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# The Impact of Packaging and Labeling Elements on the Rural Consumers' Purchase Decision for Skincare Products in Bangladesh

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## Abstract

Differences in socio-economic conditions, demographics, and infrastructural variances in the rural markets create substantial variances in the consumption patterns compared with the urban markets. As per a report of the World Bank, about 63 percent of the population resides in Bangladesh's rural areas as it constitutes a bigger market for the consumption of different products. The researchers envision identifying the impact of packaging and labeling elements in the decision-making evaluation for different skincare products. The research exploration comprises of four objectives, i.e., perception and attitude towards packaging and labeling elements for the rural consumers, measuring the relative impact based on the demographical changes, determining the sensitivity towards branding elements and communication portrayed, and the ability in identifying the original skincare products in comparison with the copy products in the rural markets. The researchers conducted surveys in the Mymensingh, Netrokona, Jamalpur, and Sherpur Districts of the greater Mymensingh Division of Bangladesh. A total of 390 responses were selected based on the non-probability sampling frame. The target sample age group was chosen between 13 to 54 years. Researchers developed a questionnaire in combination with close-ended questions along with simple dichotomies. For analyzing the outcomes, the researchers have applied a statistical method of the "Z-test" Technique. The researchers identified that the packaging and labeling of skincare products influence rural consumers' behavior. Different promotional strategies and trade marketing activities are recommended based on the findings, reinforcing the rural consumers' acceptance of skincare products.

**Keywords:** Copy Products, Packaging, Labeling, Rural Markets, Skincare Products, Trade Marketing

## 1. Introduction

Bangladesh, a developing country in South Asia, has an estimated population of 164.6 million, which includes around 63 percent of the total population living in the rural areas (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 2019, The World Bank, 2020). With such a more significant population structure, Bangladesh has been a prominent marketplace for the different marketers to segment, target, and eventually position the different types of consumer-

good offerings. The marketers of various consumer goods with multiple product offerings have seen a more significant potential among the customers to offer and sell the offerings to the urban consumers and the vastly diverse rural Bangladesh's population. Among such categories of consumer goods include the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector of Bangladesh, a significant and one of the most potential product marketing segments for its economy. According to Kotler, Keller, Koshy, & Jha (2014), they have opined that FMCG products are distributed using the Intensive Distribution channels, which refers to distributing the products to as many retail outlets as possible. As the consumers are buying these products frequently and with minimum buying effort, marketers make the products convenient to the consumers by delivering these products to their nearby retail outlets (Kotler, Armstrong, Agnihotri, & Haque, 2010). Therefore, these products sell on the front shelves of the retail outlets. The FMCG products move off the shelves of retail outlets quickly and entail continual replenishment (Law, 2016). Many multinational companies and local manufacturers have served the FMCG sector, supported by a robust distributional network and intense competition among the firms (Dhopatkar, 2011).

The FMCG sector covers household items (toiletries, washing bar soaps, detergents, air fresheners, etc.), personal care products (cosmetics, perfumes, etc.), foods, and beverages (Shamsher, 2014). More than three billion people represent rural markets. They comprise around 40 percent of the world's markets, whose present consumption is projected to be at least four trillion dollars per year (Kashyap, 2016). The FMCG sector in Bangladesh has experienced significant growth and market expansion in the last few years; qualitative and quantitative developments have mounted in the durable consumer goods (Hamid, Akter, & Mazumder, 2008). Bangladesh's rural areas hold a significant measure of the total industry sale generations, making it one of the diverse spheres in the educational attainment, income levels, occupation, socio-cultural factors, psychology, consumption pattern, etc. Thus, Bangladesh's rural markets are considered significant and potential markets for promoting and selling different consumer goods. The rural markets are diverse than urban markets in terms of multiple factors. Hence, different contemporary approaches and market-centered initiatives are necessary for penetrating the rural markets. Based on the market and marketing mix observations, many FMCG companies in Bangladesh are now applying different customer-friendly marketing policies. Attractive communication strategies in the rural markets to make their products acceptable and eventually ensuring their organizations financially profitable. In formulating cosmetic and personal care products, an ancient art, these products originally had ground minerals in an oil or grease. Men primarily used them to exaggerate their features during the battle, conduct tribal ceremonies, and differentiate, unlike tribes or clans, and women in ancient Egypt began to use such cosmetics (Wilmott, Aust, Brockway, & Kulkarni, 2005).

An article published by The United States Food and Drug Administration (U.S. Food & Drug Administration, 2016) stated that certain products that refer to as 'personal care products' are cosmetics. Items include skin moisturizers, perfumes, lipsticks, fingernail polishes, eye and facial makeup preparations, shampoos, permanent waves, hair colors, toothpaste, and deodorants. Skincare, the work of providing maintenance and treatment of the hygienic term of the skin under optimal conditions of sanitation and comfort for or attending to someone or something; "no medical care is included." Consumers can achieve skincare effectiveness through washing, cleansing, bathing, soaps, detergents, oils, etc. In an assortment of disease aspects, therapeutic and protective solutions and ointments are practical. Caring for skin is predominantly significant in various practices, facing sunlight, newborns, and recovering infections (Draeos & Thaman, 2006). The researchers envision skincare products (face cream, face wash, body lotion, talcum powder, and deodorant) for this study.

