



# **Storytelling on product packaging and consumers' perception**

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<p><b>Abstract:</b></p> <p>This thesis focuses on studying the integration of storytelling on product packaging and its influences on consumer perception. This thesis is topical due to the increasing popularity of brand storytelling across different marketing channels, Despite its potential function as a message and value communicator, packaging is often neglected as a brand storytelling context, with not many existing researches done on the topic. The purpose of this thesis is to examine in depth the concept of brand storytelling on product packaging, the effectiveness of different approaches to storytelling through packaging and their influences on consumer perception. Consumers' perception on packaging's storytelling effectiveness are examined in accordance with packaging's attractiveness and in-store visibility. The thesis provides answers to three research questions: (1) What is the concept and importance of brand storytelling through packaging? (2) What brand storytelling approaches and elements do brands use to communicate brand stories through product packaging? (3) How do consumers perceive brand stories, and which is the most effective storytelling approach to communicate brand stories with consumers? In the thesis, the researcher only focus on the marketing aspect of storytelling without analyzing the use of storytelling within other areas, and review only verbal and visual storytelling approach. The theoretical framework reviewed existing researches and literatures on the concept of brand storytelling through packaging, verbal and visual storytelling approaches and elements, and consumers' perceptual process when exposed to a brand story. The two main important sources used were Solja E.'s doctoral thesis (2017): "Let me tell you a story: Consumer responses to company-created brand stories" and "Storytelling: Branding in practice" by Fog et al. (2004). In terms of empirical research, a quantitative study was carried out in the form of survey in February, 2018 in Helsinki and recorded 69 valid responses from 70 respondents. The survey result suggested that the combination of visual and verbal storytelling on product packaging was the most effective for an average consumer, and there were major differences in consumers' perception of packaging storytelling effectiveness in accordance with packaging attractiveness and in-store visibility. In conclusion, this thesis findings suggest that the integration of storytelling on packaging may significantly influence consumers' perception on product and affect brand image. Brands may integrate both verbal and visual stories on package to communicate stories with consumers most effectively. However, since consumers' perception may vary when it comes to storytelling effectiveness, packaging attractiveness and in-store visibility, and across gender and age group, it is crucial for brand to take into</p>	

account other aspects, such as target market and segmentation.	
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction to the topic

For thousands of years, stories have always been one of the most prevalent parts of human history. Stories shape our perception and understandings of the world (Weick, 1995) and the way we index, store and retrieve information (Woodside, 2010). Coming with many indices that cause implicit and explicit awareness and emotional connection in the minds of viewers or listeners (Woodside, 2010), a compelling story is stated to be the best mean to persuade and engage with audiences (McKee, 2003).

Within the field of marketing, storytelling has been used for years by marketers as a mean to communicate brand stories with customers. Especially in recent years when social media and content marketing have grown explosively, brands are incorporating more and more storytelling into their marketing strategies, in various forms such as videos, social media posts, and news articles. Storytelling has slowly become the ultimate tactic in advertising for many brands and marketers.

Since storytelling is such a powerful tool when it comes to engaging with customers, and approximately one-third of consumer decision-making is based on packaging (Jarski, 2014), integrating storytelling element into the product packaging design itself is a great method chosen by many businesses to influence consumer's buying behaviours right after their first encounter with a product. Storytelling on product packaging enables brands to communicate story via two different types of language: visual and verbal, and visual cues are quite important since it catches consumer's eye the quickest while they scan the shelves looking for a product. A stand-out packaging design using the right colour, background, fonts, etc. makes the story comes together in a way that consumers can easily understand. Together with the verbal brand communication on the packaging, the two languages make the most powerful brand story to consumers (Mininni, 2013)

Being a popular tactic used in marketing means being a popular research topic among marketing researchers, in the past, there have been many researches investigating the use of storytelling in different marketing contexts and its influences on consumer perception. Yet, the majority of those studies mainly looks at the use of storytelling in advertising

(e.g. Escalas, 2008; Escalas, 2004; etc.), while packaging, among other marketing contexts, have been neglected. Among a few researches studying the integration of storytelling in packaging, researchers tend to only focus on the verbal narrative aspect of storytelling on packaging while neglecting the use of non-verbal elements with storytelling abilities and vice versa. Since packaging communicates with customers mostly through visual stimuli such as colours, pictures, graphics, shapes, type and texts (Joutsela, 2010), studies on both aspects of storytelling would be highly in need.

This thesis will focus more in depth on the integration of storytelling into product packaging and its influence on customer buying behaviour, as well as customer perception towards storytelling packaging. It is relevant to companies and businesses, as storytelling at this time is a trendy digital marketing strategy, while product packaging is an important element that determines customers' first impression of a product. For any successful product launch, brands should be aware of consumers' perception on storytelling, packaging and able to utilize those two to connect and engages with consumers in the most efficient way. Since story telling is not a new concept, currently on trend, but not much study has been done on the integration of storytelling on product packaging, especially in terms of analysing both verbal and visual storytelling as important packaging elements.

## **1.2 Research aim**

The aim of this thesis is to examine in depth the different approaches of storytelling through product packaging, influence of storytelling packaging on customer buying behaviours, as well as the most effective approach to storytelling to consumers. Different types of stories are examined in terms of verbal and visual stories. Consumers' perception on packagings' storytelling effectiveness is also examined in accordance with packaging attractiveness and in-store visibility.

## **1.3 Research questions**

Since this thesis focus on studying the influence of storytelling through packaging on customer buying behaviours and customer perception towards packaging design with storytelling elements, there are three research questions as follow:

- What is the concept and importance of brand storytelling through packaging?



- What brand storytelling approaches and elements do brands use to communicate brand stories through product packaging?
- How do consumers perceive brand stories, and which is the most effective storytelling approach to communicate brand stories with consumers?

## 1.4 Key concepts and definitions

- Storytelling

According to the Oxford Dictionary of English, storytelling is traditionally defined as “the activity of telling or writing stories” (Stevenson, 2015). Storytelling has different approaches with different definitions. The storytelling approaches are divided into 3 categories, which are:

- **Verbal storytelling**, in which stories are conveyed entirely using written language.
- **Visual storytelling**, in which stories are told using design elements like type, colour, space, and images (Sametz & Maydoney, 2003)
- **Cinematic storytelling**, in which stories are told by using the re-enactment (or dramatization) of events on screen.

Since this thesis focus on analysing the use of storytelling in packaging context, only relevant approaches to this context will be studied, which are verbal and visual storytelling. Cinematic storytelling will not be mentioned in the later part of the thesis.

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

The thesis includes four clear main sections as follow:

- Introduction: Introducing topic background and motivation for the thesis topic. Aim and research questions are raised.
- Theoretical framework: Reviewing different historical literature on the topic, which will then be used in accordance with the empirical data results to answer research questions
- Research method: Explaining research method used for the collecting empirical data. The empirical data results are also analysed in this section.

- Discussion and conclusion: Discussing evaluating the findings of this thesis, concluding the main content of this thesis and finalizing the decision of the study.

## **1.6 Limitations**

While many different topics could be covered in the thesis, the researcher will only focus on the issues that directly relates to storytelling through packaging as follow:

- The researcher only considers the marketing aspects of storytelling without analysing deeply into the use of storytelling within other areas, such as psychology, education, etc.
- Only written and visual stories in brand storytelling are reviewed. Other concept, for example brand archetypes in stories, are not considered in this thesis. Cinematic storytelling due to being not relevant is also not mentioned.

## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The aim of this part is to review some of the main previous theories and literature that will later be used as the theoretical foundation for empirical research for this thesis.

This section is divided into three parts: The first part reviews brand storytelling through product packaging, including the concept of storytelling, benefits of brand storytelling in marketing, and packaging as a brand storytelling context. The second part examines two different approaches to brand storytelling, which are verbal and visual storytelling. The elements contributing to each approach are also reviewed in this part. The last part of the theoretical framework section reviews different models on how consumers respond to and perceive storytelling through packaging.

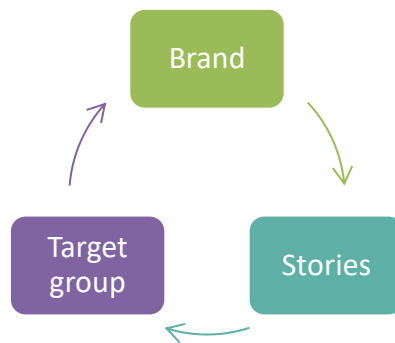
### **2.1 Brand storytelling through product packaging**

#### **2.1.1 The concept of brand storytelling**

Story is undoubtedly a powerful tool in human communication, and brands, especially iconic brands, have been using stories as a great way to convey brands' value and what the companies stand for (Fog, et al., 2004). Whether real or fictional, those stories provide meaning to brands and reflect brand's core value. Brands use their stories as a platform to perform a special kind of story – a myth (Holt, 2003), and what people want to believe in are myths and stories (Kelly T, 2006). For the brand to have a great impact, it should be built based on clear values that are embedded within the core of the company. The more stories told about the company that supports its values, the more they will nurture the company's core story. Brand core story helps ensure the consistency of company communications and messages, thus differentiating it from competitors (Fog, et al., 2004). Stories have positive influence on both internal and external brand perceptions (Guber, 2007)

Fog et al. (2004) present the model which outlines the relationship between brand, brand stories, and the target group when brand storytelling is used to communicate within the company (internally) and between the company and consumers (externally). In this model, Fog et al. emphasize the importance of the emotional bond created between brand,

stories, and target group. The brand creates an emotional connection with consumers, the stories touch consumers (target group) emotion and the target group emphasizes with the company (Fog, et al., 2004, p. 22). The target group for brand stories telling could be internal, in which the stories are used to communicate brand's core stories with employees; or external for communicating with consumers. For this thesis, the researcher will only study the external brand storytelling between brand and consumers.



