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Designing to Attract in an Emerging Market: Applying Behavioural Reasoning Theory to South African Consumer Reactions to an Ultra-High Temperature Milk Product Line Extension

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ABSTRACT

In the ultra-high temperature (UHT) milk category, parent brands introduce line extensions as innovative product designs to address the competitiveness in the market. However, not knowing if consumers will purchase the product results in uncertainty for the product design and marketing team. Using the behavioural reasoning theory, the purpose of this study was to explore South African consumers' reasons for purchasing a UHT line extension that was designed to include the word 'enriched' and other extrinsic line extension attributes comprising product packaging design, country of origin and price. An exploratory-descriptive qualitative study was conducted using six focus groups involving milk consumers from a South African university. Three behavioural approaches (i.e. curiously cautious, unconditional and habitual) emerged, with differentiating characteristics of the behaviour towards the UHT line extension. Each extrinsic product attribute was characterised by specific behavioural acts that positively or negatively influenced the reasons for purchasing the UHT line extension. The behavioural reasoning theory was useful in explaining the linkage between the reasons for or against purchasing a UHT line extension product and the intended behaviour, which contributes to a better understanding of consumers' approaches to a UHT line extension. Findings can assist food designers and marketers in designing a UHT line extension that resonates with consumers.

JEL classification: I12, M30, M31, N37

Keywords: UHT milk, line extension, product design, behavioural reasoning theory, extrinsic attributes, purchasing intention

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purchasing of ultra-high temperature (UHT) milk by South African consumers in an emerging market context has continued to increase, surpassing fresh milk sales and demand in 2020 (Le Roux et al., 2020) and demonstrating a 22% increase during March 2020 that was credited to consumer stockpiling in response to COVID-19 (South African Dairy, 2020). Due to the weak cold-storage and cold-chain infrastructure in South Africa, consumer preference for UHT milk is attributed to a longer storage period, the momentum of urbanisation in the country and the use of UHT milk in school feeding programmes across South Africa (Persistence Market Research, 2015). As a result, food companies are challenged to stay competitive and to sustain market share, the achievement of which lies in innovative food product design.

A line extension signifies the introduction of an innovative product from the same product category under a familiar parent brand (Shah, 2018). The purpose of a line extension is to reach a new and diverse consumer base by enticing consumers with new product options, thereby reinvigorating a product line with the intention of increasing profits and adding value to the existing brand. A line extension can include minor product changes in function, packaging and size (Yoshioka-Kobayashi et al., 2020) or the introduction of a healthier product (Hanson & Yun, 2018). Through the introduction of a line extension product, consumers can compare the existing product with the new line extension to make more informed decisions about whether to purchase the line extension or to continue to purchase the existing and familiar product. A line extension may furthermore attract attention from new consumers who may not be familiar with the existing product, thus expanding the consumer base of product users of a specific product category. It is well established that extrinsic product attributes, in general, contribute to consumers liking or disliking a product. During the design and development of a line extension, various extrinsic product attributes can be introduced to differentiate the new product from existing products in the category. For this study, the word ‘enriched’, the country of origin (COO), the price and the product packaging design were considered in relation to a UHT milk line extension. Without a clear understanding of how consumers would behave towards a newly designed line extension, its introduction could result in an uninteresting product that fails to resonate with consumers, potentially leading to product launch failure and a decrease in market share for that product category. It was therefore necessary to determine how consumers would approach a new UHT line extension to understand their opinion of the new product better based on them explaining their approach to the product, and to establish the role of extrinsic product attributes in influencing the purchase of a new line extension.

To understand South African consumer reaction and behaviour better within the specific context of a UHT milk line extension, the behavioural reasoning theory (BRT) was used as the theoretical approach to this study. According to Claudy and Peterson (2015), as a framework, BRT has been proven valuable to explain behaviour choices. As a result, BRT has been used in different contexts (Sahu et al., 2020) with limited food-related studies applying BRT. During the systematic literature review on BRT by Sahu et al. (2020), 23 studies were identified that had used BRT, of which the review only identified Ryan and Casidy’s (2018) study on organic food purchases. Tandon et al. (2020) have lately added to this body of literature on BRT and organic food research. Kumar et al. (2021) has recently added the application of BRT on local food-related research. These studies have not been conducted in an emerging market context such as South Africa. Furthermore, most BRT research to date has applied a *quantitative* methodology (Sahu et al., 2020), resulting in numerous studies offering similar findings and confirmation of hypothesis testing of the components of the BRT within different contexts. This is not the case in *qualitative* studies employing approaches like interviews or focus group data gathering where the underpinnings of the BRT are used to understand *behaviour* within a particular context. Subsequently, an inductive approach to the use of BRT is used to explain the behaviour within

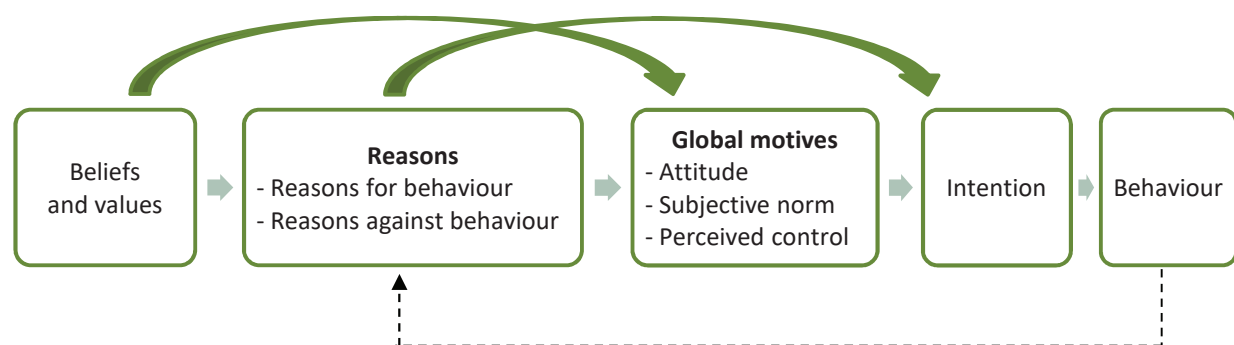
the components of the BRT. Therefore, Sahu et al.'s (2020) suggestion that qualitative studies should be employed alongside the BRT to understand consumer behaviour better fits well within the qualitative approach and an inductive use of BRT to explain behaviour. In Mitrofanova et al.'s (2021) research, as following a qualitative approach, albeit in relation to orthorexia nervosa, and Diddi et al.'s (2019) qualitative research on young adult consumers' sustainable clothing consumption, an intention-behaviour gap was subsequently identified to guide the application of the BRT in this qualitative research. Thus, following the framework of these two studies, the current study introduced the use of the BRT for a qualitative exploration of the reasons for and against purchasing a UHT line extension within an emerging market context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Approach to the Study