Previous researches have shown no specific agreement on the overall classification of packaging materials and package elements. There are also disagreements regarding the methods of packaging impact on consumers' purchasing decisions. Some researchers have explored the effects of packaging and its features on the consumers' overall purchase decisions (Underwood, Klein, & Burke, 2001). The packaging is an essential feature of the branding process, as it signifies a vital role in communicating the company's image and unique identity. The packaging design is chosen from the various elements and blended into a holistic strategy to achieve a sensory effect (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). Nowadays, the packaging is considered an essential component in terms of promoting a product. Durable packaging and stimulating aesthetics can pursue the attention of potential customers, especially in rural areas. Packaging appeals to consumers' responsiveness towards a particular brand, increases its brand image, and stimulates consumers' perceptions about a product (Rundh, 2005). According to Walter, Cleff,

& Chu (2013), the consumer brand experience impacts the customer satisfaction level and, therefore, increases the loyalty towards any specific chosen brand. Manufacturers must understand the company's responses to consumer packages (Nancarrow, Wright, & Brace, 1998). The company should plan the packaging that covers some specific elements, such as the packet size, shape, packaging materials, package colors, writing patterns, use of texts, and brand marks for effectual recognition of any brand that the customers desire to purchase usefulness.

According to Walsh and Elsner (2012), certain areas in which the impact of media messages has been verified is in the goods and services markets. Several studies have shown that market experts significantly influence the behaviors of consumers in the market. These experts have market information regarding different products, especially new products in the market. The market experts have significantly influenced consumers' behaviors through mouth-to-mouth communication (Armellini & Villanueva, 2010). Besides, an essential aspect of trade marketing has been portrayed in this research paper. As mentioned by Cespedes (1993), 'Trade Marketing' practices are to integrate sales and marketing objectives and strategies. Trade marketing designs to ensure that the retailer's needs (e.g., in promotional terms) communicated internally by sales personnel are met by the brand marketing mix coordinated by marketing activities.

This research work is the extended version of a preceding research work conducted by the same researchers presented at an international conference. The researchers had shown previous research work in other study locations in Bangladesh. The key objective was to identify the rural consumers' perception of packaging and labeling to select personal care products (Rodrick, Islam, & Zadid, 2017). The current paper incorporates a new dimension of trade marketing activities to identify the decision-making process for selecting and purchasing different skincare products. Moreover, the researchers have identified four essential objectives, which were eventually analyzed and discussed in the report findings. The first objective was to illustrate packaging and labeling influences on rural consumers' perception and attitude towards their purchase decision for skincare products. Secondly, to measure the relative impact of packaging according to the Age, Education, and Average Income Level of rural consumers. Thirdly, to determine the rural consumers' understanding of the sensitivity towards the brand elements, product information, and instructions communicated on the skincare products' packaging. Finally, to identify their aptitude in identifying the original skincare products compared with the copy products available in the rural markets.

## 2. Literature

Lavuri & Sreeramulu (2019) have discussed that personal care products are those items that a purchaser utilizes for increasing his/her motivation. Personal care products include different sorts of refreshing and healthy skin items like powder, cold cream, decency cream, toothpaste, toothbrush, aroma, antiperspirant, hair oil, cleanser, cleanser, and all kind of infant care and radiance care items. People of different age groups regularly use personal care products. The products are deodorants, facial moisturizers, and creams (Wu, Bennett, Ritz, Cassady, & Lee, 2010). Few synthetic compounds are utilized in the assembling of personal care products for different purposes. For instance, parabens are used as additives considering their antimicrobial movement, and phthalates are used as solvents and fixative in scents (Soni, Carabin, & Burdock, 2005). According to a newspaper article (Farhin, 2007), in which she mentioned quoting a statement from the 'State of the Global Islamic Economy Report of 2016-17' that Bangladesh is the sixth largest Muslim cosmetics market. It exhibited that the estimated size of Muslim consumers' cosmetic spending in Bangladesh was \$2.5 billion in 2015. Therefore, in promoting any product, packaging plays a significant role in stimulating consumers' behavior and intention to purchase their desired products. In designing the packages, the manufactures can include essential components such as the color, typography, pictures, shape, size, and materials, which can be effectual for consumer inducements for product's purchase (Sonsino, 1990).

