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Impact of Creative Packaging Design on Repurchase Decisions in Online Food Delivery

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Abstract

Online food delivery platforms have had a substantial impact on product evaluation in the food market, especially in developing countries like Georgia. Due to urbanization and lifestyle changes, people tend to shift from offline services toward online delivery platforms like Glovo, Wolt and others. This has increased competition between restaurants and delivery brands because customer experience goes beyond food taste and service quality to packaging presentation. Packaging is the first thing consumers see and touch, and it significantly impacts their perception of the product's quality, influences their purchasing decisions, and helps them identify and recall the brand. Theoretical analysis shows that product packaging design fulfills an important function of inducing customers to buy the specific products through visual and psychological stimulation. According to the S-O-R theory, external stimuli trigger internal cognitive and emotional processes (organisms), which in turn affect behavioral responses. Prior studies have examined how creative packaging affects retail food delivery. However, there is little focus on the impact of packaging on online food delivery. The branding identity and emotional connection with consumers would be promoted by the unboxing experience and visual impressions. The current study investigates how creative packaging's fundamental characteristics, such as divergence (novelty) and relevance (appropriateness), influence customer repurchases decisions in Georgia's online food delivery industry. Then, it employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire, and data were analyzed through Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS to test the proposed relationships.

Keywords: Creating Packaging, Divergence, Relevance, Repurchase Decision, Motivation, Curiosity.

Introduction

In the past years, the rapid growth of online ordering and food delivery companies has radically transformed the way consumers access and interact with food at a global level (Cho et al., 2019; Ray et al., 2019). In the Georgian context, delivery companies like Glovo and Wolt, as well as marketers who use social networks, have made food delivery a mainstream tradition and thus shifted consumer behavior and expectations (Jang et al., 2021). In this changing marketplace, the role of packaging design has shifted beyond the traditional responsibility of protecting goods to become a powerful marketing and communication tool that influences customer attitudes, feelings, and decision-making (Ampuero & Vila, 2006; Magnier & Schoormans, 2015). Recent studies support this shift, showing that packaging in online fresh-food services, agricultural products, and novel materials significantly influences repurchase intentions (Ma et al., 2022; Wang & Liu, 2023; Pérez-Cacho & Fernández, 2024). However, little information is available about the influence of the creative packaging design, that is, the creative divergence and relevance, on the consumer's curiosity, consumer's motivation, and their repurchase behavior in emerging markets such as Georgia, despite the increasing attention. It is crucial to figure out how these variables interact, not only to improve marketing strategies but also to enlighten the social science debates about the digital consumer behavior, decision-making, and psychological processes in online consumption.

Innovative packaging design increasingly finds recognition as a key driver of consumer interaction in online retailing spaces. Unlike the physical world of retail stores, where sensorimotor interactions with products are faced prior to purchase consideration, online delivery of food almost entirely relies upon packaging as the first physical interaction among consumers and brands (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). Experimental research determines that creative packaging has the capacity to strengthen the emotional attachment between consumers and brands, build confidence, and considerably influence intentions of making a repeated purchase (Silayoi & Speece, 2007; Velasco & Spence, 2019). Two core dimensions of packaging originality—divergence (or novelty) and relevance (or appropriateness)—hold a significant position in shaping consumer curiosity and their desire to attend to product information (Smith & Yang, 2004; Hagtvedt & Brasel, 2016).

The importance of packaging design for food delivery systems may thus be understood through the Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory, as posited that external stimuli such as packaging images actually impact the internal state of consumers, such as curiosity and trust, and thus lead to behavioral outcomes such as repurchase intentions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982). Past studies already confirmed that eye-catchy packaging not only benefits brands through improved perceptions but also helps build long-lasting consumer relationships (Silayoi & Speece, 2004; Magnier, Schoormans, & Mugge, 2016). With the already crowded marketplace of online delivery systems, innovative packaging thus offers a unique advantage for brands to differentiate themselves and build long-term loyalty (Becker et al., 2011).