According to Westaby (2005), the reasons that individuals offer constitute specific cognitions that are used to make decisions with confidence and that also explain their behaviour. The BRT offers a framework that considers context-specific reasons for and against the behaviour (Westaby, 2005). This is important since reasons against portraying the behaviour have received less attention (Ozaki & Sevastyanova, 2011). Therefore, this study explored the reasons for and against purchasing a UHT line extension to determine consumers' decision-making behaviour. Importantly, reasons form the linkages between individual beliefs, global motives (attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control), intention (to purchase or not to purchase) and behaviour (action) (Westaby, 2005) (see Figure 1). This stems from the fact that the BRT is part of the group of behavioural intention theories that expands on the theory of planned behaviour (Sahu et al., 2020) and assumes that individuals' reasons influence their global motives and intentions.

Figure 1
Behavioural reasoning theory (Westaby, 2005)



Westaby (2005) proposes that reasons do not function in isolation from individual beliefs and values. Rather, the reasons that individuals offer to influence and sustain their behaviour result from the processing of their beliefs and values. Beliefs, therefore, represent the opinions or associated meanings that are consciously considered at any given time, resulting in the salient beliefs held by consumers. Thus, the reasons that consumers give in explaining their behaviour for accepting or not accepting a new UHT line extension may be to justify their beliefs about the line extension. The BRT also proposes that beliefs affect global motives, in some instances, without being fully mediated or activated through reasons (Westaby, 2005), which in turn influences the intention to purchase or not to purchase a new product. Intention theories suggest that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control, which facilitate a person's beliefs, are the primary antecedents of intention (Ajzen, 1991). Westaby (2005) consolidates these antecedents

as global motives and proposes that they are broad substantive factors that consistently influence intentions—the main determinants of behaviour—or the anticipated actions that may result in the purchase or not of a UHT line extension as the behavioural outcome. The BRT is thus an important framework with which to explore the reasons for or against purchasing a UHT line extension because an understanding of these reasons may provide insight into the salient factors that influence consumer behaviour.

2.2. Considering the Role of Extrinsic Product Attributes

‘Enriched’

Food designers and marketers are continuously challenged to develop safe and nutritious food in order to keep the consumer healthy (Bordewijk & Schifferstein, 2020). Enriched food products have been developed to provide health benefits for the consumer (Shan et al., 2017) through increasing the percentage of one or more of the nutrients that are naturally present in the food (Timpanaro et al., 2020), resulting in a functional food product. In comparison with existing products, consumer acceptance of a newly introduced functional food product is largely dependent on sensory evaluation. Should the sensory characteristics of the product differ from the usual product, consumer acceptance of the product may be low (Smarzyński et al., 2019). Therefore, since the word ‘enriched’ was featuring on a UHT milk product instore and very little was known about its effect on consumers’ decisions to purchase a UHT line extension, it was included in this study in the form of a word-association exercise.

Product packaging design

Consumers’ subjective judgements on a new product are based on the appearance and packaging features of the product. In order to differentiate new products from existing products, product packaging is used strategically to introduce consumers to new product line extensions (Vergura & Luceri, 2018). It is one of the product features that food designers need to develop because the food product is being designed to merge product function with the purpose of the packaging effectively (Bordewijk & Schifferstein, 2020). In fact, Magnier and Schoormans (2017) point out that in regard to new products, consumers use packaging to differentiate between products. When consumers do not have information about the new product and are thus unable to evaluate the intrinsic attributes of the product before purchasing, they apply the symbolic information that is implied by the packaging design. Subsequently, the visual cues (colour, quality, general appeal and others) of product packaging have been found to create strong consumer associations that influence the overall perception of the product (Sofi, 2019). According to De Francisco Vela and Ayala-Garcia (2020), these perceptions are associated with emotional experiences that designers need to understand when working on food products. Hence, different elements in the design may attract or resonate with consumers from an emerging market, influencing their intention to purchase the new UHT line extension.

Country of origin

COO labelling has become increasingly important to consumers (Bimbo et al., 2020) because trusting the source is part of their food experience (Bordewijk & Shifferstein, 2020). However, little generalisable knowledge about the effects of COO food labelling is available (Newman et al., 2014), with even less concerning the effect of COO on a UHT line extension. The inclusion of COO is known to affect product perception and evaluation (Visbal et al., 2017). However, Inch and Cuthbert (2018) point to the discrepancies in research, causing doubts about the real influence of COO on food purchase decisions. For this reason, COO labelling was included in this study because it remains a clear tool of communication between the consumer and the producer

in distinguishing a domestic product from an imported product and may, therefore, influence the decision to purchase a UHT line extension.