A product's shape plays a decisive role in emerging an image in the consumers' mindset and attitude. It enables the offerings into a prominent uniqueness in identity besides the materials used in packaging, affecting the consumers' perspective and inducing its acceptability (Sauvage, 1996). A study by Raheem, Vishnu, & Ahmed (2014), discussed the appropriateness and rich image content, or the attractive package color used on the package

label brings the consumers a euphoric feeling and emotion. When the package shapes are easy to handle, it contributes to raising the consumers' attention and interest in purchasing the desired products. Further to a study conducted by Underwood, Klein, & Burke (2001) mentioned that the images on packages amplified the products' learning and measured as more positive inducements than verbal descriptions. Color, pictures, and graphical illustrations support a better interest among the younger members before the older family members; simultaneously, it entices those who cannot read the information represented on the product's packages. Therefore, pictures and images increase the shoppers' attention to the brand and reinforce product purchases. The result presented that the images on the product's packages were suitable for private label brands and less tire national brands whose strategic purposes were to expand the consumers' perceptions of the brand. Hine (1995) had identified that individuals experience the color characteristics in the product's packaging at three different levels: the physiological, the cultural, and the associational. The physiological aspect is universal and involuntary (e.g., the color red moves the pulse, while the color green decelerates it down). The cultural involvement relates to visual agreements recognized over time in various societies (e.g., the color black inducing images of wealth and elegance in Europe and the Americas). The associational involvement reflects the color prospects for a particular product category and product due to marketing efforts over time.

A study by Underwood (2003) supports the significance of pack size in the visibility of packaging and information display. Recent trends have shown that the consumers for the non-durable products are attracted to the packaging, which offers in small-sized packs, especially for the traditional consumer brands available at the marketplace. According to Bone & France (2001), it is evident that the graphical component of the package impacts consumer beliefs even when the verbal factor of the package provides more accurate and precise product attribute information to the customers. The research analysis presented that the label's graphical component could suggestively influence the attribute beliefs and purchase purposes even when the package's verbal part was held continuously and provided accurate product attribute information. Underwood (2003), in his research, has also highlighted that unlike the communication of positioning conducted through advertising, the packaging allows positioning to be transferred live to its prospective consumers much more promptly.

According to Keller, Parameswaran, & Jacob (2015), 'Packaging' is the term for designing and producing containers or wrappers for a product. From the manufacturers' and consumers' viewpoint, packaging must achieve numerous purposes: to identify the brand, convey descriptive and persuasive information, facilitate product transportation and protection, assist in at-home storage, and aid in product consumption. Marketers choose the aesthetic and functional components of packaging appropriately to comprehend the marketing objectives and achieve the consumers' needs more accurately. Aesthetic resemblances administer a package's size and shape, material, color, text, and graphics. Moreover, innovations in printing developments now permit eye-catching and attractive graphics that convey decorative and colorful messages on the package at the "moment of truth"—the point of purchase, eventually increases consumers' attractiveness towards the purchase and use of a brand and its product offerings in the marketplace. Typically, the primary purpose of the package was to hold and protect the product. Still, in recent times, packaging has become an imperative marketing tool to promote the product and the brand. The labels and logos range from modest tags attached to products to complex graphics that are part of the packaging. Thus, a product's label identifies the product or brand and defines multiple features about the product, and provides crucial information about the manufacturer, the location of the manufacturing unit, the manufacturing, and the expiry dates, the product's ingredients, the use directions, and the measures to use it safely. Along with these features, the label also supports to endorse the brand and engage customers. Many labels have become a significant component in broader marketing campaigns (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018).

The influence of packaging and labeling aspects and the elements can affect the consumers' purchase decision. Bassin (1988) has highlighted five essential areas in packaging that deliver value addition to the consumers; these are brand identification, advertisement at the point-of-sale, facilitating the consumers' handling the products, enhancing home storage facilities, and adding value by providing task assistance. When such factors impact consumers, it directly influences their purchase and consumption behavior. Another study projected an evident framework to direct the plan of operative communication in the product's packaging. Underwood & Ozanne (1998) suggested that a set of norms (truthfulness, sincerity, comprehensibility, legitimacy) could direct the

compound task of designing good product packaging, and thus creates an optimistic view among the customers for choosing and purchasing their desired products from the markets.

The specific challenges that the manufacturers of skincare products face when they market and distribute their products in the rural markets are the general issues related to fake or counterfeit products available at the retail outlets. The prominent brand manufacturers and their product offerings face such complications in meeting the locally sold counterfeit products. Such a situation arises due to limitations in abridged penetration and insufficient availability of the branded products in many rural locations across Bangladesh. Thus, the local/regional manufacturers take this opportunity to use the original and genuine brands' names and make a counterfeit version of the product offerings to be retailed through the rural outlets. The original brand manufacturer sometimes cannot penetrate these rural markets and eventually deprived of selling the original product offerings to prospective customers, which results in generating fewer profits from the specific markets. Simultaneously, local/regional manufacturers earn more significant revenue by forging, misleading, or deceiving the original manufacturers' brands and products. Research by Lehman & Phelps (2005) defines that the copy or imitation of something as a carefully planned strategy, which is promised as factual and genuine to cheat another, is identified as a counterfeit product.

Kashyap (2016) described counterfeit or fake products into three different classifications: look-alikes, spell-alikes, and duplicates. When examining the look-alikes, it is evident that the color scheme and the package design cautiously resemble that of a popular and recognized brand. The label carries a different name and identity of the manufacturer. While exploring the identity of the spell-alikes, it is apparent that the colors and package designs are identical to that of the original brand; the brand name is precisely and cleverly misspelled. Many rural consumers, especially the consumers who cannot read and understand any foreign languages mentioned on the product's label, will be deceived into purchasing such counterfeit products. The biggest challenge that rural consumers face when they buy duplicate products. Duplicate products are the exact imitations of the original brands, such as the color scheme, package design, name on the wrapper, etc. The product details, such as the ingredients, brand name, manufacturer's name, etc., are also precise on the duplicate products. The price charged on the duplicate products is the same as the price of the original products. Thus, consumers are deceived through such false product offerings available at the rural markets. Rural consumers, when unaware of the consumption of these counterfeit or fake products, may lead to having a lowered product and brand belief towards the genuine original products, as they are not always able to differentiate between the original and copy products.