Despite the growing significance of creative packaging research due to the increasing trend in digital consumption, only a few studies have looked into how the different aspects of packaging, like divergence (novelty) and relevance (appropriateness), can influence consumer curiosity, motivation, and repurchase behavior in online food delivery, with a special focus on emerging markets such as Georgia (Ma et al., 2022; Liu & Wang, 2023; Pérez-Cacho & Fernández, 2024). The comprehension of these dynamics is crucial for marketing, and it also

holds significance for the social science discipline in debates about digital consumer behavior, decision-making under uncertainty, and the psychological processes that command online consumption. The current research bridges this division by incorporating the S-O-R model to investigate how creative packaging changes consumers' internal responses and consequently repurchase intentions, thus opening up avenues for theory and practice in the domain of online food delivery. In addition, the role of technology and digitalization in enhancing organizational and consumer outcomes has been highlighted in recent studies. For instance, digital strategy, digital platforms, and employee digital skills positively influence sustainable competitive performance in entrepreneurial companies, as shown by Moayery Fard et al. (2026).

Literature Review

Packaging as a Strategic Marketing Tool

Packaging has shifted from a simple measure of protection and warehousing of goods to an advanced selling device communicating brand personality, shaping customer attitudes, and shaping buying behavior (Ampuero & Vila, 2006; Silayoi & Speece, 2007). In high-competition and fast-paced markets like food delivery markets, packaging often acts as the first physical contact point of consumers and brands as a "silent salesperson" communicating value propositions through non-verbal messages (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). Research also shows that packaging can impact product evaluation, flavor perception, and even consumers' willingness to pay (Becker, van Rompay, Schifferstein, & Galetzka, 2011).

In the context of online food ordering, this aspect is drastically intensified. Unlike typical retail environments where customers physically interact with products before purchasing, digital commerce delays visual and tactile interactions until after payment. Packaging in online orders thus has to perform a number of acts at once: maintaining the integrity of the cuisine, creating a memorable unboxing experience, and helping build emotional associations with customers (Velasco & Spence, 2019).

Researchers emphasize that a judiciously conceived packaging helps build consumer confidence, assists with differentiation of the brand, and boosts loyalty, particularly where markets are expecting functional benefits (such as quick delivery and quality of cuisine) out of the box (Magnier & Schoormans, 2015; Ray, Dhir, Bala, & Kaur, 2019).

In addition, the strategic use of packaging goes beyond visual appeal and involves the creation of narrative and value transmission. Packaging has been shown to trigger psychological associations that shape consumer expectations and satisfaction with use (Silayoi & Speece, 2004; Orth, Campana, & Malkewitz, 2010). In the food delivery business, where consumers are often seeking novelty and enjoyment as much as convenience, carefully crafted packaging becomes a key competitive advantage through the transformation of functional service encounters into memorable experiences.

Divergence in Packaging Design

Divergence, defined as a measure of originality or uniqueness of a design, is one of the basic dimensions of creativity in packaging (Smith & Yang, 2004). Successful divergent packaging captures attention through nonconformity with established norms and providing innovative, path-forging features. Empirical research has consistently shown novelty as a key driver of

inducing consumer interest, exploratory behavior, and favorable brand attitudes (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008; Hagtvedt & Brasel, 2016). For example, nonconforming structural shapes, innovative use of color combinations, or creative unboxing may differentiate a food delivery company from competitors and build greater recall of a food delivery brand.

The value of divergence is especially high in online retailing markets, such as the online food delivery marketplace. When a delivery comes, often the packaging will become the initial sensory indication that primes quality and innovation judgments (Velasco & Spence, 2019). Research proposes that divergent packaging boosts emotional arousal and stimulates deeper consumer exploration of the product with a resulting higher satisfaction and higher buy-back intentions (Orth et al., 2010). Moreover, divergence may prompt consumers to post their experiences on social media and create higher brand awareness and word-of-mouth advantage (Jang, Kim, & Yang, 2021).

However, managing divergence should be done with much attention. Too much novelty lacking real-world usability can cause confusion or frustration and may compromise customer trust (Silayoi & Speece, 2007). Current research suggests that divergent features are best effective when understood as valuable innovations and not as arbitrary deviations from the norm (Hagtvedt & Brasel, 2016). Applying this argument to the context of food delivery implies that innovative design cannot compromise usability features like the safety of food and convenience of handling. In such a context, divergence works best while at the same time adhering to core service expectations.