Price

Price is an extrinsic product attribute considered by most consumers, and it offers a value perspective of the product (Aeni, 2020). In most instances, it is assumed to relate to the quality of the product (Rafdinal & Amalia, 2019). Therefore, consumers confronted with a UHT line extension may expect the product to have a certain price and may use this as an indicator of their willingness to purchase (Roy et al., 2014). By comparing prices of similar products in the category with those of the line extension, consumers test their product expectations, leading them to the decision for the most attractive offer (Reisman et al., 2019), which may not be in favour of the UHT line extension. Of late, the price reviews prevalent on the internet and social media platforms are influencing product purchases (Hu et al., 2019), and negative price reviews have been found to have a stronger negative impact on consumers' purchase decisions (Weissstein et al., 2017). There is currently little understanding of the role that price plays in influencing the intention to purchase a UHT line extension within an emerging market such as South Africa.

From the reviewed literature, the success of a UHT line extension is dependent on food designers' understanding of why consumers consider or do not consider a product. Since it is not clear how extrinsic product attributes such as inclusion of the word 'enriched', COO, price and product packaging design can affect the reasons to purchase the new UHT line extension, food designers may be unaware of the role that each of the attributes play in the consumer's evaluation of the new product. Since UHT milk is an important contributor to the milk consumption of South African consumers in a highly competitive market, it becomes even more important to establish which features of the new line extension will resonate with consumers and which will not. Through the findings of the current study, food designers and marketers may be better able to address barriers and consumer concerns prior to launch. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine consumer reasons for and against purchasing a new UHT milk line extension and the role that specific extrinsic product attributes play in supporting the purchasing reasoning of consumers.

3. DATA AND METHODS

3.1. Study Design and Sampling

An exploratory-descriptive qualitative (EDQ) study was designed to identify and describe the experiences of participants, which allowed for an array of information (Acocella & Cataldi, 2021). The exploratory nature of the study relied on an inductive approach to investigate consumers' reasons and resulting behaviour. Purposeful sampling, typical of an EDQ design (Sandelowski, 2004), was used to recruit milk users employed at a university in South Africa to participate in the study.

3.2. Data Gathering

Focus groups provide a synergistic process in which participant interactions refine individual viewpoints to reveal insights that would not have been achieved without this group interaction (Doyle et al., 2020). Given the study objectives, this was the most suitable data gathering approach to uncover consumer reasoning and opinions regarding a UHT milk line extension. Six digitally recorded focus group discussions were held, each being facilitated by an experienced moderator. Each focus group consisted of voluntary staff members (male and female) who complied with the

inclusion criterion of being milk users and who were enabled to join the focus group by selecting the most appropriate day and time from the list of proposed focus group slots for participation in the study. The sample size was determined through inductive thematic saturation where the development of conceptual categories that were adequate in describing and understanding the experiences and reasoning of the participants were identified. Comparable male (47%) and female (56%) representation was established among the 34 participants who were recruited from among university employees. The participants were between 18 and 49 years old, although age was not a criterion for study inclusion. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were reminded that participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw at any time. They were assured of confidentiality and the anonymity of information and were informed that the session would be recorded. Thereafter, informed consent was signed. The study received ethics clearance from the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Health Research Ethics Committee (2013/CAES/138a) prior to the commencement of the research.

To determine participants' reasons for purchasing the UHT line extension, a vignette or hypothetical scenario (Stravakou & Lozgka, 2018) giving the context for the newly developed UHT line extension, which was next to or near the original UHT product at the point of purchase, was used to initiate the focus group sessions. This technique allows for the articulation of perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes by participants (Azman & Mahadhir, 2017) and is facilitated by the reasons that consumers give. Remaining within the context of the vignette, participants were asked to present their thoughts on extrinsic product attributes such as COO, price and packaging presentation and explain how their views would influence the purchase of the UHT line extension. Further probing was used to expand their views of each of these concepts.

During the focus group sessions, a word-association exercise was used to explore the word 'enriched'. Participants were asked: "What comes to mind when you see the word 'enriched'?" Word association is a new sensory characterisation methodology that is applied to understand consumers' perceptions of new food products (García-Segovia et al., 2020) and has been used successfully with ill-defined concepts related to food and how consumers make sense of food products (Barone et al., 2020). In this way, the words that consumers freely associate with the perceived product are considered the most relevant for consumer choice and product purchase. In the current study, the association exercise was not applied in the true context of a free word-association exercise but rather allowed participants to elaborate on their thoughts and ideas about the word 'enriched'.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data were transcribed verbatim. This was followed by an inductive approach to thematic analysis in search of the salient themes that emerged from the data. Thematic analysis is the identification, analysis and reporting of data patterns, allowing for a rich description of participant perspectives (Brawn & Clarke, 2006). Following Kiger and Varpio (2020), the process of data analysis that was applied entailed familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, developing and reconsidering categories and themes and reporting the findings. Open coding was first applied to the data to identify distinct concepts, after which codes were grouped to form categories that best represented the codes. Axial coding was then applied to form the categories that best represented the similarities, differences and the relationships across the categories. Broad themes could then be assigned to the categories that were developed from the reasons that the participants had presented. Johnson et al. (2020) stress the importance of rigour and quality of data in qualitative research. To address these issues, the trustworthiness criteria summarised by Nowell et al. (2017) were applied. *Credibility* was achieved through prolonged engagement with the data and the participants in the study, *peer debriefing* during code generation and *member checking* during the focus group interviews. The thick descriptive data obtained ensured *transferability*, and