Manjunatha (2004) had emphasized that rural people's consumption pattern has been increasing in recent years. The rural markets are gradually evolving in terms of greater product acceptance and usage regularly. As rural consumers are now having access to different media and observing the urban lifestyle, they want to obtain urban life patterns in their purchasing behavior. Thus, reflected in their buying choices and products' acceptance in their daily life. There has been a substantial increase in product offerings of different skincare products in Bangladesh's rural markets. The rural consumers are readily consuming such products for themselves and their immediate family members.

### **3. Methodology**

The researchers had developed a structured questionnaire with multiple-choice questions to gather preliminary information from rural consumers and retailers. The rural inhabitants were interviewed by one-to-one home visits, focus group discussions, and through mails. The researchers surveyed the selected localities in the greater Mymensingh Division, covering the Netrokona, Jamalpur, and Sherpur Districts, along with the Mymensingh District's representative areas. These three districts are located at both the eastern (Netrokona) and western (Sherpur, and Jamalpur) end of Mymensingh's Divisional town, with distinctive socio-cultural and economic environments. The researchers initially distributed the questionnaire to 507 potential respondents based on the non-probability sampling frame. A total of 429 respondents (85 percent) participated in the survey and returned the filled questionnaire with their independent opinions. After a comprehensive screening process, the researchers found that a total of 390 responses (91 percent) have correctly filled the given questionnaire with all the required fields required for the survey analysis.

The researchers mostly relied on such a sampling frame due to the feasibility, cost minimization, time constraints, identifying the limited objectives, and generalization. Non-probability sampling has different classifications for ensuring the sampling frame properly. In this research paper, the researchers intended the quota sampling structure, where the population clustered into mutually exclusive subgroups.

The accepted sample size of 390 has been determined as per the sample size determination theory by Krejcie & Morgan (1970). According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) research findings, if the population size is above 100,000, then the sample size should be at least 384 to attain significant results. Researchers selected the target group based on the Age ranges between '13 to 54' and classified in the range interval of 6 years. The questionnaire was a combination of close-ended questions along with simple dichotomies. The researchers applied a statistical method of the 'Z-test' technique for analyzing the study outcomes to interpret the results. A 'Z-test' technique is a statistical test used to determine whether two population means are dissimilar, the variances identified, and the large sample size. The 'Z-test' Technique is a widely accepted model that is used for hypothesis testing.

#### 4. Analysis and Discussion

To study the impact of the packaging and labeling elements of the different skincare products and assess the rural consumers' behavior pattern. The consumers were divided into three broad clusters based on their socio-economic characteristics such as Age, Level of Education, and Average Monthly Income components. All the components were divided into two broad groups. For the 'Age' component, 'Group-1' was classified from ranges '13 to 40', and subsequently, the Age ranges from '41 to 54' were classified into 'Group-2'. Researchers categorized one group from 'No Educational Attainment to Primary Level (up to the 5<sup>th</sup> standard) for interpreting the 'Educational' perception. Researchers categorized another group from the 'High School' (6<sup>th</sup> standard) up to the Masters' Level or with Vocational Educational' attainment degrees.

Finally, to figure out the significance of the average Income Level was further divided into two sets. One group is for the income earners up to Bangladesh Taka (BDT) 15,000/-, another group from Bangladesh Taka (BDT) 15,001/- to BDT 30,000/-. Researchers tested three different hypotheses by using the "Z-test" table to achieve a substantial result. How much these indicators influence rural consumers' buying behavior in terms of purchasing skincare products. Again, as the questionnaire contains both qualitative and quantitative natured questions, and to simplify these issues, it has been categorized into 'Positive' or 'Negative' Responses. Responses that support the statement are counted as 'Positive' Responses, whereas the responses which opposed the statement were counted as 'Negative' Responses. It is to note that the option 'Sometimes' was also counted as 'Positive' Responses. The researchers measured the questions in simple dichotomies containing valuable insights of the respondents as 'Positive' Responses.

##### Hypothesis: 1

Rural Consumers' 'Age' does not influence purchasing behavior by the packaging and labeling elements of different skincare products.

Table 1: Distribution of the Respondents' Responses based on the 'Age'

Group	Age	Number of Respondents	Positive Responses	Negative Responses
Group-1	13-19	42	30	12
	20-26	87	69	18
	27-33	73	68	5
	34-40	81	70	11
<b>Total (G1)</b>		<b>283</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>46</b>
Group- 2	41-47	55	33	22
	48-54	52	27	25
<b>Total (G2)</b>		<b>107</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Grand Total (G1+G2)</b>		<b>390</b>	<b>297</b>	<b>93</b>

**Hypothesis: 2**

The Level of Education of rural consumers does not influence the packaging and labeling elements of the different skincare products.