*Figure 1 Relationship between brand, stories and target group (Fog, et al., 2004, p. 22)*

### **2.1.2 Benefits of brand storytelling in marketing**

With a structure that keeps it together and engages with listeners (Lundqvist, et al., 2012), brand storytelling brings about lots of valuable benefits for brand communication.

Firstly, storytelling catches consumers' interest and attention (Escalas, 2004) and build their memories. Stories are crafted strategically around a plot, communicating one clearly focused message (Fog, et al., 2004) that is valued, either positively or negatively, by the audience. With its tactical nature (Katz, 2016), stories help audience see, hear, taste, smell and feel brands' messages; and build their memory. As stories are stored in memory in various ways: factually, visually and emotionally, consumers will highly more likely to remember them (Mossberg & Johansen, 2006).

Secondly, storytelling is a natural motivator, generating positive feelings in consumers, both in general and in term of the brand image. A study conducted by Escalas (2004) has shown that advertisements with story content raise more positive emotions, such as upbeat or warm feeling. Comparing to other regular types of advertisement, stories are often less critically analysed and raise less negative thoughts in the target audience (Escalas, 2004, p. 38)

For the brand itself, storytelling connects brands with consumers on a more personal level and builds relationships. It creates customers' expectation and influence customers' evaluation of the brand and its product or service (Lundqvist, et al., 2012). By integrating storytelling in advertisements, positive features of the brand's products or services could be conveyed to audience without being perceived as commercials. Studies also show that by sharing a story, people are more likely to be persuaded than data, facts or figures (Aaker, 2014). On the other hand, stories add unique associations to a brand, which makes them a value-adding asset and increase customer brand equity (Aaker, 1991). Moreover, the episodic nature of a story will enhance the likelihood of its being passed along from consumers to consumers (Fog, et al., 2004). Brand is more interesting to talk about when there are some stories presented, and in this case, consumers are more likely to become the ambassadors of the brand they like (Guber, 2007)

### **2.1.3 Packaging as a brand storytelling context**

The previous section discussed the concept of storytelling and how storytelling benefits the brand perception from a customer's point of view. Next, relevant characteristics of packaging that was examined and researched will be reviewed.

Many researches have shown that most of consumer's purchasing decisions are impulsive and made at the point of purchase. This result emphasizes the important of point-of-purchase marketing, and various point-of-purchase communications vehicles that marketers can use to influence consumers' buying decision in retail. Among those, packaging is considered the most important and the only communication stimulus that consumers encounter at the time and place of purchase, hence may serve as one of the main determinants of consumer purchasing behaviour, providing consumers with important information of the brand and product. Researches have also shown that packaging influences consumers' responses to and valuation of the brand. Packaging is particularly important and the key influencer in low-involvement and FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) purchasing decisions, since consumers would not spend much time and effort into choosing or looking for additional information on those types of products. For low-involvement products, initial impressions formed initially can have lasting impact (Silayoi & Speece, 2007). Packaging of those, as a result, represents the product itself in the eyes of consumers. An effective package therefore must perform the following sales tasks: attract

attention, describe product's features, create customer confidence, and make a good impression (Kotler & Keller, 2006).

The above characteristics of packaging makes it an important competitive advantage of brands, a tool that differentiates the brand from other competitors in the market and strengthens the relationships between brands and its consumers. With all of these advantages, packaging may serve as an influential context for brands to communicate its marketing messages with consumers, especially brand stories.

In terms the functions of packaging, different researchers have different viewpoints on packaging functions. However, most functions relate to either marketing, logistics, or both. Prendergast & Pitt (1996) condenses all packaging functions suggested by other researchers into 3 core functions: The first function is logistically related: protecting product in movement. The second function relates directly to marketing and sales packaging: conveying products' virtues and attracting attention to the products. The last function relates to both marketing and logistics: providing convenience of handling and storing the product. Packaging has many functions, however, the potential function of packaging as a value, stories and meanings communicator to end users are often overlooked (Joutsela, 2010). Storytelling, both verbally and visually, is an effective way of communicating brand ideas and impressions with packaging.

Despite its great influences on consumer's perception and valuation of the brand, the content of messages on product packages traditionally includes product claims: intensive information and arguments about the products; and other product-related information such as nutrition, ingredients, quality, performance and use. As of recently, many brands have also started incorporating brand stories on product packages. However, most of the brand stories are fact-centred, with a rather flat storyline and little to none dramatic turning points, which leads to the lack of emotional appeal. Because emotional appeal is the main typical message content found in storytelling advertisement, messages on packaging which relies mainly on facts are likely to be different. It's not very typical for consumers to perceive emotional brand story content on product packaging.

## 2.2 Verbal vs. visual storytelling and storytelling elements

In this thesis, storytelling is categorised into two groups: verbal storytelling, in which stories are told using verbal (written) elements; visual storytelling, where non-verbal elements are used to communicate brand stories. The non-verbal elements for visual storytelling includes typeface, colour, images. On product packaging, some brand use only verbal or visual stories to communicate with consumers, while others integrate both type of storytelling on product packaging.

This chapter will review more on two types of storytelling and the importance of each type in communicating brand story.

### 2.2.1 Verbal storytelling and short written brand stories

As mentioned earlier, the term “verbal storytelling” in this thesis is used for stories that are conveyed entirely using written languages. Visual storytelling is not a very new concept, since the very first story on product packaging appeared in London during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. However, brand stories on packaging were not widely used until the past decade. Nowadays, many companies utilise stories on packaging, and the label on product package are used not only for facts (e.g. ingredients, nutrition, etc.) but also as a tool for telling brand stories. Most packages include some brand stories, either on celebrating brand origins or describing brand autobiographical tales, with the purpose of competing for consumers’ attention (Kniazeva & Belk, 2007).

#### *a. What is a brand story?*

In order to give a correct definition for “a brand story”, it’s essential to classify the meaning of the term “story”. The word “story” itself holds a spectrum of definition. Gergen & Gergen (1988) defines story as “a narrative of an incidence or a sequence of events”, while Adaval & Wyer (1998) and Shankar et al. (2001) suggests that a story has a sequence, or a beginning, middle and an end”. Many other elements of a story such as time, location, activity, are also mentioned in other definitions of “story” created by other researchers. Based on all the widely recognized elements in other’s definition spectrum, Solja (2017) defines a story as *“a narrative of an incident or a sequence of causally linked or interconnected events arranged temporally, and involving characters as*

*agents of activities*”. In other words, a story includes causality, temporality, characters, and a plot with a beginning, middle and an end.

A brand story is defined most simplistically as a story created by a brand, for a brand. A This mean that the story will interact with the brand in a way and characters in the story will represent the brand or its product. In this thesis, a brand story is defined based on the previous definition of a story as “ a brand-created narrative of an incident or a sequence of causally linked or interconnected events arranged temporally, and involving characters as agents of activities” (Solja, 2017). This definition is restricted to brand story in the context of verbal brand storytelling only.

***b. Characteristics of a good verbal brand story on product package***

Telling a good story in general is not easy and telling a good verbal story on product packaging is even harder. Due to the space limitations, a brand story on a product package has to be short and concise. Yet, the story also must be capable of arousing consumers’ interest instantly, since for an in-store environment, consumers do not spend much time browsing between shelves and look closely at the product. Indeed, verbal stories used in marketing contexts, such as on packages or price promotions, are very short. A research on the length of stories on product package suggests that from 12 packages chosen in a convenience store Helsinki, the average story length is 43 words, with the shortest having 12 words and the longest 73 words (Solja, 2017). Indeed, past researches have also shown that a short brand story of just a few sentences, told in person, may have a positive impact on consumers’ purchase intension (Gilliam & Zablah, 2013; Gilliam & Flaherty, 2015). However, studies also suggests that shorter stories are less likely to be able to transport the consumers into a fully absorbed state of mind that has a maximal persuasive potential (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008)

In addition, a good verbal brand story means a well-formed story, which has one main message (Escalas, 2008) communicated using a concise and easy-to-understand method (Health & Health, 2007). A story narrated in non-first person is proven to generate a more positive brand image (Huang, 2010)The story should be believable to consumers, but it does not necessarily have to be true (Mossberg & Johansen, 2006). Moreover, other elements such as the expected results of the story (Fog, et al., 2004), the type of product and brand in question (Chiu, et al., 2012)), the target group, context and channel used to tell



the story (Fog, et al., 2004) should be considered to make successful storytelling experience.

Most importantly, a good verbal brand story is an emotionally engaging story. In order to engage with consumers emotionally, it is significant that the story has a dramatic structure with negative incidents (Freytag, 1900). Negative aspects of a story generate unpleasant emotions like fear, sadness and anxiety, which are proven to create just an impactful and enjoyable story experience as effective as positive emotions (Söderlund & Dahlen, 2010). Meanwhile, those negative story events allow consumers to experience the mimic unpleasant emotion inside a safe story world without having to bear with the real-life experiences (Nell, 2002).

### **2.2.2 Visual storytelling and non-written storytelling elements**

Product design and aesthetics are vital tools to gain competitive advantages in the market and differentiate brands from potential competitors (Kreuzbauer & Malter, 2005). As a result, visual storytelling has long been utilized in marketing in various areas, particularly social media. From a packaging perspective, an effective visual story is told using three main elements, which are typeface, colour and image. The importance of each of those elements and how they influence consumers' perception will be analysed below.