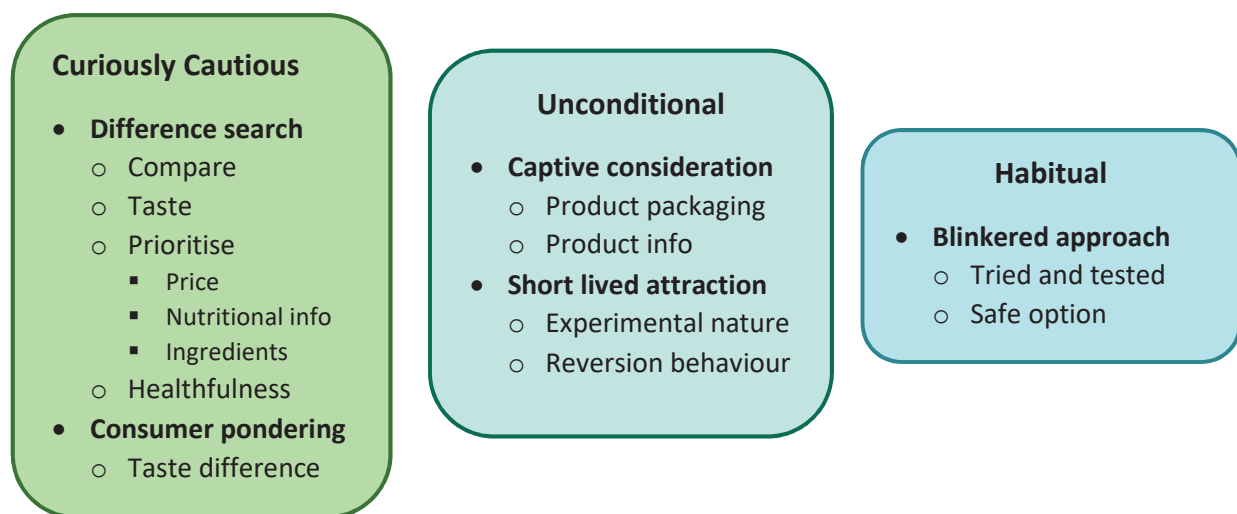
through a logical, traceable and documented research methodology, *dependability* was addressed, which contributed to the *confirmability* of the data.

4. FINDINGS

Three different consumer behavioural approaches (themes) emerged from the data involving consumers' reasons for purchasing a UHT line extension: (a) curiously cautious; (b) unconditional; and (c) habitual. Figure 2 provides an overview of the approaches and presents the associated behaviours as categories emerging from the data to describe each consumer approach.

Figure 2

Consumer behavioural approaches with related categories



Curiously cautious behavioural approach

The curiously cautious behavioural approach is characterised by a cautious consumer who analyses the existing (old) and line extension (new) product attributes through a difference search. In the current study, the reasoning for this approach was that the participants were “*curious to see and compare*” the differences between the old and the new product and to “*see if [they] can see a difference ... and then make a decision*” at the point of purchase. According to one participant,

[I]f I were to get them in the shelf like this way [next to each other], I will definitely, definitely will compare.

In regard to determining the difference between the old and the new product, participants indicated that they would “*actually consume and see if they are different in various attributes*” and not rely on product information to guide their purchase decision.

Cautious consumers seem to *prioritise* the “*the price difference*” between the products, which was clearly explained by this participant:

I first ... look at the price. Then after looking at the price ... I then ... it's then that I can look at the other factors like the ingredients. But my first ... It's the price, it's the price. I first look at the price.

Thereafter, an investigation into the “*nutritional information ... check there what the difference is*” and “*look for the ingredients [product information]*” was used to determine “*which one is more healthier than the other*”, resulting in a healthfulness approach as explained by this participant:

[B]ut also, I would also like to know the difference in ... the health benefits ... I'm going to read through the content that ... are that ... which are different from both of them and see which one is more healthier than the other.

Although the difference search is an attempt to identify the attributes of the improved product, it may not be persuasive and may result in some of these consumers opting for “*what [they] know*”. In other instances, awareness of the new product may generate a “*peaked curiosity*”. This may result in them purchasing the new product, especially “*if I think this could be interesting. This could be, you know ... I try it*”. For some curious consumers, a helpless state of attraction to the new product arises that does not involve consideration of the price as much as the experience resulting from using the product and thereafter, a decision regarding the product is made. This is explained by one participant as follows:

I'm usually a sucker for ... for being curious and stuff ... So I'll, I'll try it once and even if it is more expensive. And then after that, if it's not as great as I thought it was, then I'll go back to the cheaper one.

The results of the difference search indicated a certain degree of consumer consideration regarding the taste of the new product and the potential differences between the product they know and the new product: “*I always wonder if the same product ... will have the same taste as the one that [I] know*” or if it has been “*tampered with ... the sensory attribute*”.

The importance of tasting the new product was indicated in these quotations. It would be good to have “*a smaller one just to taste it*” and “*people that are demonstrating ... and letting you taste this new product*”.

Therefore, for this focus group, product comparison and profound thoughts about the product form the behavioural strategies used during the decision to purchase the new line extension.

Unconditional approach

The unconditional approach is demonstrated by a captivated consumer who is drawn in and attracted by specific attributes of the new food product or a consumer who does not have the time to study the product differences. In this approach, consumers show a captive consideration of the product as their attention is drawn to the product packaging, which may be found to be “*more attractive ... better designed*”, thereby “*grabbing*” the attention of the consumer. The effect of product packaging is best described by this participant:

I would probably look at it and think it's more attractive because the packaging is more attractive and better designed.

Immediately visible product information that explains or highlights features of the new product that are important to the consumer is another product attribute that can capture the attention of the consumer at the point of purchase:

Because I'm seeing all the information I need right in front of me, so [I] don't have to turn back and try and find that fine print. Look how many vitamins ... does it have any of this nutritional information? So I think it's very inviting ... yes, how it's presented.

A new product must capture the consumer's initial attention in order for the product to be considered for purchase:

I'm just thinking ... If it's not a product that I know and ... [is not] advertised very well, then I probably also would not even see that. I would probably just see the original and think that's some other brand or something else. So, if it's not like well advertised, and they don't say why it's beneficial to buy something different, then I wouldn't even notice it probably ... because it doesn't look familiar.