Table 2: Distribution of the Respondents' Responses based on the 'Education' Attainment

Group	Number of Respondents	Positive Responses	Negative Responses
No Educational Attainment-Primary	110	81	29
High School to Masters/Vocational	280	165	115
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>144</b>

**Hypothesis: 3**

The average level of rural consumers' monthly income does not influence their preferences on the packaging of different personal care products.

Table 3: Distribution of the Respondents Responses based on the Average Monthly Income

Average Monthly Income	Number of Respondents	Positive Responses	Negative Responses
Up to BDT 15,000/-	169	125	44
BDT-15,001/ - BDT-30,000/-	221	140	81
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>125</b>

[USD 1= BDT 84.45 at the time of the survey]

For all three hypotheses, the Null Hypothesis is,  $H_0: \pi_1 = \pi_2$

If not a true alternative Hypothesis,  $H_1: \pi_1 \neq \pi_2$  or  $\pi_1 > \pi_2$

N1 = Population Group: 1

X1 = Positive Responses: 1

$$\therefore P(1) = X(1) / N(1)$$

Again,

N2= Population Group: 2

X2= Positive Responses: 2

$$\therefore P(2) = X(2) / N(2)$$

Hence,

$$P = (N1P1 + N2P2) / (N1 + N2)$$

$$= (X1 + X2) / (N1 + N2)$$

**“Z-Test Technique”**

$$Z = \frac{P1 - P2}{\sqrt{\{P(1-P) (1/N1 + 1/N2)\}}}$$

**‘Z-Test Technique’ Testing for Hypothesis-1**

$$N1 = 283; X1 = 237 \quad P1 = X1/N1 = 0.837$$

$$N2 = 107; X2 = 60 \quad P2 = X2/N2 = 0.561$$

$$P = (X1 + X2) / (N1 + N2)$$

$$= (237 + 60) / (283 + 107)$$

$$= 297 / 390$$

$$= 0.762$$



$$\begin{aligned}
 Z &= P1 - P2 / \sqrt{\{P(1-P) (1/N1 + 1/N2)\}} \\
 &= 0.837 - 0.561 / \sqrt{0.762 (1 - 0.762) (1/283 + 1/107)} \\
 &= 0.276 / \sqrt{0.762 (0.238) (0.013)} \\
 &= 0.276 / 0.049 \\
 \mathbf{Z (1) = 5.63}
 \end{aligned}$$

#### 'Z Test Technique' Testing for Hypothesis-2

$$\begin{aligned}
 N1 &= 110; X1 = 81 & P1 &= X1/N1 = 0.736 \\
 N2 &= 280; X2 = 165 & P2 &= X2/N2 = 0.589 \\
 P &= X1+X2/N1+N2 \\
 &= (81+165) / (110+280) \\
 &= 246 / 390 \\
 &= 0.631
 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 Z &= P1 - P2 / \sqrt{\{P(1-P) (1/N1 + 1/N2)\}} \\
 &= 0.736 - 0.589 / \sqrt{0.631 (1 - 0.631) (1/110 + 1/280)} \\
 &= 0.147 / \sqrt{0.631 (0.369) (0.013)} \\
 &= 0.147 / 0.055 \\
 \mathbf{Z (2) = 2.67}
 \end{aligned}$$

#### 'Z Test Technique' Testing for Hypothesis-3

$$\begin{aligned}
 N1 &= 169; X1 = 125 & P1 &= X1/N1 = 0.740 \\
 N2 &= 221; X2 = 140 & P2 &= X2/N2 = 0.633 \\
 P &= X1+X2/N1+N2 \\
 &= (125+140) / (169+221) \\
 &= 265 / 390 \\
 &= 0.680
 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 Z &= P1 - P2 / \sqrt{\{P(1-P) (1/N1 + 1/N2)\}} \\
 &= 0.740 - 0.633 / \sqrt{0.680 (1 - 0.680) (1/169 + 1/221)} \\
 &= 0.107 / \sqrt{0.680 (0.32) (0.010)} \\
 &= 0.107 / 0.047 \\
 \mathbf{Z (3) = 2.28}
 \end{aligned}$$

Z's critical value at  $\alpha = 5$  percent (0.05) level of significance  $|z_{cal 0.025}| = 1.96$  is the critical value. The calculated value  $|z_{cal}| > |z_{cal 0.025}|$  for all three cases calculated that the Null Hypothesis had been rejected. The alternative Hypothesis is accepted; therefore, the test is significant.

As this is a right-tailed test ( $H: \pi > \pi_2$ ) since  $z \geq z_{\alpha}$ , then the Null Hypothesis will be rejected.

Based on the 'Z-test' Technique, the result for the Hypothesis (s) stands as-

<b>Hypothesis-1</b>	<b>5.63</b>
<b>Hypothesis-2</b>	<b>2.67</b>
<b>Hypothesis-3</b>	<b>2.28</b>

As a result, the individual Hypothesis is more than 1.96. So, the alternative Hypothesis is accepted, which stands:

**H<sub>0</sub>:  $\pi_1 \neq \pi_2$  or  $\pi_1 > \pi_2$**

Therefore, all three mentioned indicators, such as Age, Education, and Average Monthly Income of rural consumers, show a strong positive influence on their purchase decisions when buying different skincare products.