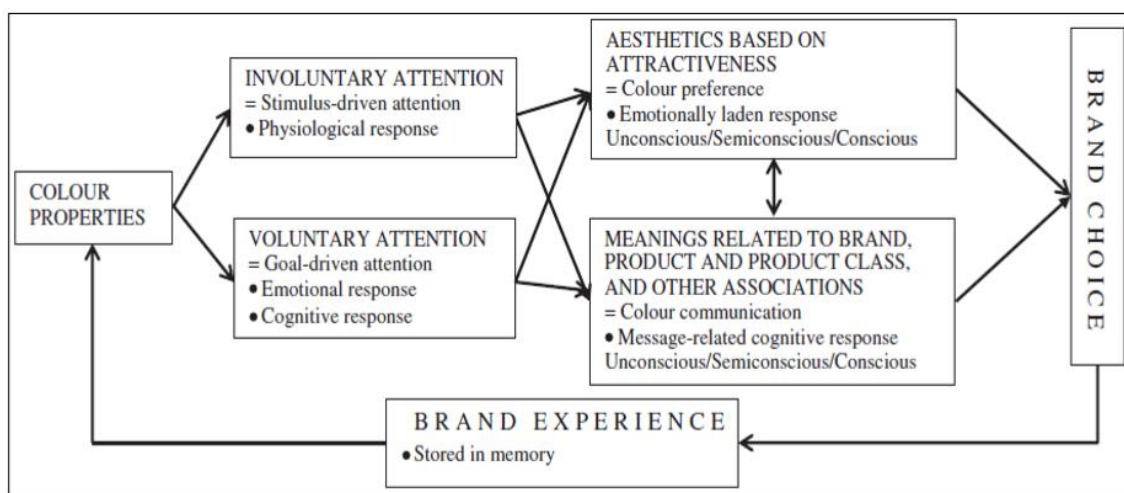
#### ***a. Typeface***

Typeface has a strong influence on consumer's perception of a product package. On a product package, typeface functions as a tool to make the text easier to read, as well as to attract customers' attention. From a storytelling point of view, typeface communicates meaning on two levels: Firstly, typeface has sensory effect on audience, and creates impression of being, for example, hard, soft, friendly, mechanical, etc. Secondly, typeface also carries cultural meaning or associations with it. Some typefaces such as Snell Roundhand and Caslon Antique may serve as two typical examples. While Snell Roundhand typeface evokes associations with weddings, ye olde Caslon Antique is proven to reference colonial America (Sametz & Maydoney, 2003). Those associations may contribute to or detract from the sensory meaning. As for Times Roman, Arial, and some other typefaces, no meanings are communicated due to their popularity across occasions.

In addition, every single element of a typeface, such as font, weight, sizes, column widths, and spacing options, can create differences. This can be strategically used to generate different emotions and feelings from target audience.

### **b. Colour**

Estimates has shown that about 62-90 percent of human's assessment and evaluations is solely based on colour (Singh, 2006). From a marketing perspective, packaging colour strongly influences buying decisions, especially for consumers who live a hectic lifestyle and are always in a hurry. This group of consumers usually rely on packaging colour and design for purchasing decisions (Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014).



*Figure 2 Packaging colours' function at point of purchase (Mohebbi, 2014)(Adapted from (Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014)*

Presented in figure 2 is the framework on packaging colours' function at point of purchase designed by Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) and adapted by Mohebbi (2014). The framework includes three core function of packaging colour, which are voluntary, involuntary attention; aesthetics, and communications. Other than the influence that packaging colour exercise on consumers' emotion, her study also shows that the consumers reactions to packaging colour differs based on cultural factors or personal preferences. While cultural factors generate unconscious and innate, semiconscious responses, personal preferences based on personal experiences influences conscious reactions.

Being such an excellent source of information and consumer influencer, marketers have long taken advantage of colour as a visual mnemonic device to generate consumers' attention. On the other hand, colour's power to influence emotions and role in forming attitudes (Singh, 2006) also make it one of the most significant storytelling elements. As

a result, packaging designers are required to use colour's connotations when designing a product package and be able to combine different colours to generate consumers' attention at point of purchase. Table 1 below summarizes colour's connotation and its most popular meaning in marketing and storytelling (Singh & Srivastava, 2011)

For example, warm colours serve the function of involuntary attention and are often used in for sale and discount advertisement or packaging due to its nature of being noticeable, stimulating psychological reaction, increasing blood pressure (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999). On the other hand, Middlestadt (1990) suggests using cold colours as background, since products with cold background (e.g. blue) is often regarded as elegant, unique and more attractive when compared to warm background (e.g. orange), since warm colours have more effect on the brain.

*Table 1 Colour's connotation in marketing and storytelling (Mohebbi, 2014)*

Color	Connotation
Red	celebration, purity, passion, strength, energy, fire, love, excitement, speed, heat, arrogance, ambition, leadership, masculinity, power, danger, blood, war, anger, revolution, and communalism
Blue	depression, tranquility, trust, confidence, conservatism, dependability, wisdom, wealth royalty, truthfulness, and creativity
Green	growth, rebirth, renewal, nature, fertility, youth, good luck, generosity, health, abundance, stability, and creative intelligence
Yellow	sunlight, joy, earth, optimism, intelligence, hope, liberalism, wealth, dishonesty, weakness, greed, decay aging, femininity, gladness, sociability and friendship
White	youth, sterility, light, reverence, truth, snow, air, cleanliness, coldness, fearfulness and humility
Black	absence, rebellion, modernity, power, sophistication, formality, elegance, mystery, style, evil, emptiness, darkness, seriousness, conventionality, unity, sorrow, professionalism, and sleekness
Gray	elegance, respect, reverence, wisdom, old-age, pessimism, boredom, decay, dullness, urban sprawl, intense emotions, balance, mourning, and neutrality
Orange	energy, heat, fire, playfulness, gaudiness, arrogance, warning, danger, desire, royalty, and religious ceremonies and rituals
Brown	calmness, boldness, depth, natural organisms, richness, tradition, heaviness, poverty, dullness, roughness, steadfastness, simplicity, dependability, friendliness and aids in stimulating appetite and is popularly used for advertising various bakery products, chocolates, foods and flavors
Pink	gratitude, appreciation, admiration, sympathy, socialism, health, femininity, love, marriage, joy, innocence, flirtatiousness, childlike behavior and symbolizes sweet taste
Purple	nobility, humility, spirituality, ceremony, mystery, wisdom, enlightenment, flamboyance, exaggeration, sensuality, pride, and lavender essence
Indigo	spirituality and intuition
Violet	elegance, grace and artistic creativity
Magenta	artistic creativity
Rose	optimism, hope and love and used in advertising to signify rosy flavors

The effectiveness of colour for communicating stories and drawing attention to packaging also depends on how colour preference differs across gender. Studies have shown that blue is the most favourite colour for both gender, and least favourite colour for men and women are brown and orange respectively (Babolhavaeji, et al., 2015). Target consumer in terms of gender thus is an important factor determining the selection of colour for storytelling packaging.

### *c. Image*

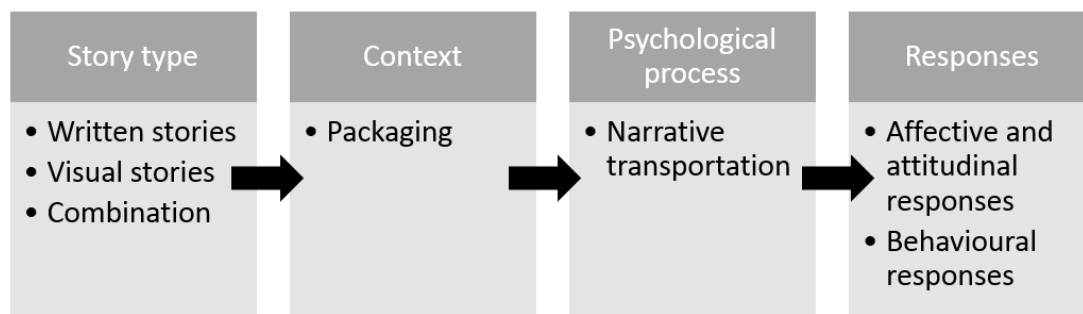
An image itself is a good non-verbal attribute in marketing, and packaging particularly. The picture on the package is admitted to be the element that the majority of consumers pay most attention to when they look at a product (Elena, 2015). An image is worth a thousand words, and a product can be successfully visualised without the involvement of verbal communications just with the use of a picture. With a picture, consumers may understand the product, know what it looks like, and decide whether they are interested in the product or not even without reading the description texts on the package.

As a visual storytelling element, image plays an even more important role, and storytelling via images has been an academic research topic within art and aesthetics. In 2003, the existence of storytelling elements in images have been acknowledged by Jørgensen (Rafferty & Albinfalah, 2014); however, the study faces the same problem as some other research on the same topic: interpretation and perception of image are highly subjective, therefore, hard to yield (Sametz & Maydoney, 2003). There is, however, one research that have faced the challenge and come to the conclusion that there is existence of narrative elements in the story-receiver's description of the image, and the use of storytelling as an input method encourages connotative level of response (Rafferty & Albinfalah, 2014).

On the other hand, the way an image is interpreted is dependent of other factors such as image execution, position. Different adoption of an image may tell different kind of stories, and the choice of background, point of view, package material, etc. will either enhance the brand attributes or weaken them. Those elements will make a significant difference on how consumers interpret the image-based story.

## 2.3 Consumer perception process to brand storytelling on product package

Consumer perception are defined as “the process by which stimuli are chosen, organized and interpreted” (Solomon, et al., 2002). Perception involves in the purchase decision process and is known to influence consumer behaviour. How information is perceived and the meaning of a story on a product package or advertisement may vary based on consumers’ prior assumption and interpretations. Such assumptions stem from schemas, organized collections of belief and feelings, which plays an important role in consumers’ perception process (Solomon, et al., 2002).