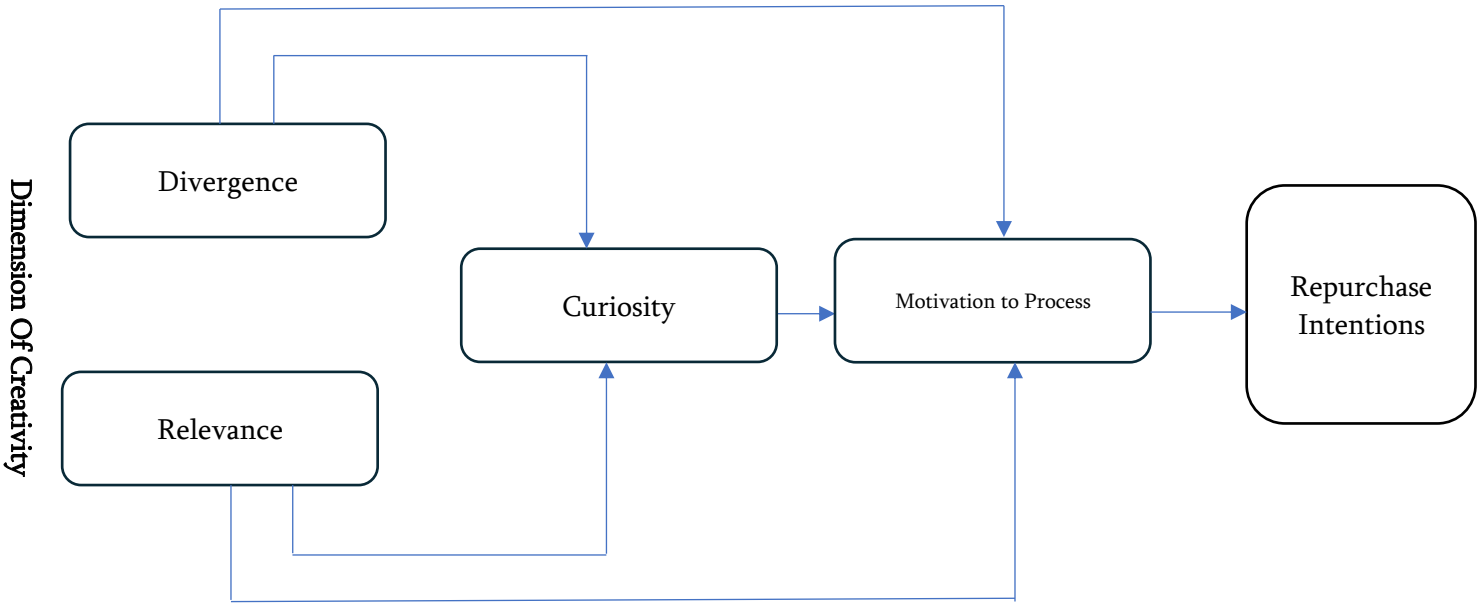
Relevance in Packaging Design

Although divergence values originality, relevance indicates the suitability and significance of packaging in dealing with consumer needs, cultural beliefs, and product sectors (Smith & Yang, 2004). Relevant packaging has an appeal to consumers through informativeness, coherence, and usability. From research, relevance has a key function of increasing consumer understanding and establishing confidence since consumers are inclined towards packaging designs with congruence and product features (Magnier & Schoormans, 2015).

In food delivery packaging, relevance is especially significant because packaging needs to attract attention as well as fulfill utilitarian needs like sustaining heat or cold temperature, leakage prevention, and hygienic delivery (Ray et al., 2019). Relevant packaging sends out a message of reliability and professionalism that helps build consumer confidence and diminishes perceived risk of online transactions (Silayoi & Speece, 2004). For instance, green packaging may be deemed extremely relevant with green consumers and create favorable brand associations and loyalty (Magnier, Schoormans, & Mugge, 2016).

Relevance operates at a symbolic level through matching packaging with cultural and social relevance. Research indicates that packaging incorporating cultural symbols, lifestyle desires, or consumer values has the capacity to build emotional associations and strengthen brand identity (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008; Velasco & Spence, 2019). In emerging markets such as Georgia, where food culture intersects with traditions, packaging that matches domestic taste and expectations can build an intense level of authenticity and credibility.

Significantly, divergence and relevance should not be perceived as conflicting elements, but rather as interrelated facets of packaging creativity. While divergence draws the attention of consumers and ignites curiosity, relevance guarantees that the packaging design is comprehended, valued, and appreciated. Consequently, it is crucial to maintain a balance between these two aspects to secure both immediate engagement and enduring intentions for repurchase (Smith & Yang, 2004; Orth et al., 2010).



Conceptual Model

Methodology

The research is quantitative in nature. It uses structured instruments to collect numerical data, enabling statistical assessment of hypotheses regarding the effects of packaging design features on psychological and behavioral responses under an online delivery system. Conducted in Georgia with a specific interest in consumers who use online food delivery websites frequently such as Glovo, Wolt, and home vendors selling through Instagram. Using purposive sampling techniques, the study considered participants with first-hand exposure to innovative packaged online food delivery. The final sample achieves a minimum of 300 valid interviews and therefore ensures extensive statistical analysis and sufficient representation of a multidimensional spectrum of consumers.