- From the study, the researchers have found that packaging strongly influences the purchasing behavior of rural consumers. The research findings evaluated that mostly the 'Generation Y' (born in-between 1978-1994) or the 'Post-Millennials' (born in-between 1996 and 2010); the age bases '13-26' are

attracted by the packaging of a product. The age group ranges from '27-40' consider packaging as a layer of protection. Finally, the last age group, '41-54,' believes that packaging is convenient in carrying the product. Through in-detailed discussions, the researchers have identified that rural consumers do not have comprehensive knowledge regarding the 'eco-friendly' packaging; the fact which allures them is that demolishing polythene packages can only protect the environment. They are unaware of the proper disposal of the packages or containers, which are considered harmful to the environment.

- Based on the responses, rural consumers' top preference is the 'Size' of the packaging. They have a prevailing perception that the greater size of the product develops a sense of quality in their mind, and the shape of the packaging considers as a second preference. The majority of rural women and young adults prefer such features on the product's shape. The in-depth discussions found that the inclination towards transparent packages motivates them towards their purchase action, as they can see the actual product's quantity and physical condition. Moreover, the rural consumers also prefer the packages' aesthetic designs and patterns; sometimes, they keep the empty packets by placing them in any prominent place of their home, easily seen by the others. It is, therefore, considered as a sense of belonging and pride among the same community residents.
- The majority of the respondents do not provide appropriate attention to the product label's instructions. The researchers identified that consumers do not always follow the label's instructions due to varied reasons through the research analysis. In such cases of purchasing different skincare products, they are aware of their frequent usages. Therefore, every time, they do not need to observe and read the mentioned information in detail. Secondly, if the brand is novel, then the other family members, especially the younger family members, help clarify products' usage. Finally, suppose the consumers do not know about the appropriate quantity to apply/use or any other product usage related issues. In that case, they do it by their intuition using their judgment and discretion. When a manufacturer launches a new product in the market, they seek out the retailer's assistance in understanding its proper usage. The rural retailers are often considered a 'Trustworthy' source of the products' information. Therefore, the manufacturers of different skincare products apply the 'Affiliative Selling' approach where there are a friendship and trustworthy relationship between the salesperson/retailer and the individual customer. Therefore, the seller becomes the customer's advisor for making the ultimate product choice (Tanner, Honeycutt, & Erffmeyer, 2009).
- A significant portion of the rural consumers does not read the 'Dates' mentioned on the product's label, such as manufacturing date, best date of usage, expiry date at the time of purchase. It is apparent to a large portion of the female respondents that they are not even aware that the different skincare products even contain an expiry date on the product's label. Moreover, few respondents portrayed that the product's label dates are not visible and readable sometimes. Generally, the younger family members, those who are school going, observe the products' imprinted details out of curiosity. They instantly inform the purchasers about the expiry date issues regarding the products. Therefore, it is evident that rural consumers strongly rely on the retailers' delegation for any information regarding the purchased skincare products' expiry date issues.
- Rural consumers prefer mini packets/sachets. Firstly, they believe they receive the best value for money through such package offerings. Also, most consumers believe that the availability of smaller packet sizes in rural markets eventually minimizes the products' misuse. The rural consumers can buy the smaller package versions, which are cost-effective to purchase and frequently used.
- The rural consumers come to know about the authenticity of a product from the rural retailers' support. The rural retailers maintain essential information about the products and need to share such information with the consumers. Secondly, by comparing the price with the actual products, rural consumers can identify whether the products are genuine. Due to varied purposes, rural consumers visit nearby towns and cities. On such visits, they can differentiate the actual products from the copy products.
- Moreover, it is not always possible for rural females in such a situation. They do not always get the opportunity to compare prices between the offerings available from the nearby towns/cities with rural areas from which they reside. A significant portion of the consumers can identify the differences by reading the manufacturer's name. Only 8 percent of the respondents mentioned that they could locate the copy products after their product usage compared to the original products used earlier. Researchers identified it from the findings; rural consumers find certain complications to distinguish the copy products

from the original products, for those who have not once used genuine original products.