*Figure 3 Consumer perceptual process*

According to Solja (2017), consumers process information in the form of story, both verbally and visually, through narrative processing and transportation. The response process is then followed by a variety of affective, attitudinal and behavioural responses.

### 2.3.1 Narrative processing and transportation

By definition, narrative processing is an information processing strategy, in which consumers consume a story-based information in a narrative manner based on temporality and causality (Escalas & Delgadillo, 2004). This narrative mode of thought makes the information easier for consumers to absorb and believe, since this processing style is compatible with consumers’ natural way of processing and storing information.

Through narrative processing, brand story can elicit narrative transportation, which is a mental process that can carry consumers away by the story to the point that they are lost in it and lose contacts with some facts from the surrounding world, and move in favour

of the story (Escalas, 2004). As a result, consumers will experience strong emotions and motivations that may change their opinion and beliefs about a brand or a product.

Incorporating brand stories on product packaging and utilize narrative transportation when reading brand stories on product package brings about lots of benefits. It reduces critical thoughts, create experiential meaning, make consumers identify with the character of the story and adopt their viewpoints, and make the story consumption experience enjoyable (Solja, 2017).

However, ambiguity is considered one of its major drawbacks. When telling a story, brand cannot control consumers' perception and interpretation of the story. Therefore, consumers may interpret the story based on personal experience, leading to unintended interpretation that differs from the original story that brands want to communicate.

### **2.3.2 Affective and attitudinal responses**

After exposed to a brand story, consumers are likely to have several affective and attitudinal responses following narrative processing and transportation.

In terms of affective responses, research has shown that a message in the form of a story may create positive influences, such as upbeat and warm feeling (Escalas, 2004). Positive emotions through narrative transportation may increase in intensity, and make transported consumers experience strong emotions (Green & Brock, 2000). Enjoyment provoked through narrative transportation is perceptually charged and evoke positive affective responses (Solja, 2017). Negative story elements, such as violence or horror, although are negatively charged, may in the end result in enjoyment and positive affect emotions (Green & Brock, 2000).

On the other hand, consumers may generate attitudinal responses when exposed to brand stories. Studies have shown that brand stories may influence brand attitude in a positive way (Escalas, 2004). In consumer perception, stories are interesting, entertaining and enjoyable mean of communication. This makes consumers more likely to have beneficial attitude towards the brand (Forgas, 1994). Moreover, with the help of transportation, consumers are offered insights to how to brand is consumed and experience the benefits that the brand offers (Boller & Olson, 1991), which thereby can positively influence brand attitude.

### **2.3.3 Behavioural responses**

In terms of behavioural responses, brand stories have been proved to provoke higher purchase intention in consumers when compared to other forms of communications (Solja, 2017). This result stems from the fact that story-based information can match easily with existing knowledge in human memory, making the consumers consider the information as a whole story through narrative processing instead of judging all the detailed information separately (Schank & Abelson, 1995). As a result, consumers are more likely to accept the story that brand claims without arguing them (Green & Brock, 2000). With this mechanism, stories may have a positive influence on consumers' purchase decision. On the other hand, as previously mentioned, increased level of brand attitude is one of consumers' attitudinal responses to brand stories. And since brand attitude is positively related to consumers' purchase intention (Lundqvist, et al., 2012), the use of brand stories on product package can indirectly influence consumers' purchasing behaviour.

Besides positively influencing consumers' purchasing intention, brand stories can also impact other behavioural intentions of consumers, other than ones that relate to purchase. Gilliam & Flaherty (2015) states that stories can have positive impact on word-of-mouth intentions. A study by Soderlund & Sagfossen, 2015 also supports the idea that stories have positive impact on consumers' information gathering intentions, such as intention to visit the brand's website.

## **2.4 Summary**

In the theoretical framework, some previous theories and literature were reviewed and analysed to answer the research questions, regarding the importance and benefits of brand storytelling through packaging, and how brands can use verbal and visual storytelling with written and non-written elements to tell stories on product packages.

Firstly, it is undeniable that brand storytelling plays a key importance in today's world, especially within the field of marketing, being the ultimate tactic for many brands and marketers. Story reflects the brands' values, provide meaning to the brands and its products and services. It ensures the consistency of brand-consumers communications and messages, as well as differentiating brands from competitors. On the other hand, product package serves as an influential context to communicate brand stories, since it is the only

communication stimulus that consumers encounter at the point of purchase, while most consumers' buying decisions are impulse and made at point of purchase. The integration of storytelling on packaging brings about lots of benefits: catching consumer interest and attention, build memory; generating positive feeling in consumers, connecting brands with consumers on a more personal level and build relationships, and have a positive on consumers. All previous theories and researches have emphasized the importance of storytelling through product package, and at the same time answer the first research questions regarding the concept of brand storytelling and its importance.

The second part of the theoretical framework answer the second research questions on how brands communicate story on product packages and analyse different storytelling elements. Currently two types of stories are used on product packaging, which are written and visual stories. Both types of stories, along with its storytelling elements, have certain influences on consumers and serve the same purpose of telling brands stories with consumers and communicate its values and meanings. Some packaging uses only written or visual stories, and some brands choose to integrate both types on packaging to maximize its storytelling effect. Despite having its own strengths in generating interests and attentions, both written and visual stories have its own drawbacks. While the drawback of written stories on packages is that the story must be short, which may lead to less persuasiveness, visual stories are often ambiguous and generate unintended interpretation. It is believed that integrating both types of story on product packages helps eliminates the drawbacks of both: non-written elements tell a visual story, while a short-written story may serve as the guide in interpreting the visual story, makes the storytelling process less ambiguous and minimize unintended interpretation from consumers.

The last part of the theoretical framework partly answers the last research questions on consumer perception. The stories on the product package, no matter it is written or visual, will make consumers go through narrative transportation, which makes the information easier to absorb and believe, reduces critical thoughts, and make consumers identify with the character of the story. The perceptual process is then followed by affective and attitudinal responses (positive brand attitude, willingness to pay for the brand, less price sensitivity), and behavioural response (increased level of purchase intention and more word-of-mouth intention). This whole process influences the consumers' brand perception.



### **3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research methodology section of the thesis explains the choice of research method used in this study. It represents the structure of the empirical research section and strategy used for gathering and analysing empirical data.

#### **3.1 Quantitative research method**

By definition, quantitative research method "emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, questionnaires and surveys, or by manipulating pre-existing statistical data" (Anon., 2018). Quantitative research method concentrates on gathering data in the form of numbers and generalizing it across different groups of people or explaining a particular phenomenon. Matthew and Ross (2010) states that quantitative research is an effective method to gain knowledge on consumer preferences and opinions.

In this thesis, the researcher elaborated quantitative data analysis as the main research approach. The main reason for selecting this type of research was that the thesis subject on the use of storytelling through packaging was a relatively new area of study with not much preliminary research or data available. Since the goal of this study is to find out how consumers perceive the use of storytelling on packaging and which way of storytelling is most effective for an average consumer, a larger sample set were more useful for researcher and quantitative research method provided a more reliable result. Moreover, in quantitative research method, numbers are used to statistically analyse, summarise and describe data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This characteristic of quantitative analysis guaranteed objectivity, reliability, and transparency when collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. As a result, good results and strong conclusions were delivered.

In this thesis, quantitative research standards and guidelines were used. Structured data were collected using the survey method.

### **3.1.1 Survey questionnaire**

In this study, the questionnaire used was written in English, consisting of demographic questions and questions relevant to the thesis topic. The questionnaire included eight questions in total, which could be found in the appendix.

Most of the questions were multiple questions with single selection design. There were three demographic questions investigating the characteristics of respondents according to gender, age group, and nationality. The purpose of these questions is to help the researcher to determine whether such factors may influence consumers' attitude towards storytelling packaging, since the gender, age and shopping frequencies of respondents sometimes may greatly alter their responses to the questions. Nationality can also affect consumers' perception of the packaging, since some stories carry its cultural associations and meaning that may not make sense to only some people from some specific background, while having no meaning to other people from different background.

Besides the demographic questions, there were two other questions measuring consumers' attitude towards storytelling packaging, which are "Which approach to storytelling would you prefer?" and "Do you prefer packaging with storytelling elements to other generic packaging with no storytelling elements to it?" The purpose of these two questions is to measure consumers' attitude and perception, packaging preference and answer the third research question on which the most effective storytelling approach is to communicate brand stories with consumers.

Lastly, there were three forced preference rank order questions, which allow the respondent to rank a set of chosen packaging from high to low until all packagings are ranked. Since this type of question could be fatiguing for respondents, the number questions in this type were minimized to three questions. The purpose of these three questions is to evaluate consumers' preference in terms of storytelling approach, and the importance of different verbal and visual storytelling elements from consumers' viewpoint. Since the integration of storytelling elements on product package does not guarantee that the packaging will score high in consumers' eyes and will stand out on product shelves, the researcher asked respondents to evaluate the packagings based on three different factors: attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness. In terms of packaging selection, the researcher chose five different packagings, each of which integrates some

different storytelling elements and storytelling approaches, which will be explained more in detail in Section 3.2. After finishing the questionnaire, respondents were asked why they ranked the packaging the way they did.

All the questions in the questionnaire were carefully designed to allow respondents to provide answer more aptly and help researcher focus on the thesis topic. All questionnaire participations were given a standard questionnaire with exact same questions.

### **3.1.2 Research sampling and data collection**

For the survey questionnaire, convenience sampling approach was used. The reason for choosing this data sampling approach was based on the time availability and other relevant factors and resources. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), convenience sampling approach allows researcher to select respondents based on their availability, willingness and accessibility.