However, the risk with the unconditional approach to a new line extension is that consumers may have a short-lived attraction to the product. This attraction may be of an experimental nature and may result in consumers opting to “*buy the new one, try it and taste it first*”, possibly meaning, “[*T*]ry it once”. The reason for this behaviour is explained in the quotation below:

I would try it. First time and ... just see ... the taste. But obviously, price matters ... you know ... it's milk at the end of the day ... even if it tastes nice.

Therefore, these consumers may portray an unconditional attraction to the new product without questioning any particular aspect of the product or the marketing strategy aimed at attracting the consumers' attention, thus trying the product simply because it is new. The outcome for the tested product may be reversion behaviour, with consumers returning to the product they know and suggesting discontinuation of any further trial purchases of the new product.

Habitual approach

The habitual consumer approach describes those who are not tempted by the newly introduced product, suggesting a more resistant approach to shopping. These consumers would rather stay with “*the tried and tested brand*”. As one participant said, “*I look for what I know [as I am] more familiar with it ... I don't know the other one*”. The participant added, “[*It*] feels the safer route”. Consumers adopting this approach have a general distrust of ‘improved’ food products. One participant stated,

I'll go with what I know, which is the old one ... because sometimes, I'm scared that the new developments ... sometimes, they're sweetened ... they add a lot of things and I don't want to read, so I'd rather go with what I know.

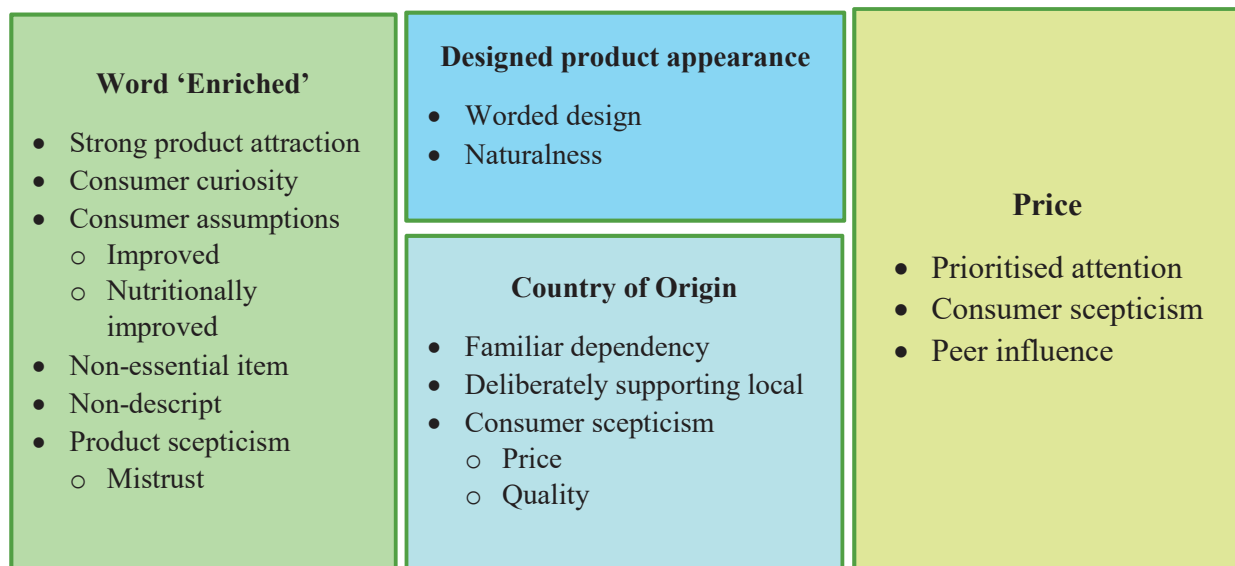
For habitual shoppers, very little appears to persuade them to consider another product. Their loyalty to the familiar product seems to anchor their decision to purchase the known product.

Role of extrinsic product attributes

The specific extrinsic product attributes of (a) the use of the word ‘enriched’, (b) designed product appearance, (c) COO, and (d) price can be identified as playing a supporting role in consumers' reasons for and against purchasing a UHT line extension. The UHT line extension may not be noticed if the product design does not catch the consumer's attention by immediately emphasising the differences between the UHT line extension and the existing UHT products. Through an analysis of the findings, differentiating product attribute behaviour emerged as being specific to the way that consumers approach each of the extrinsic product attributes as indicated in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Extrinsic product attributes with related categories

***'Enriched'***

Analysis of the word-association data for the term 'enriched' identified differing consumer opinions. Some participants perceived 'enriched' as a strong product attraction, "*a powerful word*" that "*draws ... attention*". However, for others, this was considered more of a curiosity since these consumers wanted to know "*what exactly*" had been added. One participant contended, "*Once you study it, then you want to know with what*" and "*Wording influences the consumer's choice*". The word 'enriched' also led to a variety of assumptions regarding what the participants expected the enriched product to contain. According to these participants, the assumptions included the idea that the product was improved:

They've added a lot of new things to the product ... For me, that's attractive ... to me. Like there's more nutrients; there's more vitamins in this product ... I'm just interested in that there's more than [it] has to offer.

The participant continued, "[T]hey tried to actually make it more than the original".

For some participants, the assumption was that the new product was nutritionally improved: "[W]hen they say enriched, they mean with nutrition" and, therefore, it "*should be healthy*". As participants explained, "*There should be extra vitamins and stuff in there*" that add extra "*nutritional value*" because "*it has nutrients that were not in the original ... product*" to "*improve the intake of vitamins and whatever*", hence making it "*more improved*".