- Around 39 percent of the rural consumers would keep using the copy products despite knowing that it is not an original and genuine product. Due to the multiple factors, sometimes due to the authentic original products' unavailability, the rural consumers would retain themselves using the copy products, which are readily available at the retail outlets in their proximity. Improper distribution of the actual products in the remote areas leads them to make such purchase decisions. Numerous renowned branded products are not always available in rural retail outlets. Thus, even though the consumers desire to use the original and genuine products, due to the brand's unavailability, they are deprived of authentic branded products.
- Furthermore, the researchers also observed whether rural consumers are satisfied with using copy products. They are merely happy with the subjected benefits they had acquired when compared to their costs. Therefore, it was evident that rural consumers are more concerned about the 'Affordability' factor, eventually reinforcing them to use the copy products available at rural retail outlets. Even though they are relatively aware that they are using the copy products, they regularly purchase the copy products from their nearby outlets due to the cost-effectiveness factor in the product's consumption.
- To identify the rural consumers' expectations regarding any additional components or factors, they prefer to view their desired skincare products' package labels. Around 33 percent of the rural consumers stated that they want to see the images of different renowned characters such as television celebrities, film actors, cricketers, national heroes, etc., on the product's label. A significant portion of the respondents mentioned in favor of the moral messages from the experts and professionals. The middle-aged and the senior segment customers desire to see moral messages that they believe will encourage the young generation for good deeds and righteousness in their daily life. As skincare products are sensitive, experts' views and suggestions and photographs on the product's label are useful to make them aware. The rural consumers would be captivated with such inspirational communication approaches undertaken by the manufacturers of different skincare products.
- One of the very insightful investigations for the researchers was to identify the media access to rural consumers. To get a comprehensive idea about the thinking process regarding packaging and labeling aspects, and at the same time to get a sense of the further recommendations for the marketers. The researchers observed that the rural retailers' 'Word-of-Mouth' communication medium impacts the consumers while making any product purchase decision. As rural consumers firmly believe that the retailers have direct correspondence and communication with the company agents and distributors, they will be well informed about any product-related issues and thus possess detailed insights about the product offerings. For such circumstances, rural consumers have developed an embedded reliance upon the retailers and consider them an imperative product information source. Moreover, as the retailer-customer resides from the same locality and knows each other personally, the customers' patronage in belongingness elevates the belief that the rural retailers will not deceive them with any copy or sub-standard products.
- Further to the researcher's observation, with the advancement in electrification in Bangladesh's rural areas and raising the rural consumers' affordability, they can now consume different electronic home appliances. Among such products is the consumption of Color Television, through which the rural consumers can view and get aware of the different skincare products. As the manufacturers of different skincare products are profoundly promoting their products by the television commercials broadcasted on the Local and International Television Channels, this increases the exposure towards the usage and availability of the different skincare brands in the local market. Consequently, such amplified exposure to the media and brands leads the consumers to try and adapt new and varied skincare products. Such a media exposure level was not evident in the past years, considering that still in rural areas, Generation X (people born between 1965-1977) listens to different radio advertisements. Young adults and educated rural consumers now have direct access to the Internet through smartphones in rural villages and towns. Through such digital platforms and Internet connectivity, many rural consumers have been exposed to usage benefits and brands' availability of the different skincare products in the Bangladesh market. As internet penetration, mostly in rural areas, had low penetration until recent years, the online platform is progressively getting widespread among the mass people. The users are getting adapted to the usage and benefits of online and digital media.

## 5. Recommendations

Based on the findings mentioned above, the researchers would like to suggest a few recommendations which can be implemented by the marketers for further development in this category:

- The skincare products' manufacturer should design the packages so that the product contents can be easily visible from the outside. As the rural consumers are attracted and gain the self-assurance to purchase skincare products by observing the external product design and outlook and the products' internal contents from the outside; therefore, increasing their affinity towards the product. Thus packaging should be made transparent. Also, to ensure the consumers' fascinations, a colorful and lucrative packet design having the celebrity images on the product's label can genuinely enhance the consumers' recognition in purchasing their desired skincare products from the rural retail outlets.
- Manufacturers should implement powerful marketing strategies for remote rural areas and localities with multiple and diverse sales and distribution channels for better and effective product availability. Such actions will reinforce the customers to purchase the products at ease and use them as per the requirement. It is perceived that the printed information about the manufacturer, manufacturing and expiry dates, listed price, and other visual illustrations sometimes get faded due to extensive transportation and delivery scratches. The mentioned details and unique holograms provided with proper color coding and in more vivid forms. It does not get easily worn-out, and rural consumers can read the given information appropriately. Simultaneously, the local language or sales instructions in showcasing and merchandising products in the outlets can be made more useful for the diverse rural markets.
- Nowadays, monitoring the sales and marketing of the different copy products in terms of brand name, package and label designs, etc., is a primary concern for marketers, especially in the rural markets. Due to the company's sales supervisors or representative's infrequent store visits, slow delivery process, and supply chain arrangement losses, the original manufacturers cannot adequately contact the sales point. For such a crucial reason, the local or regional companies' unethical practices are taking such an opportunity to market their copy products to rural consumers. Sometimes, they make the salespersons/retailers biased by offering attractive sales commissions and other incentives to pursue rural consumers to purchase their products. The original manufacturers need to ensure more effective sales and distribution networks and regular market follow-ups in rural areas to eradicate this problem. Therefore, the copy products are eventually diluting the original brands of the different skincare products, which is considered a significant threat to the original brand manufacturers. Such initiatives may include the sales representatives to visit the retail outlets at least once every fifteen days for the fresh new stocks to be replenished on the retailers' shelves and thus to make more prominence of the original and genuine skincare products. Regular and constant monitoring of the company's sales representatives can lower the risk of facing the copy products' threats in rural areas.
- For catering to the need of the rural consumers, the marketing of mini-packs or sachets might be the most convenient size options, as the smaller pack sizes will easily adjust with their daily or weekly buying capacity for the multiple family members' diversified requirements. Consequently, marketers should enhance the products' quality and value proposition based on rural consumers' preferences to afford and use their desired products quickly.
- As rural consumers are price-sensitive, the manufacturers must establish sensible pricing points related to the brand and product positioning. For the significant launch of new skincare products in the rural markets, the 'Penetration Pricing' strategy can be more productive to attract rural customers quickly. However, the 'Bundle Product Pricing' strategy can also be considered an effective pricing strategy to attract rural consumers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). This concept is also instrumental in utilizing the old stocks or for those not sold as a single piece to clear off the rural retail shelves within the shortest possible time frame.
- Rural Retailers are one of the pivotal marketing intermediaries in evolving the business into their markets. They are selling the products and work as a vital source of information in assisting the rural consumers towards product selection and consumption. Therefore, companies should implement different prolific promotional strategies to entice these rural retailers and persuade them by providing various trade allowances and benefits to promote the original brands to rural consumers. Introducing the 'Quantity Purchase Scheme' (QPS) might be a possible solution to ensure the original products' presence in rural