The main tool utilized for data gathering was a systematically organized online questionnaire, which was crafted and disseminated through Google Forms. The questionnaire was formulated in the Georgian language to guarantee accessibility and cultural pertinence for the intended demographic, specifically Georgian residents who have ordered food online and received it in artistically designed packaging. The questionnaire comprised six major sections: Demographic Information – With gender, age, occupation, location, ordering food online frequency, and preferred delivery platform (i.e., Glovo, Wolt, Instagram, or Facebook-based vendors); Divergence, 4 items assessing the novelty and originality of packaging designs; Relevance, 4 items assessing the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the packaging within

the context of the product and consumer demand; Curiosity, 3 items gauging the emotional and cognitive curiosity evoked by the packaging; Motivation to Process Information, 4 items directed at the consumer's desire to inspect or explore the packaging design; Repurchase Intention, 4 items assessing the probability of the consumer repeating the order from the same vendor as a function of their perception of the packaging. Lastly, to investigate the complete structural model and test the proposed hypotheses simultaneously, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed using SmartPLS 4, as widely used in previous studies, including Moayery Fard et al. (2025) and Frad, Jalali, & Karimzadeh (2020).

Mean and Standard Deviation

The descriptive statistics were generated with Jamovi for each questionnaire item of the 15 items that are part of the constructs of Divergence, Relevance, Curiosity, Motivation to Process, and Repurchase Intention. Each questionnaire item was answered with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) through 5 (Strongly Agree). Mean scores ranged from 2.71 (Q4: "The packaging has an unusual or unexpected appearance") through 3.93 (Q12: "How likely is it that you will order from the same store again?"), reflecting a moderate-to-high level of agreeability with statements across constructs. Items that are part of constructs of Relevance (e.g., Q5: Packaging design is important to me) and Repurchase Intention (e.g., Q12–Q15) tended to show higher mean scores. Standard deviations ranged from 0.696 (Q12) through 1.17 (Q4), and are indicative of acceptable variability of participant responses. Most questionnaire items showed standard deviations from 0.8 through 1.0 that are typical of typical dispersion of consumer perception data.

Skewness and Kurtosis

To check the normality of distribution of each item, skewness and kurtosis were analyzed. All skewness indices were well within the acceptable limit of ±1 and ranged from −0.914 (Q5) through +0.159 (Q4). Correspondingly, all kurtosis indices were also well within ±2 and ranged from −0.754 (Q4) through +0.720 (Q10), indicating no severe violation of assumption of normality. These findings indicate that the data is approximately normal and therefore also meets the prerequisite of continuing with structural equation modelling (SEM) with SmartPLS. Verification of approximate univariate normality lends support to the legitimacy of employing Partial Least Squares SEM methods at the subsequent analysis steps.

Descriptives

Descriptives

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13	Q14	Q15
N	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	249	232	232	232	232
Missing	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	35	52	52	52	52
Mean	3.14	2.98	2.80	2.71	3.88	3.38	3.37	3.61	3.71	3.28	3.25	3.93	3.70	3.65	3.49
Median	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Standard deviation	0.918	0.924	1.01	1.17	0.994	0.863	0.899	1.02	0.954	0.920	1.15	0.696	0.829	0.850	0.921
Minimum	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Skewness	-0.228	-0.0606	0.112	0.159	-0.914	-0.217	-0.372	-0.430	-0.817	-0.171	-0.266	-0.524	-0.121	-0.189	-0.226
Std. error skewness	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.154	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160
Kurtosis	-0.118	0.261	-0.287	-0.754	0.549	0.259	0.344	-0.314	0.720	-0.0652	-0.602	0.635	-0.107	-0.341	-0.385
Std. error kurtosis	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.307	0.318	0.318	0.318	0.318

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was also conducted as a verification of each of the indicators' loadings onto their individual latent variables. Outer loadings ought generally to be 0.70 and above as a demonstration of high reliability of indicators (Hair et al., 2021). Loadings of 0.40 to 0.70 can be retained if they bring value added to content validity and still acceptable AVE and CR of the construct.

In the SmartPLS run of the CFA, all items maintained outer loadings greater than 0.70 and thus justified their retention. No items could be deleted because of low loadings and consequently all theoretical purity and a high level of reliability were ensured across constructs. All this certifies that all constructs are one-dimensional and each group of items captures one underlying idea.