The participants asserted that line extensions create expectations of what the product offers. More specifically and based on the word 'enriched', the participants maintained that consumers "*expect there is a change in terms of the nutritional information*", resulting in "*much [more] of the nutrients than [in] just the ordinary original*" and, therefore, the product should "*actually taste better than the original*" or "*slightly better*". However, because the expectation is that nutrients have been increased in the UHT line extension, it "*should not change the taste because those things aren't flavourants*". As a consequence of being labelled 'enriched', consumers may expect the new product to "*have something that the old one doesn't have*", with the result that it is "*more expensive*". According to one participant, the word 'enriched' may also lead to consumers assuming that not only is the product improved in terms of sensory and nutritional characteristics but also there may be a change in other ways such as the new product may be "*better in terms of the shelf life than the other*".

‘Enriched’ could also be considered unimportant by consumers whose diets are nutritionally adequate and thus do not find *“it necessary to take the new product”*. For some participants, the word was vague and without meaning and was, therefore, disregarded. These participants *“usually don’t read”* the information on products or only focus on the product that they are familiar with, *“going straight to what [they] know”*. They would not *“bother looking at this”*. Introducing ‘enriched’ into the product description may have the effect of creating scepticism since some consumers may perceive such terms as *“fancy words ... but it’s not entirely the truth”*. As one participant explained

[B]asically marketing ... what they want you to see ... what they think will attract you to their products.

The intentions of companies launching such products could be doubted if consumers saw the term being used as a way to *“sell products”*. It was said, *“They’re just trying to make it sound better”* or they only wanted to *“make money ... do whatever it is that they want to do. Put [‘enriched’] on a packet to make you buy it”*.

Hence, dangers exist in the promotional use of the term ‘enriched’ on a UHT line extension. As shown, understandings of the term vary widely and can underpin different behavioural responses. So, while the term ‘enriched’ catches the attention of some consumers, its interpretation may not always be that intended by the food designer.

Designed product appearance

The appearance of the designed UHT line extension packaging is intended to attract consumers. When effective, the packaging itself creates interest: *“[J]ust from looking at the packaging ... really get attracted”*. Two important aspects of packaging design emerged during the focus group discussions, indicating different requirements for UHT line extension packaging. Worded design features were important for some participants who were less attracted to images and would rather consider what was written on the pack *“as pictures don’t do it for [me]”*. These participants were *“look[ing] for the small print”* and the value of this information. One participant explained

Information is what attracts me ... rather than how it’s advertised.

In relation to the UHT milk line extension, an implied ‘naturalness’ in the design of the packaging was another element that some participants preferred to see. Suspicion was raised if a product seemed *“far too artificial”* in its presentation. It was important that the new product should not be presented as

... looking less natural. It’s like they’ve tried to do something on the milk and then that’s where it does not sound good....

You’d assume that this one has ... some sort of probably GMO ... some sort of like, enhancements ... some way....

The effectiveness of the design for the UHT milk line extension was dependent on the inclusion of both worded information and a natural product appearance.

Country of origin

When considering a new product, consumers seem to show support for locally produced products. There may be reassurance in the familiar feature of place:

Because you know, there’s many things coming into the country – then you read about it, the meat and stuff like that. So, I’d rather stick to what [I] know.

Consideration of *“which country it comes from”* could be generally aligned with loyalty towards the *“South African brand”*. Wanting to support local producers resulted in participants

“trying to buy South African” and in doing so, *“supporting South African companies over other countries”*.

Consumer scepticism emerged regarding products from other countries. The price of new line extensions would reflect the production costs and the export strategies elsewhere. Participants' experiences suggested that *“other countries' products would be more expensive”* or *“priced low”*.

In particular, if a product from another country was priced lower than a local product, the quality was questioned. There could be concern that *“they have compromised on a lot of good things about the product”*. In other instances, consumers might be *“scared to try it”* since previous products have caused safety scares, and this could occur with new products from a different country. Consumers could be *“uncertain about the quality”* for a number of reasons, with COO concerns being a proxy for doubts that are not possible to resolve.

When considering a new UHT line extension sourced from another country, supporting local may contribute to consumer reluctance. In the current study, scepticism was evident about price being a reflection of production costs and exporting strategies and regarding the quality of products from places where there was doubt about production standards and where problems had been experienced in the past.

Price

Among the attributes of the new line extension, price attracted considerable attention. Consumers indicated that they would *“first look at the price”*. This would help them establish the pricing placement of the new product and *“then see if it's in the same range”* as the established product.

In some instances, price is *“important if it's a new product ... if it is cheaper than the one [usually bought] ... obviously something to gain”*. However, doubts may emerge for some would-be purchasers, with the cheaper price possibly deterring purchase. As one participant stated

If it is a lot cheaper than the old one, it makes you think how much did they actually add ... [A]nd if they have added all these things, and if the old one is a standard price, then why is it lower than this one? ... [T]hat will make me immediately not go for it.

However, a higher-priced item does not mean it will not be considered by some consumers because *“the slightly expensive ... sort of gives me an idea that what it's enriched with”*. In particular, *“health-conscious consumers ... won't even think about the price ... Only interested in the nutrients and all that ... [B]ut some who doesn't [sic] care about nutrition or that will say 'No, no, it's expensive for me'”*.

Although there are differences regarding the influence of price in purchasing a new food product, the decisive factor may be peer influence:

Maybe somebody introduces me to say, 'Okay, there is a new product like that' ... [W]ithout such information, I will stick to the original until maybe several consumers come and say, '[W]hy don't you try this?' ... So I will not be convinced simply by the high price.

Price as an extrinsic product attribute is a priority attribute that influences the purchasing decisions of consumers. This attribute can result in consumer scepticism if the product is priced too low or too high. Consumer assumptions are not necessarily based on facts, and through peer influence, consumers' minds can be changed to consider the new line extension.