The survey was conducted in February 2018 in Helsinki with the participation of seventy respondents. The participants of the survey cover different age groups and different nationalities. The first ten questionnaires were distributed outside K-Citymarket Vantaa Koivukylä due to its relevance to the thesis topic. However, it was quite difficult to distribute and collect questionnaires in flourishing areas and outside supermarkets due to respondent's time limitation: many people did not have time to finish the questionnaires. As a result, the other sixty questionnaires were distributed at Arcada University of Applied Sciences. The questionnaires were individually distributed among respondents. After survey completion, the total number of respondents were seventy. However, one questionnaire answer was deemed incomplete and was excluded from the final sample. Only sixty-nine survey answers were used for the study.

When distributing the questionnaire, to be sure that all the respondents understand the objective of the study, before filling in the survey, all respondents were explained how every package tells its story. This was to guarantee that all respondents have the same information before filling in the survey.



### 3.1.3 Data analysis



The data analysis for this study was conducted with the help of IBM SPSS Statistical Program. Since all data was collected in the form of physical questionnaire format, the data collected was first coded and quantified before being analysed with SPSS for discussion and conclusion.

## 3.2 The selection of packaging

For the ranking questions in the questionnaire, five packagings of FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) were used. Each packaging used different storytelling approaches with different storytelling elements. Further detail on storytelling approach and elements used on product packagings are explained more in detail in Table 2.

Table 2 Choice of packaging

Packaging	Image	Storytelling elements				Storytelling method
		Verbal storytelling	Visual storytelling			
		Written stories	Colour	Type-face	Image	
A		x			x	Combination of verbal and verbal storytelling
B		x	x	x		Combination of verbal and verbal storytelling

<b>C</b>		x	x			Verbal story-telling
<b>D</b>			x		x	Visual story-telling
<b>E</b>		x	x	x	x	Combination of verbal and verbal story-telling

In the questionnaire, five different packages were chosen for ranking, each of which uses one or more specific storytelling elements and verbal, visual storytelling or combination of both as the main approach to communicate stories with consumers.

- Packaging A uses the combination of verbal and verbal storytelling; however, the main story was put inside of packaging.
- Packaging B also integrates both verbal and visual storytelling, with typeface and colour as the main visual elements and a very short brand story for verbal element.
- Meanwhile, packaging C uses only verbal storytelling as the main approach, and the written stories are much longer when compared to packaging B.
- Packaging D is an iconic Finnish packaging that utilizes visual storytelling using colour and image.
- Lastly, packaging E combines the use of both verbal and visual storytelling, with all of its storytelling elements including written brand stories, colour, image and typeface.

The purpose for choosing packaging with different storytelling elements was to examine consumers' storytelling approach preference and the importance of different storytelling elements in drawing consumers' attention and influence their perception on the package.

### **3.3 Limitations**

For this quantitative study, the researcher used only five different packages with different storytelling elements used in each packaging. Since the use of storytelling on packaging in the market may vary enormously, this small number of package sample may have biased the response result.

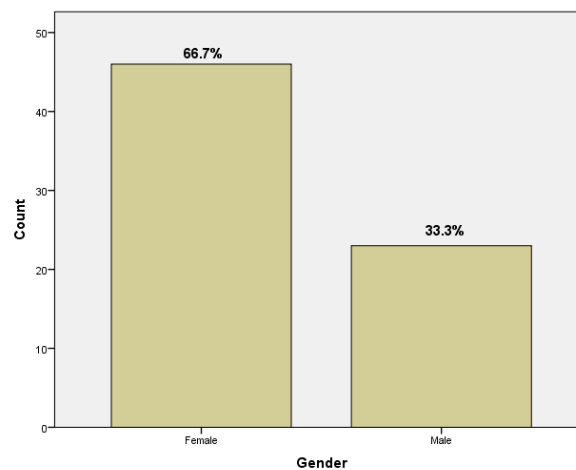
Moreover, in this study, the researcher used existing packages on the market. As a result, there might be biases that respondents were previously exposed to the packagings and might rank ones that they use over the less familiar packages.

## 4 RESULTS

### 4.1 Characteristics of respondents

In this section, the researcher presents the respondents' demographic results, in which respondents are segmented by gender, age groups, nationality, profession, and grocery shopping frequency. Following are the result classified by gender, age groups, nationalities, profession and grocery shopping frequency using suitable types of diagram.

#### 4.1.1 Gender



*Figure 4 Respondents by gender*

Figure 4 shows the segmentation of questionnaire respondents according to gender. Among 69 respondents to the packaging survey, there were 46 female respondents, making up 66.7% of respondents. The other 23 respondents are male, which accounted for 33.3% of the whole group.

#### 4.1.2 Age group

The age group of respondents are shown in Figure 5. In this research, respondent's ages are classified into three different groups, which are 20 year old and under, between 21 and 30 years old, and over 31 years old. Since the data collection was carried out at Arcada University of Applied Sciences with students making up the majority of respondents, 63.8% of respondents were between 21 and 30 years old.

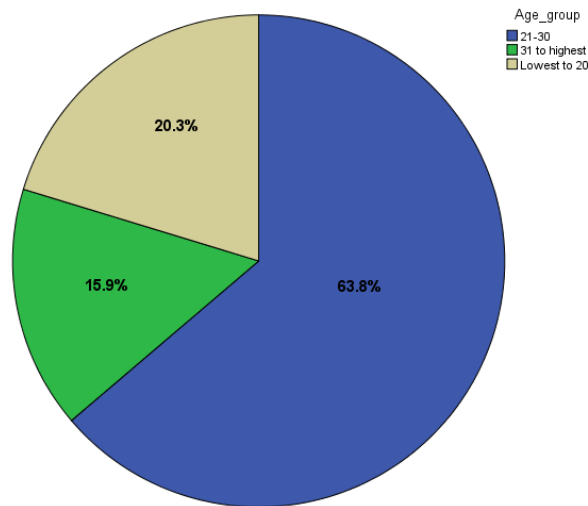


Figure 5 Respondents by age group

#### 4.1.3 Nationality

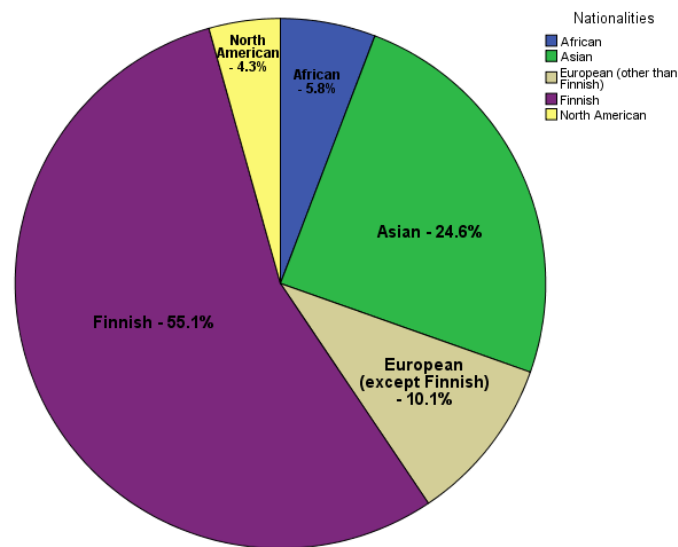


Figure 6 Respondents by nationality

There were 38 Finnish respondents, which made up 55.1% of the total number of respondents. The other 44.9% belonged to respondents from other countries, such as Canada, China, Germany, France, etc. Since the nationalities of respondents were quite spread out, they will be categorised into different groups according to continents, which are Finnish, Vietnamese, African, Asian (other than Vietnamese), European (other than Finnish), and North American. The detailed percentage of respondents from each group of nationalities are shown in Figure 6 above.



## 4.2 Attitude of respondent on packaging using storytelling

### 4.2.1 Consumers' packaging style preference

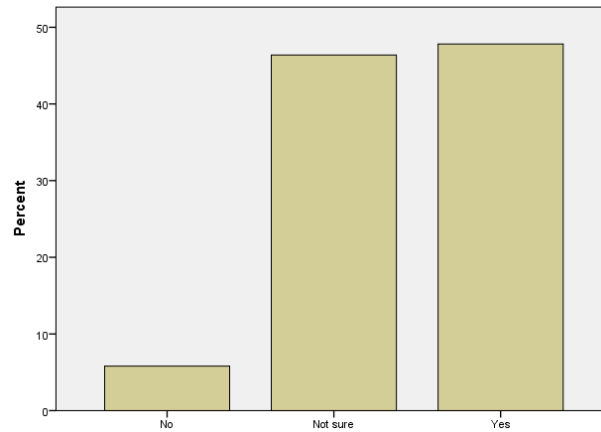


Figure 7 Respondents' attitude - Packaging style preference

Responding to the question on whether respondents prefer storytelling packaging to other generic packaging without storytelling elements presented on product packaging, 47.8% of respondents stated that they preferred storytelling packaging, and only 4% of respondents answered that they did not prefer storytelling packaging to other generic style of packaging. The other 46.4% claimed unsure that their preference depends on other factors of the package, such as the packaging design.