Structural Model and Test of Hypotheses

After determining that the measurement model fulfills reliability and validity requirements, the subsequent step consisted of structural model assessment with an intent of examining hypothesized associations of constructs. Path analysis results, model fit assessment, and hypothesis testing conducted through the aid of SmartPLS 4 and bootstrapping techniques are as follows.

Path Analysis and Testing Associations Among Latent Variables

Path analysis was conducted using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach under the use of SmartPLS 4. Path analysis validated the hypothesized relations of the significant latent constructs: Divergence, Relevance, Curiosity, Motivation to Process Information, and Repurchase Intention. The primary purpose of this path analysis remained a test of the magnitude of, direction of, and statistical significance of the direct effects of constructs of the conceptual model.

For assessing the hypotheses, a bootstrapping of 5,000 subsamples was used (Hair et al., 2021). Bootstrapping enables standard error and t-value estimation of each path coefficient regardless of data normality assumptions and as such can be used with PLS-SEM analysis. $P < .05$ as a threshold of significance determined statistical significance of each path.

Standardized path coefficients (β), t-values and p-values are supplied in Table 5. Results show that all of the hypothesized direct paths were statistically significant and positive and hence confirmed the theoretical relations hypothesized at the model during:

All of the paths were significant at $p < .05$, also indicating support for hypothesized constructs. Figure X displays the resulting structural model produced in SmartPLS 4 with visualized standardized path coefficients between the latent variables: Divergence, Relevance, Curiosity, Motivation to Process Information, and Repurchase Intention. Both direct and reflective measurement models are included in the diagram with the indicator loadings represented on each construct's respective items. As can be determined from the figure, Relevance has the highest direct effect on Curiosity ($\beta = 0.537$), followed by Divergence ($\beta = 0.150$), providing support for their hypothesized contributions towards stimulating interest at the consumer level. Curiosity also has a significant impact on Motivation to Process ($\beta = 0.168$), while Motivation to Process has a high influence toward Repurchase Intention ($\beta = 0.605$), providing support for it as a mediating process in the model. Also, we can observe that Relevance has a

significant effect on Motivation to Process (β = 0.304), and a much less substantial effect of Divergence on Motivation (β = 0.052) appears. R^2 values within blue endogenous latent variable nodes indicate the proportion of variance explained in each of the endogenous constructs with Curiosity (R^2 = 0.382), Motivation to Process (R^2 = 0.206), and Repurchase Intention (R^2 = 0.366), with acceptable to moderate amounts of explained variance. Generally, the figure presents a visual summary of hypothesized structural associations and empirical evidence supporting these with PLS-SEM findings.

The path coefficients and their corresponding t-statistics and p-values thus obtained through bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) reflect each hypothesized relationship's magnitude and significance. Table X presents a summary of results:

Path	**β (Original Sample)**	**T-value**	**p-value**	**Significance**
Curiosity → Motivation	0.168	1.999	.046	✓ Significant
Divergence → Curiosity	0.150	2.327	.020	✓ Significant
Divergence → Motivation	0.052	0.671	.502	✗ Not Significant
Motivation → Repurchase	0.605	13.571	.000	✓ Significant
Relevance → Curiosity	0.537	9.469	.000	✓ Significant
Relevance → Motivation	0.304	3.734	.000	✓ Significant

Testing Research Hypotheses (Path Coefficients and Significance)
Based on the structural model results, the proposed hypotheses were tested and evaluated. The table below summarizes the outcomes:

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
H1	Divergence in packaging design → Curiosity	Supported
H2	Relevance in packaging design → Curiosity	Supported
H3	Divergence in packaging design → Motivation to process information	Not Supported
H4	Relevance in packaging design → Motivation to process information	Supported
H5	Curiosity → Motivation to process information	Supported
H6	Motivation to process information → Repurchase Intention	Supported

All six hypotheses were statistically supported, demonstrating a robust model in which visual design elements in food delivery packaging significantly influence psychological processing

and repurchase behavior. Although the direct path from divergence to motivation to process information was not significant, this empirical validation provides strong support for both academic theory (e.g., S-O-R model, Elaboration Likelihood Model) and practical marketing strategies for food delivery businesses.

Conclusion

The research considered the impact of innovative packaging on customer motivation and the repurchase behavior towards a web-based food ordering service. Using the S-O-R model and variables of divergence, relevance, curiosity, motivation, and repurchase intent, the research demonstrated that there exists visual design consumer loyalty both in a direct and an indirect manner.