5. DISCUSSION AND THEORETICAL APPLICATION

This paper presents an analysis of the reasons for and against purchasing a new UHT milk line extension and the role that specific extrinsic product attributes play in supporting consumers' reasoning. Because the BRT uses reasons to explain the underlying behaviour of

people, its application helps to position the three consumer behavioural approaches derived from the reasons to purchase or not to purchase a UHT line extension (see Figure 4), confirming the important role reasons, as proposed in the BRT framework, play in predicting possible behaviour (Sahu et al., 2020). The curiously cautious behavioural approach was identified when reasoning indicated a difference search or a between-alternative evaluation where consumers compare different products along the same attribute, thus representing cautious consumption as a freedom to consume in whatever way they choose (Yngfalk & Yngfalk, 2015). The curiosity underpinning their actions is considered an information-seeking mechanism (Hsee & Ruan, 2020) that contributes to consumers' pondering and hesitation regarding the purchase of a new product. Through their cautiousness, the consumers attempt to minimise any negativity towards the product and to maximise the ease with which they are able to justify their reasons to purchase the UHT line extension as the correct purchasing decision. In relation to BRT, it is important to acknowledge that reasons help individuals justify or defend their actions (Pennington & Hastie, 1993) through which they are able to cautiously justify UHT line extension purchases.

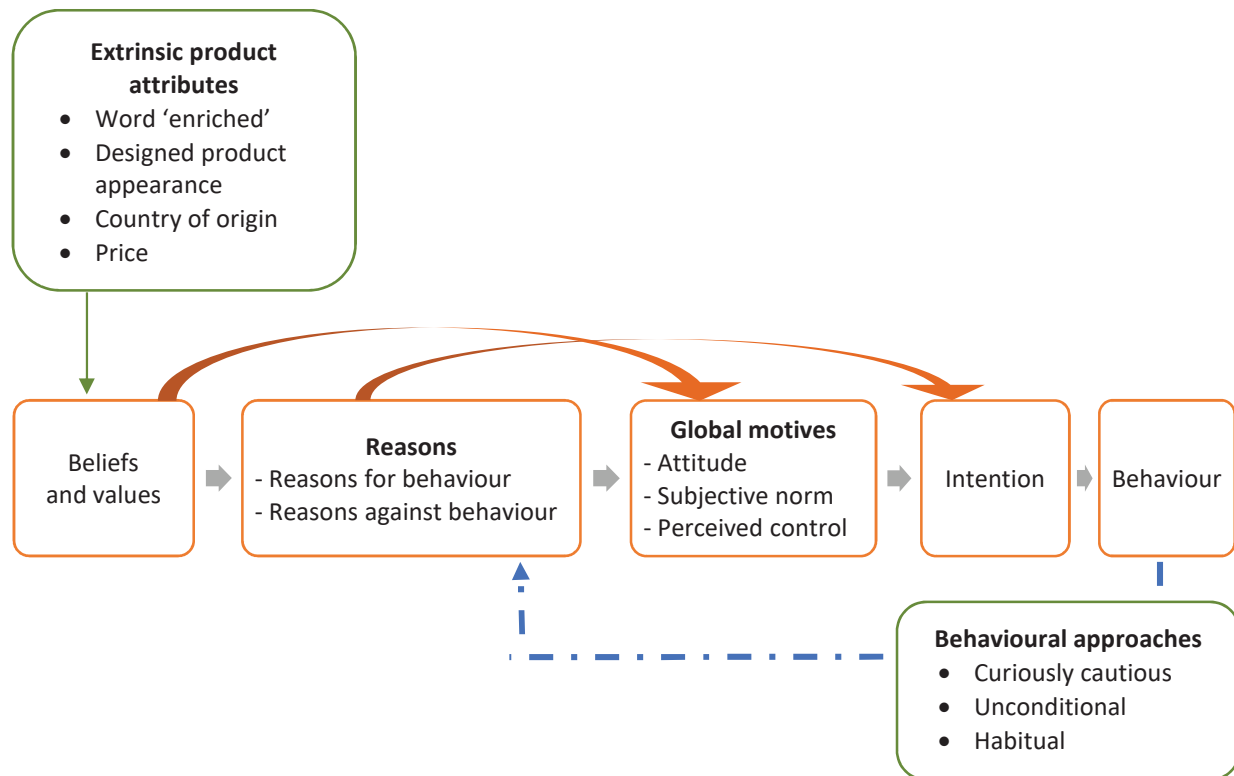
Reasons specific to the unconditional behavioural approach are characterised by the captive consideration of the consumers who are attracted to the UHT line extension whereby the consumers' ability to navigate through a visual environment of different product packaging designs and information enables them to identify the product that stands out from competitors. However, this behaviour signifies trial purchases, which is an information-gathering technique to negate uncertainty about the product (Smith & Swinyard, 1983). This may result in future purchases or immediate discontinuation as BRT clearly postulates that reasons have a strong influence on intention (Norman et al., 2012).

Consumers characterised by the habitual behavioural approach opt for a blinkered approach whereby they pay less attention to the new product and engage in repetitive purchases of their established product preference, thus requiring little or no conscious effort for decisions about the unfamiliar product. In relation to BRT, consumers displaying habitual behaviour show a strong attitude towards not engaging with the new UHT line extension, supported by reasons not to do so, resulting in clear avoidance behaviour towards the new UHT line extension. In relation to BRT, this can be explained by Norman et al. (2012), who found that a strong attitude, reasons for and past behaviour of binge drinking had a significant direct effect on intention of binge drinking in the following week. Similarly, Nicholls and Schimmel (2016) found that reasons pertaining to BRT were direct drivers of future generosity behavioural intentions. This suggests that predictively, the behaviour of the habitual consumer will possibly be the same towards line extensions in the future.