### 4.2.2 Consumers' storytelling approach preference

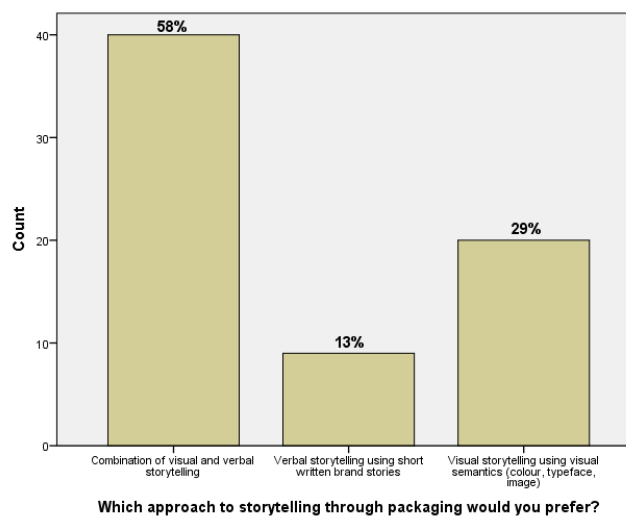


Figure 8 Respondents' attitude - Storytelling approach preference

Figure 8 shows respondents' storytelling approach preference. The results in detail is as follow:

- The majority of respondents (58%) preferred packaging that use the combination of both verbal and visual storytelling elements.
- Visual storytelling approach came second place, with twenty votes, accounting for 29% of total responses.
- Nine respondents stated that they preferred short written brand stories, making up 13% of total responses.

### **4.3 Respondent's ranking results for each type of storytelling packaging**

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rank five packaging in terms of packaging attractiveness, store availability, and storytelling effectiveness. In this section, respondents' ranking results of each packaging are presented and analysed in terms of packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness.

In this section, multidimensional scaling maps are generated with the help of SPSS program to visualise the similarities or dissimilarities between investigated packages from respondents' perspective according to ranking results. For all matrices in multidimensional scaling models, stress values are close to zero and squared correlation (RSQ) values are approximately one, indicating that they are good solutions. For example, the stress and squared correlation value (RSQ) for packaging attractiveness were 0.00287 (approximately 0.000) and 0.99988 (approximately 1) respectively, indicating a perfect goodness of fit.

The multidimensional scaling result of this study is generated purely from consumers' ranking data, only the trend on consumers' perception similarities and dissimilarities between packages were generated, while the dimension analyzing the relationship between packages remain unknown. As a result, the researcher only analyses general relationships between packagings and whether there are differences in consumers' perception for each packages.

### 4.3.1 Packaging attractiveness

In terms of packaging attractiveness, survey result showed that consumers liked packaging E the most, or in other words, found the appearance of packaging E most attractive, while packaging A's appearance was rated the lowest in terms of appearance attractiveness. Coming second, third, and forth place were packaging B, C, D respectively (Figure 9).

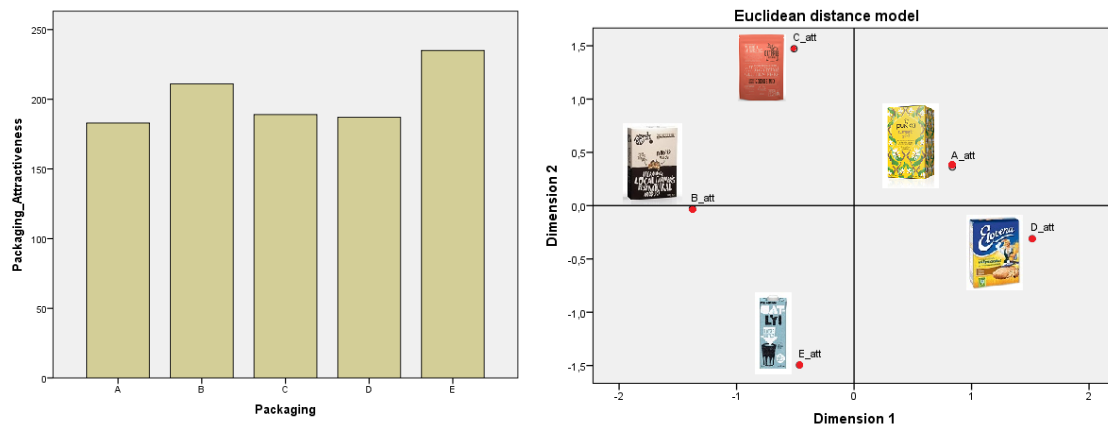


Figure 9 Packaging attractiveness ranking result

The multidimensional map analysing similarities and dissimilarities between consumers' ranking in terms of storytelling effectiveness is also shown in Figure 9. Since each point (representing each package) is placed quite far away from one another in the map, it could be inferred that respondents found five packages not very similar in terms of packaging attractiveness. Packaging C and E, as well as B and D, are placed very far away from each other, indicating that respondents found packaging C and E, and B and E very different from each other. Meanwhile, the distance between point A and D is shorter, meaning packaging A is perceived as being more similar to packaging D in terms of attractiveness when compared to packaging B.

### 4.3.2 In-store visibility

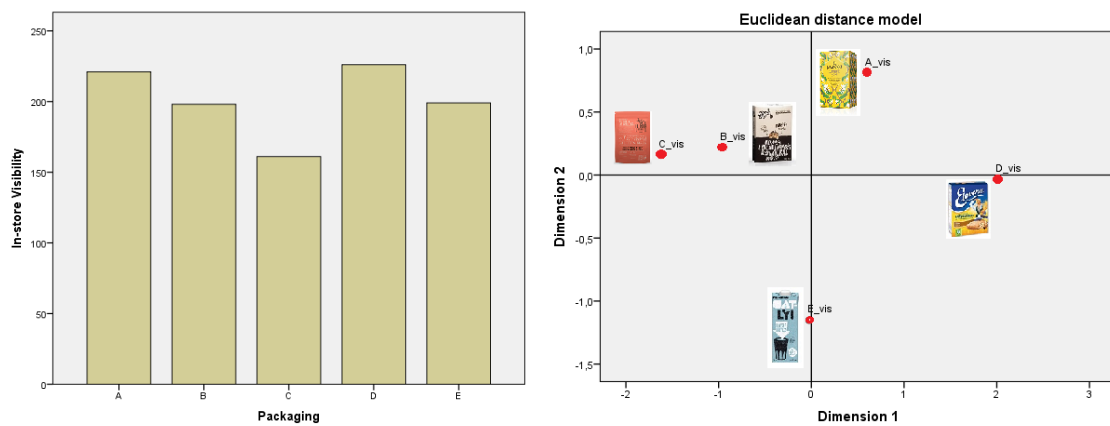


Figure 10 In-store visibility ranking result

The ranking of packaging's visibility in a specific store of five packaging is shown in detail in Figure 10. Packaging D was ranked the most visible in store, followed by A, B, and E. Meanwhile, packaging C scored the lowest in terms of packaging's in-store visibility.

According to the visibility multidimensional map, it could be inferred that respondents found dissimilarities between packaging C and D, as well as packaging A and E, since one point is placed far away from the other. Meanwhile, point B and C are closer together, indicating that respondents found packaging B and C quite similar in terms of packaging visibility. Packaging A, B, and C have high value for dimension 2 and low for dimension 1, while packaging D has relatively high value on both dimension, meaning that packaging A, B, and C seem to “favour” dimension 2 while packaging D used both dimensions more “equally”.

### 4.3.3 Storytelling effectiveness

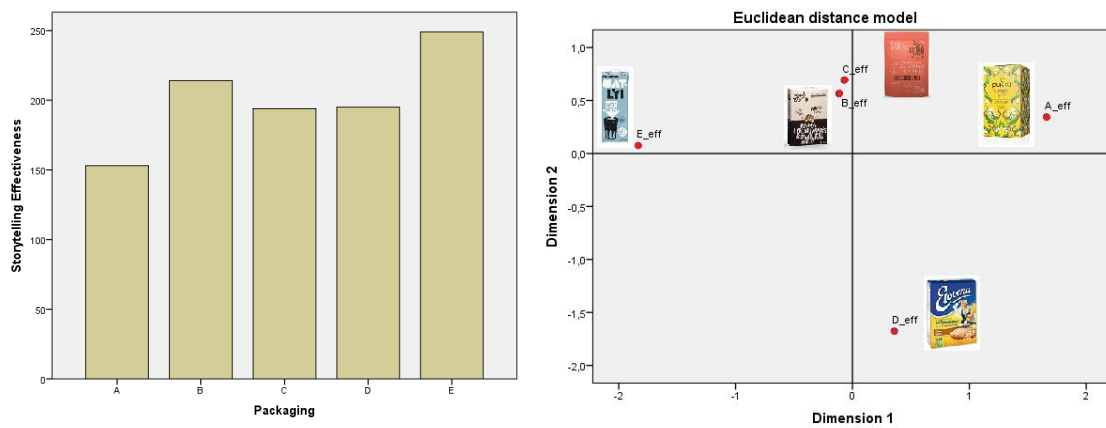
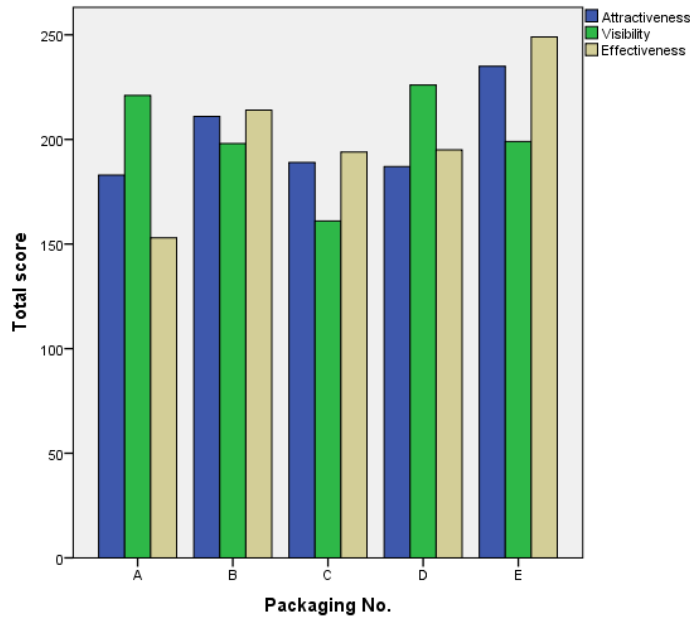


Figure 11 Storytelling effectiveness ranking result

The ranking for storytelling effectiveness turned out to be quite similar to the ranking of packaging attractiveness. Packaging E (using the combination of verbal storytelling and all three elements of visual storytelling) ranked the highest with the total score of 249. Packaging B, D, C were respectively second, third and fourth place. Packaging A, despite ranking second place in terms of in-store visibility, only scored 153 points and came last in terms of storytelling effectiveness.

