

Employment of Visual Elements for Identifying Beverage Package Design Discrepancies

Mu Chien Chou* Pei Hua Chiu** Regina W.Y. Wang***

* Graduate School of Design, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology & Department of Digital Media Design, Chungyu Institute of Technology
Keelung, Taiwan, R.O.C., f1234860@ms36.hinet.net

** Graduate School of Design, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology
Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C., M9610207@mail.ntust.edu.tw

*** Graduate School of Design, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology
Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C., wyw@mail.ntust.edu.tw

Abstract: Packaging is the medium by which marketing businesses communicate with consumers. A package with good visual designs is helpful in attracting attentions for the product. This research organizes and classifies various soft drink packaging design elements into five major categories as follows: form, brand label, graphics, colors, and information. The results are as follows: (a) packaging forms contain bottle cap, bottle neck, handle, body, and bottom; (b) brand label designs contain computer fonts, artistic fonts, combined fonts, and graphic fonts; (c) graphic elements contain real-life photography, design drawing, illustration, comics, and abstract graphics; (d) colors include mixing hue, lightness/darkness, saturation, and color matching; (e) information include instructions, stickers, and hanging cards. This research hopes to provide marketing specialist and designers a guiding chart when designing beverage packaging.

Keywords: beverage packaging, differential design, visual design elements

1. Introduction

When overflowing selections of products are placed on shelf, how good a packaging is designed directly affects whether or not consumers can notice the individual product [3]. Today, beverage packaging fall short in variety and it is a growingly challenging task for marketing/ design workers to differentiate a product from the rest [2]. This study seeks to understand the contemporary beverage packaging designs through a survey of products on market. The primary goals of this study are as follows:

- (1) Establish guidelines in beverage packaging designs through existing literature.
- (2) By observing beverage products in Taiwan, explore the differences visually in their packaging.
- (3) Analyze and organize elements in beverage packaging that produces uniqueness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Beverage Packaging and Categories

A beverage package is mainly in the form of bottles, cans, and cups, as discussed briefly below [6].:

- (a) Bottle: beverage is contained by hard bottle formed container made with glass, clay, metal, or plastic.
- (b) Can: beverage is contained by metal (iron and aluminum), foil, or paper tube-shaped container.
- (c) Cup: beverage is contained by cups made primarily with plastic and associated with coffee beverages.

This study intends to explore the differences in packaging with the focus on beverage packaging specifically. (Almanac of food consumption survey in Taiwan area 2006) [1], this study defines beverages as: milk products, tea, juices, carbonated drinks, sports drinks, supplemental drinks, bottled water. Moreover, this study collects samples for study limited to aluminium foil package (Tetrapak and SIG), paper carton (Pure-pak and Tetra-Rex), PET, cans (aluminum and iron), plastic bottles, and glass cans as major beverage packaging containers.

2.2 Visual and Functional Features of Package Design

A packaging's function is not only limited to a wing the consumers, but also serves as an important tool for establishing brand identity [4]. It is the most direct medium between manufacturers and consumers. According to design characteristics, packaging design elements may be grouped as visual and functional elements. Visual elements include form, colors, text, illustrations, and decorations, and functional elements include structural designs (protect, store, open, and recluse), material designs (emotional appeal, and display value), volume designs (economy). The summary is as follows (Figure 1) [5,7]:

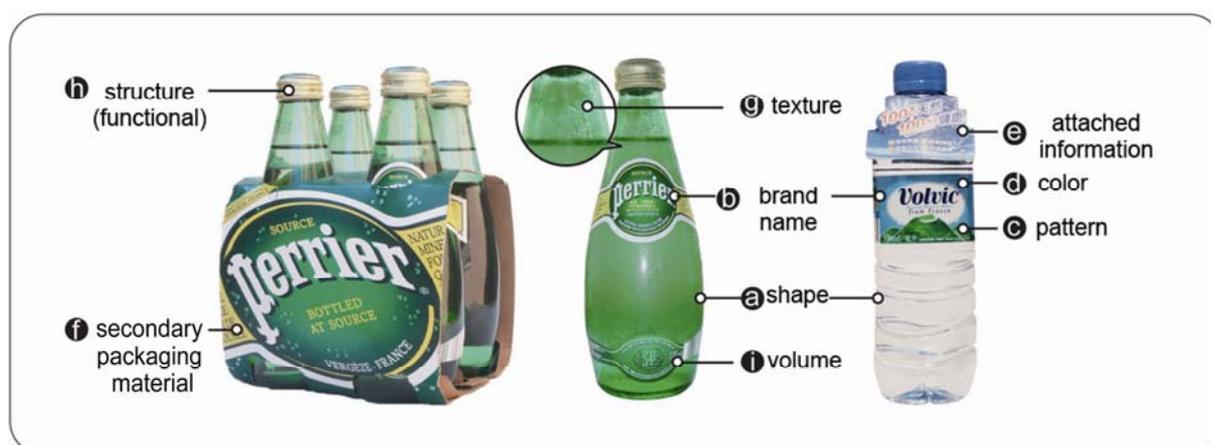


Figure.1 Focus of Design Differentiation in Beverage Packaging

Aside from the basic functionalities, a packaging should also attract consumer attention with visual aesthetics that satisfy consumer psychological needs. Thus, this study focuses on form, brand label, graphics, colors, and additional information as the five major design elements for exploration.