outlets. The attractive volume incentives or striking sales schemes would motivate the retailers to invest more in keeping and selling the original products' stocks.

- In the rural markets, the packaging and labeling elements of different skincare products are sometimes considered more compelling than the general mass advertisements. It can set a strong brand identification and have a superior positioning in the consumers' minds. According to rural consumers' common psychology, they believe in what they visually see and are not always attracted to the marketers' traditional branding and communication strategies. Live product demonstration sessions, customer engagement programs, free trial campaigns, and other programs induced the marketers are very much beneficial in pursuing the consumers' interest and eventually to promote the products. Therefore, the skincare products' marketers can implement diverse evocative market activation programs to bring the rural consumers and the retail channel members in a common platform. Such initiatives can enhance their mutual agreements and improve customer relationship management practices between the parties.
- Another essential practice to attract rural consumers is through creating 'Opinion Leaders' in rural communities. An opinion leader is a person whose words and actions informally impact others' efforts or attitudes (Kashyap, 2016). In rural schools or colleges, the skincare products' manufacturers can assign campus ambassadors and organizing experience sharing sessions, which can encourage product consumption and promote the usage benefits among the students or the youth community. On different academic and cultural observances, sponsoring such events would enable the manufacturers to arrange various consumer hands-on feel engagements, which will develop credibility among the consumers regarding the skincare products' usage benefits. On such occasions, manufacturers should envision selecting their known and trustworthy faces such as the local school principals, renowned teachers, local sportspeople, community leaders, and professional experts as their spokespersons to disseminate the proper use of the products.
- Another good practice to increase the likeability and promote the products by applying alternative trade marketing activities. Deploying skilled or semi-skilled unemployed rural youths and women for the door-to-door marketing of the products can be an appropriate strategy to receive its highest promotional coverage to the rural consumers. Simultaneously, society is benefitted as the unemployment rate reduces, and people have a substantial income source. The rural youths and the women benefits as such approaches support their livelihood and thus provides a source of income for their family members residing in the rural areas. Among such a popular model in Bangladesh is the concept of the "JITA Bangladesh – A CARE Social Business" model, one of the social project initiatives by CARE in Bangladesh. The project purposes of generating sufficient income for marginalized rural women by establishing key supply-chain associations and developing informal market systems. Utilizing rural women as independent sales agents, JITA supports linking the commercial manufacturers to the under-served customers of the economic pyramid (BoP) segment with enhanced quality health, hygiene, and nutrition products (JITA Bangladesh, 2020). These Rural Salespeople (RSPs) function on door-to-door or store-based selling of different FMCG and other health-related products. They directly interact with other rural women and targeted customer groups with their intended sales approaches. Based on such a basis, the consumers' queries related to the product's usage and brand's information can be answered by these RSPs. Eventually, they will be making spot sales to the prospective customers of skincare and other frequently purchased products.

The researchers can finally conclude the analysis of the data and findings by engulfing the study's objectives. The rural consumers' perception towards packaging and labeling elements are identified and evaluated by the rural consumers' decision-making procedure from the data analysis. The rural consumers from the more significant Mymensingh Division perceive packaging as an essential element of protection simultaneously; they perceive packaging and labeling to promote the product. Packaging and labeling elements of the products induce the rural consumers to be delighted with the new shape and the packages' color. The product's reliability is derived from the packaging of a product and influences the rural consumers to try the product offerings sold in the rural markets.

## 6. Conclusion

Future researches should incorporate other aspects of packaging, such as encompassing specific shapes and sizes that the consumers prefer for which product category. It can be mentioned that product category wise, rural consumers' preferences regarding their desired shape and size will contrast. The researchers can focus on a detailed understanding of consumers' preferences towards packaging with different product categories and incorporate how packaging helps consumers recall and recognize a brand under multiple circumstances. A significant number of scopes to research on the products' packaging and labeling aspects are yet unexplored and possess a more substantial dimension for the marketers to explore from Bangladesh's rural markets.

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