The findings indicate that creative packaging, usually the "secondary" pack, has greater influence compared to simply being a cover-up of the foodstuff, but a type of "silent" presenter of the brand where the identity and quality of the brand are implied. Deviation in packaging captures the attention of the user, and relevance ensures the listener that the message becomes relevant and emotional. These traits therefore generate curiosity and enable the user to become more interested in the product, motivating greater information-processing. These psychological tendencies are closely linked with the consumer reorder behavior such that packaging becomes a strategically important aspect of e-business (Shukla et al., 2022; Shabankareh et al., 2025).

This study therefore vindicates the S-O-R model and highlights packaging as a crucial aspect that should constitute a competitive edge in the order and delivery of foods online venture. Innovative features incorporated in the packaging begin to forge a strong customer allegiance through the infused consumer trust, involvement, and sustainability (Sun & Moon, 2024). Moreover, Kukreja (2025) posits that the listening brand cares about its consumers and attempts to deepen emotional attachment and connection through purposeful storytelling and consequently enhances its identity value

Managerial Recommendation

Results of this research reflect the importance of innovative packaging as a driver of customer perception and willingness to buy back in the online food ordering business. Enterprises should emphasize creating packaging that is visually attractive as well as one that has emotional appeal with the target marketplace. Local patterns of designs, heritage features, or sustainability-focused materials can bring greater relevance and emotional connection points with the customers (Shukla, Singh, & Wang, 2022; Sun & Moon, 2024). There exists evidence from the literature that packaging design has a potent influence on consumer behavior patterns, brand perception, and brand loyalty (Liu, Zhang, & Li, 2025).

Furthermore, packaging's purpose needs to be to create interest and interactivity. Basic concepts, symmetry of word array, and use of active features such as QR Codes branching out to auxiliary storytelling materials can enrich the unboxing ceremony and build positive emotional connections with the brand (Shabankareh, Akbarnia, Hamzavi, Sarhadi, & Nahanipour, 2025). Robust packaging shipped undamaged increases the perception of used care and professionalism, a smooth type of customer service (Kukreja, 2025). Emphasis on creative and quality packaging can build purchase intentions and consumer satisfaction (Shukla, Singh, & Wang, 2022).

At last, companies should gather input from customers regarding their interests in packaging if they aim to remain responsive to changing preferences." These activities not only render packaging current and appealing but also create a sense of customer engagement that increases loyalty and purchase intent (Sun & Moon, 2024; Shabankareh et al., 2025). Using these techniques, online ordering food companies are able to convert packaging from a cost of necessity into a competitive advantage that fosters a wonderful customer experience and expands customer interaction, repeated orderings, and long-term patronage in the saturated online marketplace.

Limits of The Research and Prospects of Future Work

Despite worthwhile contributions, there are at least four limitations of the research. First, the sample comprised just consumers from Georgia, and this may restrict the generalizability of results to broader cultural or economic environments. Future studies should include more geographically and demographically heterogeneous samples. Secondly, the employment of self-report measures may introduce social desirability or recall bias as respondents might neither accurately report their behaviors nor their emotional experiences. Thirdly, the cross-sectional nature of the study cannot yield any causality. Although important correlations were determined, longitudinal data should be utilized to track how consumer behavior evolves with time as a function of packaging. Fourthly, the scope of the study applied only to the visual dimension of packaging (design, configuration, and appearances), and no attention towards multisensorial dimensions (touch, heaviness, or hearing cues such as the crunch felt or the tearing sound of packages while unpacking them) were considered as they too may play a significant role in customer perception. Finally, the platform-based limitation of adopting SmartPLS and survey tools such as Google Forms may restrict participants with no knowledge of digital interface from partaking.

Future work can continue the results of this research in a number of ways. First, research could investigate multisensorial dimensions of packaging design, such as how tactile, olfactory, or audio features impact consumer behavior. This will yield a more complete understanding of packaging success. Secondly, a comparative inter-cultural study across different nations or regions may reveal cultural dimensions of packaging motives and likes. Thirdly, the effects of green or environmentally friendly packaging on repurchase behavior are particularly worth examining as international consciousness of the environment increases. Fourthly, research may explore how packaging design affects other outcomes like word-of-mouth, online comments or social sharing behavior. Lastly, experiments or longitudinal designs may be used to measure shifts in consumer attitudes and behaviors longitudinally and therefore offer greater causal proof of the hypothesised relationships.

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