3. Research Method and Analysis

This study adopts the observation method and compares various beverage packaging within each beverage type. The observation is conducted in three separate phases as follows: (a) First phase: survey the beverage packaging on market and collect samples. This study collects samples from three of largest wholesale markets (Carrefour, RT-Mart, and Geant) located in Taipei City and Taichung City. The samples are limited to beverages less than 2000ml in volume, and collection began from October, 2006 and ends on March, 2007. Sample collection is made with photography and totals to 755 samples. (b) Second phase: grouping beverages with the same content characteristics for differences analysis. (c) Third phase: analyze packaging differences from visual perspectives.

4. Survey Results and Analysis

4.1 Shape Design Differentiation of Beverage Packaging

In this study, the term “form” stands for the packaging’s exterior silhouette. The market survey finds that beverage packaging is shaped by cap, bottle neck, handle, body, and bottom [8]. Overall, the most distinctive

forms are, (a) large volume (1800ml or above) dairy products often have handle designs; (b) tea bottles create uniqueness with bottom angle modifications; (c) juices and coffee beverages do not share common traits, but within each category, different brand's beverages have very different shapes; (d) carbonated beverage packaging are different in areas from bottle's bodies to bottoms; (e) sport beverages have bottles that contain different engravings; (f) supplemental beverages and bottled water apply different curvatures to create distinctiveness.

4.2 Brand label differences in beverage packaging

In this study, "brand label" refers to the label relating directly to the content and is placed on packaging as center of focus. According to market survey, brand labels appear in computer fonts, artistic fonts, combined fonts, and graphic character-combined fonts. With bottled water as an exception of only using computer, artistic, and graphic fonts, the other 7 types of beverages all employ all four types of fonts in brand labels. Another discovery is that carbonated beverages use mostly artistic fonts, and other types of beverages use mostly computer fonts.

4.3 Graphic design differences in beverage packaging

The graphics in this study are any symbols, lines, images, photos, and text that relate to the brand name. According to market survey, carbonate beverages use symbolic portrayal and abstract symbolization. Bottled water, on the other hand, uses photograph, illustrations, symbolic portrayal, and abstract symbolization. Other beverages use photos, design drawings, illustrations, symbolic portrayal, and abstract symbolization. Overall, the most common graphics on beverage packaging are applications of symbolic portrayal, and abstract symbolization with the exception of juice beverages that use design drawings the most.

4-4 Color design differences in beverage packaging

In this study, the color designs refer to any labels with color on the packaging container. When comparing packaging with the same form, this study finds color applications as follows: (a) Dairy drinks use hue and brightness contrasts commonly. A similar hue, a contrast hue, or a complementary hue in the same series of products, different from the common packaging color-matching model is applied to dairy drinks. (b) Tea drinks mostly use the color of tea (green) as the main hue, and the usual matching hue either contrasts or is similar to the green hue, with intense saturation and brightness. (c) Fruit and vegetable juice packaging usually uses the content color as the main hue with high saturation or brightness to indicate freshness and delicacy. (d) For carbonated drink packaging, contrast hue is mainly used. Brightness contrast and chrome contrast are also used to suggest activeness and lightness. (e) Coffee drink packaging often use tone-matching with a deep color. Pop-up packages are usually in unique colors (i.e. gold, silver) to achieve a flashy look. (f) Sports drink packaging mainly uses a single hue with blue or green with a similar hue or brightness contrast. (g) Supplemental drink packaging mainly uses a single hue or contrast hue for color-matching. (h) Bottled water commonly features hues of black, white, blue, or green; brightness or a similar hue is used to reflect its purity and cleanness.

4-5 Attached information design differentiation of beverage packaging

The information design discussed here refers to the various texts printed on the container, giving an indication or emphasizing the message related to the content of the package. The market survey showed that five categories of beverages, including dairy drink, tea, juice, supplemental drink, and bottled water, use additional information labels on their packaging. Dairy drinks use three forms of info labels, namely: instruction, sticker, and hanging

card. Similarly, bottled water uses two forms of labels, the sticker and hanging card. It is noteworthy that carbonated drinks, coffee, and sports drinks do not contain such information label designs. Finally, overall, the stickers are used most commonly and usually attached to plastic bottles and PET.

5. Results and Analysis of the Survey

After thorough comparison and analysis, this study presents the following points: (a) Beverage packaging form design: Dairy drinks have the widest applications of the various forms in packaging, while carbonated drinks play with bottle curvatures to create distinctiveness. (b) Brand label design: In the typeface design, computer fonts are most commonly used with secondary artistic fonts. (c) Graphics design: Juice packaging usually use photography and detailed illustration methods. Sports drinks commonly use abstract symbolization. (d) Color design: With the same shape, having different colors on bottles/cans creates visual differentiation. Transparent bottles/cans with a little blue and green color are used for sports drinks and bottled water, showing comparatively small color differentiation and room for improvement. (e) Information label design: Most used in milk beverages, followed by supplemental drinks. The illustration-type instruction design is mostly used in juice packaging, followed by sports drinks. The findings above describe the current beverage packaging on market, and are beneficial for designers as effective methods to differentiate a new design from the rest. However, this research is limited to visual elements in beverage packaging, and the following more in-depth researches may complement this study and provide a more extensive guide for future designers/researchers: (a) further exploration into the functional elements (secondary packaging, texture, structure, and volume) of package design may contribute more reference data in this regard and (b) provide concrete visual marketing design and strategy.

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