According to the multidimensional map shown in figure 11, packaging B and C are grouped closer together, away from A, D and E. This result inferred that respondents found similarity between packaging B and C, and dissimilarities between A, D and E. Meanwhile, packaging E has small value for dimension 2, while the other four packagings have quite high dimension 2 value. This indicates that packaging E is not “using” dimension 2 as much as the other four packagings. In this solution, only packaging A seem to be using the two attributes equally, while other packagings seem to favour one or the other.

### 4.3.4 Summary of ranking data



*Figure 12 Summary of ranking result*

Figure 12 displays the summary of consumers' ranking in terms of packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and effectiveness in communicating brand stories. Packaging E scored the highest in both packaging attractiveness and storytelling effectiveness, however, ranked quite low (fourth place) in terms of in-store visibility. There was a consistency in ranking in terms of packaging attractiveness and storytelling effectiveness, as the ranking from first to last were E, B, C, D, A for attractiveness and E, B, D, C, A for storytelling effectiveness respectively. Despite ranking last for both attractiveness and storytelling effectiveness, packaging A scored second in terms of in-store availability. Packaging D was ranked the most visible packaging in store, while packaging B, D, C came third, fourth and fifth correspondingly. On the other hand, multidimensional scaling results indicate that there were dissimilarities in respondents' perception of five packagings in terms of packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness.

## 4.4 Relationship between consumers' characteristics storytelling approach preference

### 4.4.1 Gender

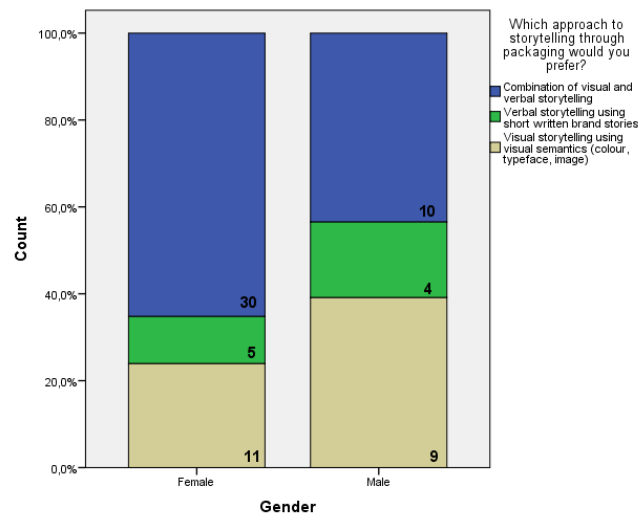


Figure 13 Relationship between gender and storytelling approach preference

Figure 13 shows the correlation between gender and storytelling approach preference. For both gender, packaging that utilizes the combination of written and visual storytelling were most preferred (40 votes out of 69 responses from both gender). Second place were visual storytelling approach. Written stories came last place, with only 9 votes from both genders.

This result shows no observable differences in the order of storytelling approach preference for both male and female. However, for male, the number of vote for visually and verbally combined approach and visual only approach were quite similar, with only one more vote in favour of the combination of verbal and visual stories.

### 4.4.2 Age group

The relationship between age group and storytelling approach preference are shown in Figure 14.

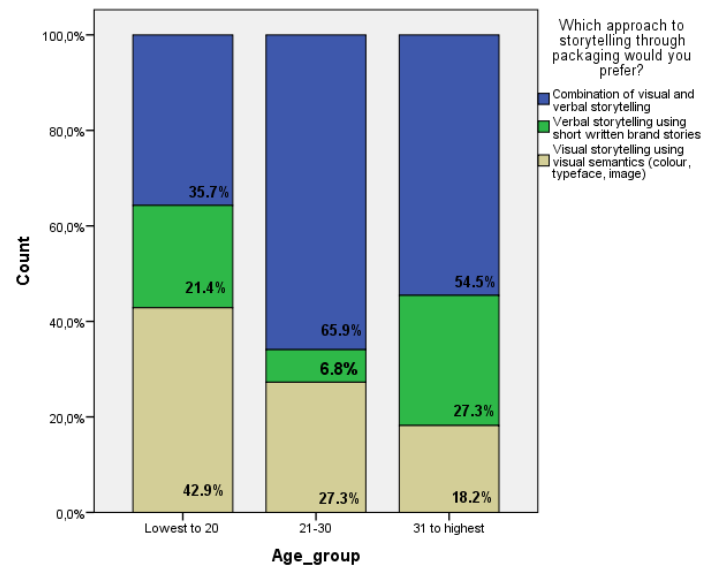


Figure 14 Relationship between age group and storytelling preference

For the 21-30 age group, 65.9% of respondents preferred visually and verbally combined storytelling approach, 27.3% of respondents chose visual stories, and verbal stories were preferred only by 6.8% of respondents. For respondents above 31 years old, 54.5% of respondents supported the combination of verbal and visual storytelling approach, 27.3% of respondents prefer visual storytelling, and only 6.8% prefer verbal storytelling only approach. Meanwhile, the response result for under-20-year-old age group was quite different: Combination of verbal and visual stories came last place with only 21.4% support from respondents, while 35.7% of respondents prefer combination of verbal and visual storytelling, and 21.4% prefer verbal storytelling only approach. Overall, the combined storytelling approach were still preferred by most respondents.

#### 4.4.3 Nationality

The relationship between nationality and storytelling approach preference is shown in Figure 15. Overall there were no observable difference in terms of storytelling approach preference for respondents from Africa, Asia, Finland and other parts of Europe. The most preferred storytelling approach on packaging was still the verbally and visually combined approach, with the support percentage ranged from 52.6% to 85.7%. Second place was visual storytelling approach, making up 14.3% to 28.9% of responses. Verbal storytelling approach was not preferred among respondents, especially for ones that were from Africa and Europe (besides Finland), since no votes from those continents



were recorded. On the other hand, responses from North Americans showed significant difference in terms of storytelling approach preference. For North Americans, visual storytelling approach were most preferred (66.7%), followed by combination of visual and verbal storytelling. No respondents from North America chose verbal storytelling approach as their preference.

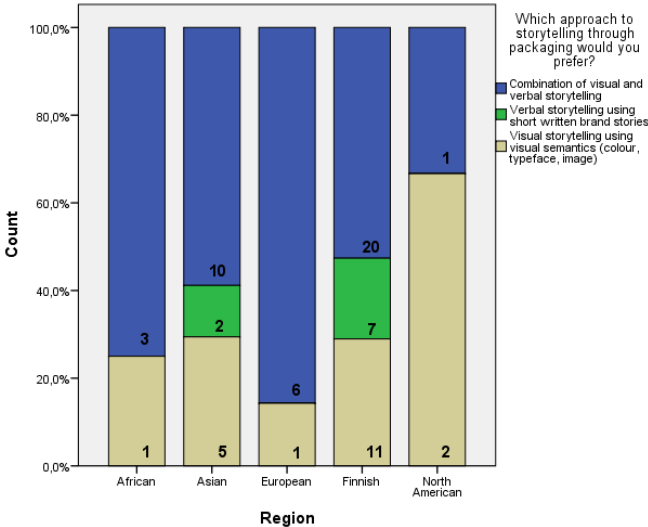


Figure 15 Relationship between nationality and storytelling approach preference

#### 4.5 Relationship between respondents' characteristics and ranking results

In this section, relationship between respondents' gender and age group and ranking results of packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness are analysed.

