related to external beauty are often evaluated more favorably when packaged in glossy materials. However, recent research by Markhgott and Kamleitner (2019) found that for artificially recognized foods (e.g., soda and ketchup), less glossy packaging surfaces improve consumer response in terms of perceived naturalness, taste, and purchase intention. As such, packaging seems to send a subtle signal implicitly. Consumers have noticed that attractiveness-enhancing products, such as those that add fragrance, tend to be sold in glossy packaging, while problem-solving products, such as moisturizing products, tend to be sold in matt packaging. In other words, viewing products in glossy (vs. matt) packaging draws attractiveness-enhancing(problem-solving) inferences, influencing subsequent consumption and choice behavior.

Bloch and Richins (1992) suggested that product enhancement refers to the type of product that directly enhances attractiveness. In comparison, problem-solving products are used to mask or alter negative factors (Bower & Landreth, 2001). The desire to hide one's flaws and fix them increases the preference for problem-solving products because of the aspiration to get out of a negative state. Matt packaging can draw attention to the actual cosmetic itself rather than the reflective nature of the packaging. Matte packaging can emphasize a product's functional characteristics, such as materials, formulation, or performance, by understating the packaging's visual appeal. This may be particularly relevant for cosmetics intended to address specific skin concerns. Glossy packaging has a reflective surface that can create an aesthetically pleasing and visually striking appearance. Glossy packaging can potentially enhance the perception of attractiveness. This research highlights the potential relationship between packaging aesthetics and

consumer attitudes in the context of attractiveness-enhancement products and problem-solving products, suggesting that matte packaging can emphasize a product's ability to solve a problem, while glossy packaging can enhance attractiveness. Therefore, we hypothesize that H1: A product's glossy (vs. matt) finish leads to a higher product attitude for an attractiveness-enhancement product, and a product's matt (vs. glossy) finish leads to a higher product attitude for a problem-solving product.

A survey was conducted with Two hundred and seventy-eight participants in the United States (56.5% females; Mage=32.98, SDage=8.87). Participants are randomly assigned to one of the four conditions in the 2 (visual finish: glossy vs. matte) × 2 (product type: problem-solving vs. attractiveness- enhancement) between-subjects design. Participants read either “Imagine you're in search of a moisturizing handwash that keeps your hands hydrated for a long time. You want a handwash that effectively resolves the dryness of your hands.” in the problem-solving condition; or “Imagine you're in search of a scented handwash that enhances the beauty of your skin. You want a handwash that provides a long-lasting scent reminiscent of perfume.” in the attractiveness-enhancement condition. After reading the scenario, participants saw an image for handwash, either glossy or matte. Participants reported product attitude on a 7-point scale. As a confirmation of visual finish manipulation, participants were asked to evaluate how glossy the handwash is on a 7-point scale (1=not at all, 7=very much). Finally, because the focal product is not an eco-friendly product, we measured participants' interest in eco-friendly as control variables.

Participants estimated the glossy package ($M_{glossy} = 4.58$, $SD = 1.85$) to be more glossy than the matte package ($M_{matte} = 2.41$, $SD = 1.52$). The two-way ANOVA confirmed a significant interaction effect of visual finish and product type ($p = .048$). Pairwise analysis further revealed that the difference between glossy and matte was significant under the attractiveness-enhancement condition ($p = .007$). Specifically, when the product was attractiveness-enhancement, participants perceived the glossy package to be more 'good, likable, positive, and favorable' than the matte package. In contrast, when the product was problem-solving, participants perceived the matte package to be marginally more 'good, likable, positive, and favorable' than the glossy package. To test the moderating effect of the product type, a PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013; Model 1) was employed, with visual finish as the independent variable (glossy vs. matte), product type (problem-solving vs. attractiveness-enhancement) as the moderator, and product attitude as the dependent variable ($p = .047$, LLCI = .006, ULCI = 1.153). The control variables included eco-friendliness. The interaction effect of the control variable was found to be significant based on bootstrapping with 5000 samples.

Through our experimental research, we highlight the significance of considering the glossy (vs. matte) finish in packaging for attractiveness-enhancement products. This finding has implications for marketers and product designers in terms of developing effective marketing strategies and enhancing product perception. By adjusting the package gloss, companies can potentially increase

consumers' favorable perception of their products. The final points and research proposals of this study are as follows. It would be valuable to explore the applicability of the package gloss effect across different product categories and industries. Investigating how various types of products are perceived differently based on their packaging gloss could provide additional insights into consumer preferences and behavior. Furthermore, future studies could examine the role of other visual elements in packaging, such as color, shape, and texture, and how they interact with package gloss to influence consumer perceptions. Understanding the combined effects of multiple visual cues on product evaluation and consumer response would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of packaging aesthetics. Additionally, considering the influence of package gloss on other consumer outcomes, such as purchase intention, brand perception, and product loyalty, could provide a deeper understanding of its impact on consumer behavior.

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