The significance of these behavioural approaches lies in the different ways in which consumers approach the new UHT milk line extension. These distinctions could assist food designers in addressing factors that are important to at least two of these behavioural groups when introducing a new UHT line extension. It is suggested that in relation to the BRT, the three behavioural approaches may change through the experience of the UHT line extension. In turn, this may lead to new reasons for or against further use of the UHT line extension (represented by the dotted line), specifically in relation to the curiously cautious and the unconditional behavioural approach but less so for the habitual product-loyal behavioural approach.

Figure 4

Ultra-high temperature milk line extension within the behavioural reasoning theory (Westaby, 2005)



The BRT proposes that behaviour originates from a person's beliefs that give impetus to the reasons for or against specific behaviour (Claudy & Peterson, 2014). This study suggests that consumers have specific beliefs about extrinsic product attributes (the word 'enriched', designed product appearance, COO and price) that result in the reasons why they will choose or not choose a UHT milk line extension. Based on the BRT proposition, the study more importantly highlights the influence extrinsic product attribute beliefs may have on the differentiation between the behavioural approaches that emerged. As a result, this study does not submit behaviour as a general and unspecified outcome, as have been done in various other studies where the focus was on the influence of the components (e.g., Diddi et al., 2019; Mitrofanova et al., 2021; Nicholls & Schimmel, 2016; Tandon et al., 2020) and not specifying the behaviour. This study rather identifies the typical behaviours in relation to the reasons consumers give when a UHT line extension is considered, suggesting that researchers should aim to specify the actual behaviour resulting from the reasons. This may result in a better understanding of the specific behaviours related to the reasons stemming from consumers' beliefs. As explained, the BRT provided a framework to inductively explore the behaviours resulting from this study and therefore assisted in interpreting the influence of extrinsic product attributes related to a UHT milk line extension and resulting behaviours.

Managerial Implications

Front-of-pack message displays using, for example, the word 'enriched' influence consumer perceptions of the new product before it is first purchased (Biondi & Camanzi, 2020). Through consumer curiosity relating to the word 'enriched', a strong attraction to the product emerges. In this, there are various assumptions and expectations about what consumers believe the enriched product entails. The current study emphasised the fact that not all consumers are attracted to the product through the word 'enriched'. Importantly, food designers and marketers should consider

the non-essential and non-descript—even ambiguous—additions to the product that could potentially underpin consumer scepticism.

It is understood that consumers' first impressions of a product involve the physical properties of the product (Blijlevens et al., 2009) that are presented through product design; however, not all consumers consider the physical properties to be of great importance (Melovic et al., 2020). This was the case with the use of the word 'enriched' for the UHT line extension. Moreover, Bimbo et al. (2017) found that the more natural the perceived appearance of a product, the higher the associated level of acceptance among consumers. The word 'enriched' was one of the product appearance attributes that the participants noticed when considering the UHT line extension. The participants also pointed out that a worded packaging design may be used to evaluate the product, and strategy food designers and marketers should use such a design to attract consumers to the features of the product.

Conversely, price was a prioritised extrinsic product attribute resulting in price comparisons between existing products and the price point of the UHT line extension product. Consumer thinking in relation to high or low pricing may result in associations with high or low product quality (Albari & Safitri, 2018); this was indicated in the scepticism of price evaluations for the UHT line extension. Although price plays an important role in the purchase decision of any product, peer influence may play an even greater role during the introduction of a new UHT line extension. Peer enthusiasm or antipathy may have a direct influence on consumers' purchase decision regarding a new UHT line extension. This influence may be important for food designers and marketers to consider when developing a UHT line extension since the target market appears to be influenced more by peers than directly by the product.

Through globalisation and the influx of foreign goods, COO has become a significant influencer in consumer purchase intentions (Dharmadasa & Chanaka, 2017). According to Lo et al. (2017), consumers who are keen to support locally produced products epitomise consumer ethnocentrism; however, this is also attributed in many instances to scepticism about the quality of foreign products. Food designers should recognise the importance of locally produced food products to the consumer and ensure that their attention is captured through the newly designed product. In relation to the BRT, the way in which the extrinsic product attributes influence the behaviour of consumers when confronted with a UHT line extension suggests that COO influences the beliefs that underpin the reasons for or against the purchase. Food designers and marketers should be cognisant of the influence of consumer beliefs when designing a new UHT line extension since they guide the intention to purchase, thus affecting a successful launch.

6. CONCLUSION

Through consideration of the reasons for and against purchasing a new UHT milk line extension and the role that specific extrinsic product attributes play in supporting consumer reasoning, different consumer behavioural approaches emerged, particular to the South African emerging market context. These were indicative of the diverse ways that consumers considered the UHT line extension. Through the identification of these behavioural approaches, designers of new UHT milk line extensions would be able to assess how well the line addresses the factors that are important to each consumer group. An understanding of the way in which emerging market consumers use extrinsic product attributes to determine whether they should purchase a UHT milk line extension highlights the importance of each of these attributes, which may be overlooked during product development and marketing. Food designers and marketers should be cognisant of the role of each of these attributes because different consumer behaviours pertain to these extrinsic attributes. Although the BRT provided an insightful framework to explore consumer reasons in an emerging market context, not all the components of the theory were unpacked comprehensively in

this research. This is potentially a useful direction for future studies, as is the influence of global motives on intentions to purchase a UHT line extension. The latter has not yet been explored for this product category, much more so in emerging markets. A further limitation is the exploratory design approach used in this study. Although valuable in providing a better understanding of a phenomenon less researched in South Africa, the reasons established for or against purchasing a new UHT milk line extension may not be applicable and transferable to other countries. Similar research could be conducted in other countries to compare the findings from this study and to identify possible behavioural differences. In using the exploratory design approach, the extrinsic product attributes identified and studied in this research have provided some insight into the relevance of some of the attributes. This is, however, not exhaustive and further studies may need to explore other attributes and influences on new UHT milk line extensions. These could include factors like sustainability; detailed packaging design elements such as logo, print and colour; and other relevant features, among which advertising and marketing strategies.

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