#### 4.5.1 Packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness across gender

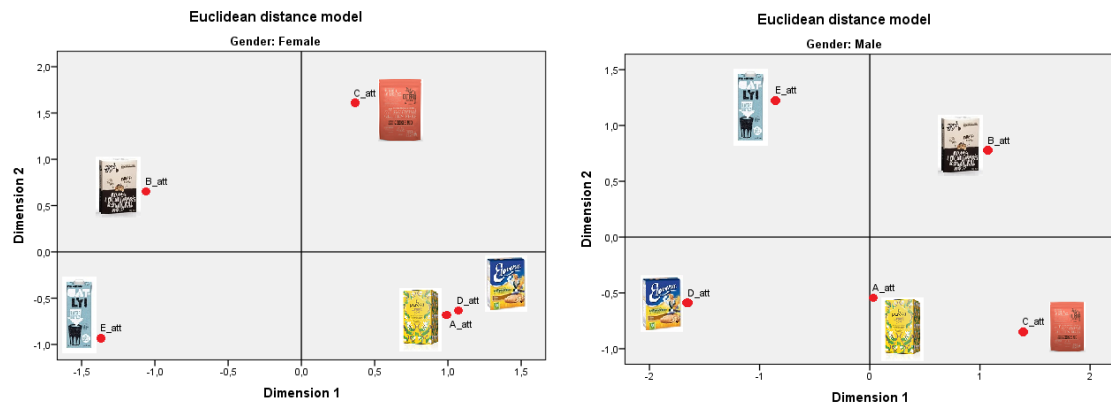


Figure 16 Packaging attractiveness for female and male

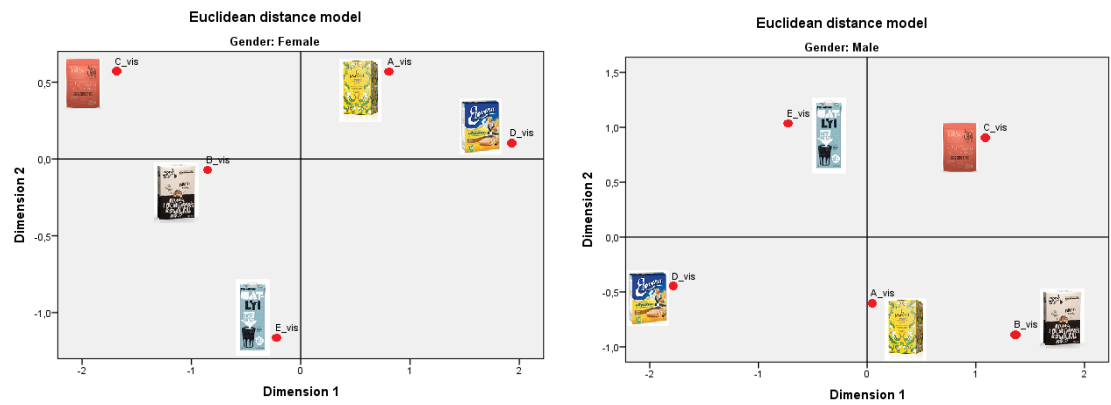


Figure 17 In-store visibility for female and male

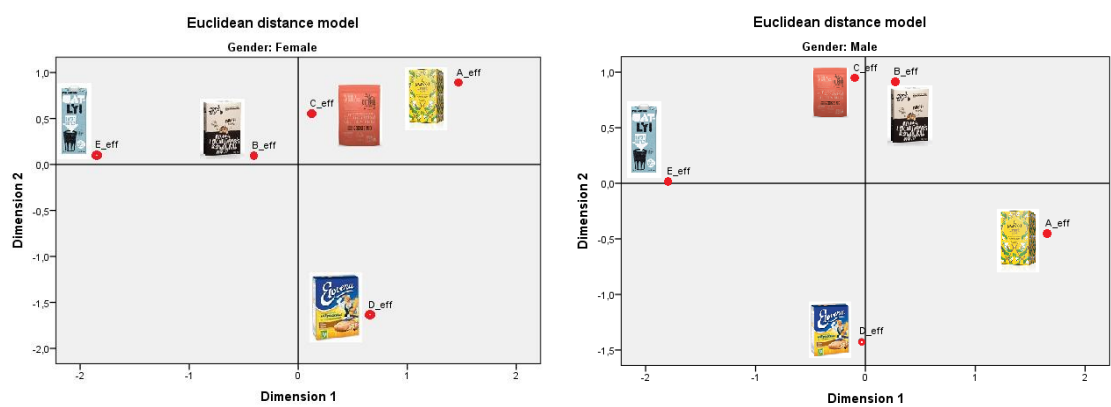
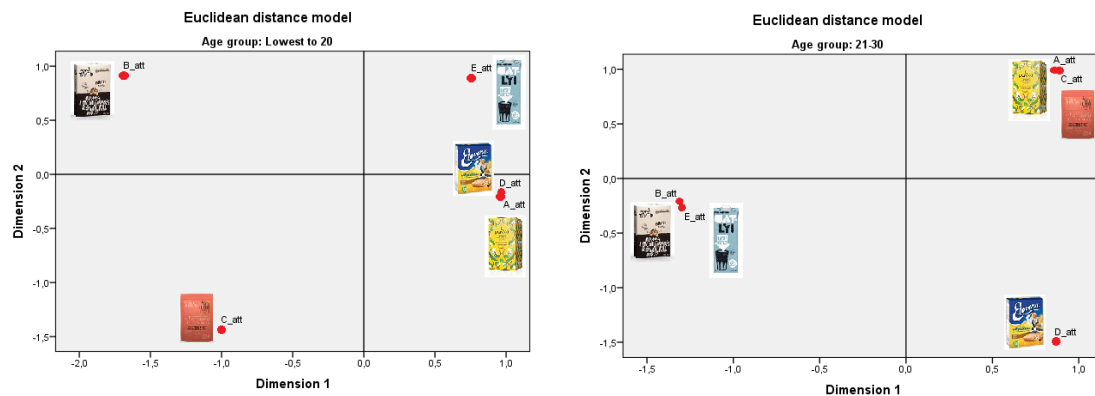


Figure 18 Storytelling effectiveness for female and male

Figure 16, 17, 18 shows the similarities and dissimilarities between packages from respondents' perspective in terms of packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness. In terms of packaging attractiveness and in-store visibility, since there are no similarities found between multidimensional maps for each gender, it could be concluded that there were obvious differences in terms of how respondents of each gender perceive each packaging in terms of packaging attractiveness and in-store visibility. On the other hand, in terms of storytelling effectiveness, female and male seemed to have similar perception. Both genders perceived packaging D and E quite similarly (placement of point D and E are quite similar in both maps), while there were only slight differences for packaging A, B and C. Both genders still found packaging B and C similar, while for female, packaging A scored higher for dimension 2 when compared to for male.

Overall, it is concluded that although there are observable differences between packaging attractiveness and in-store visibility perception for each gender, female and male has quite similar perception on storytelling effectiveness of the five packagings.

#### 4.5.2 Packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness across age group



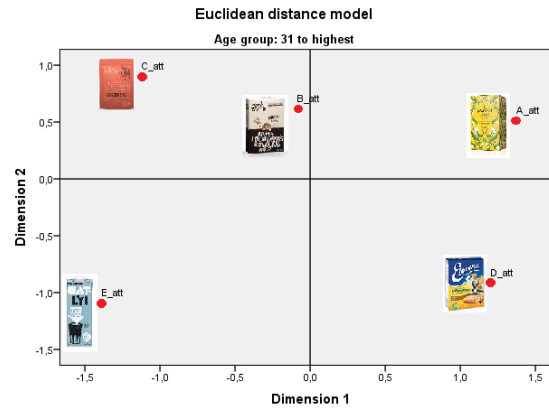


Figure 19 Packaging attractiveness multidimensional map across age group

Figure 19 shows the visualisation of similarities and dissimilarities between each package across age group in terms of packaging attractiveness. For under-20-year-olds, packaging A was perceived very similarly to packaging D. For 21-to-30-year-olds, there were clear similarities between packaging B and E, and between packaging A and C. Meanwhile, there were dissimilarities found between five packages in terms of packaging attractiveness for respondents 31 years old and above.

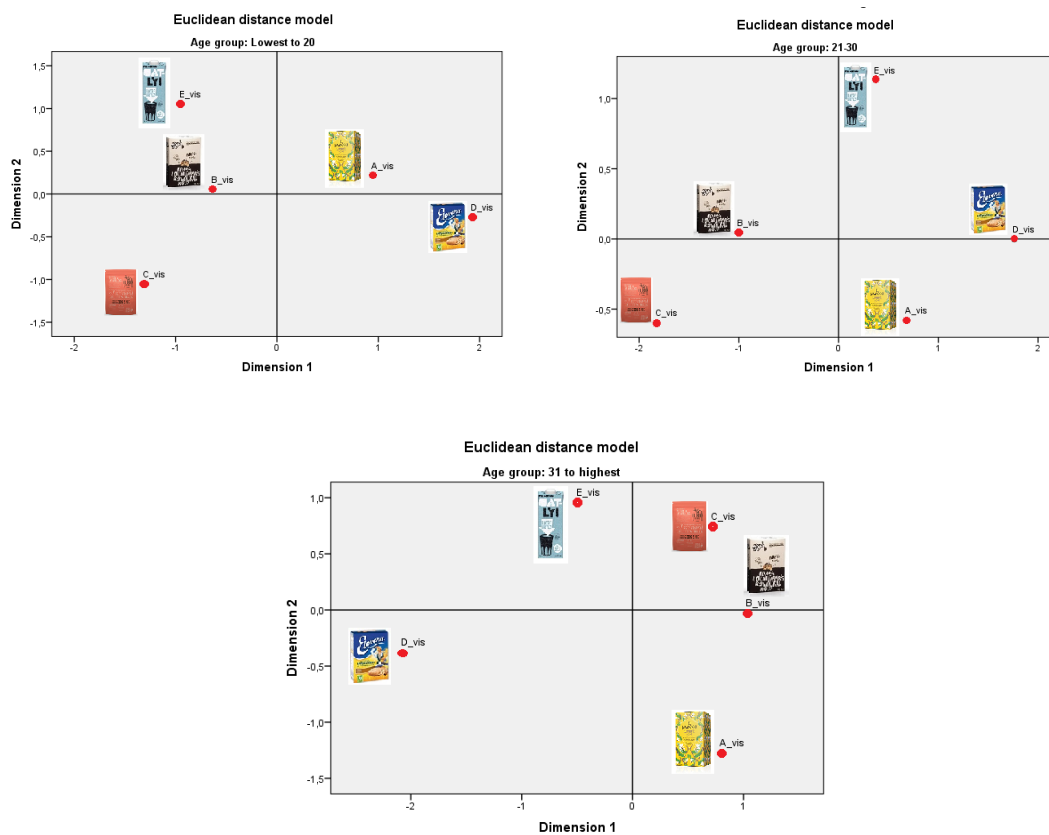


Figure 20 Packaging in-store visibility multidimensional map across age group

According to Figure 20, respondents within each age group found dissimilarities between five packagings in terms of in-store visibility, since for all three maps, the packagings were placed quite far away from one another, indicating no similarities. Meanwhile, the placement of each packaging also varies across age group which means that there were differences in perception between respondents from three age groups.

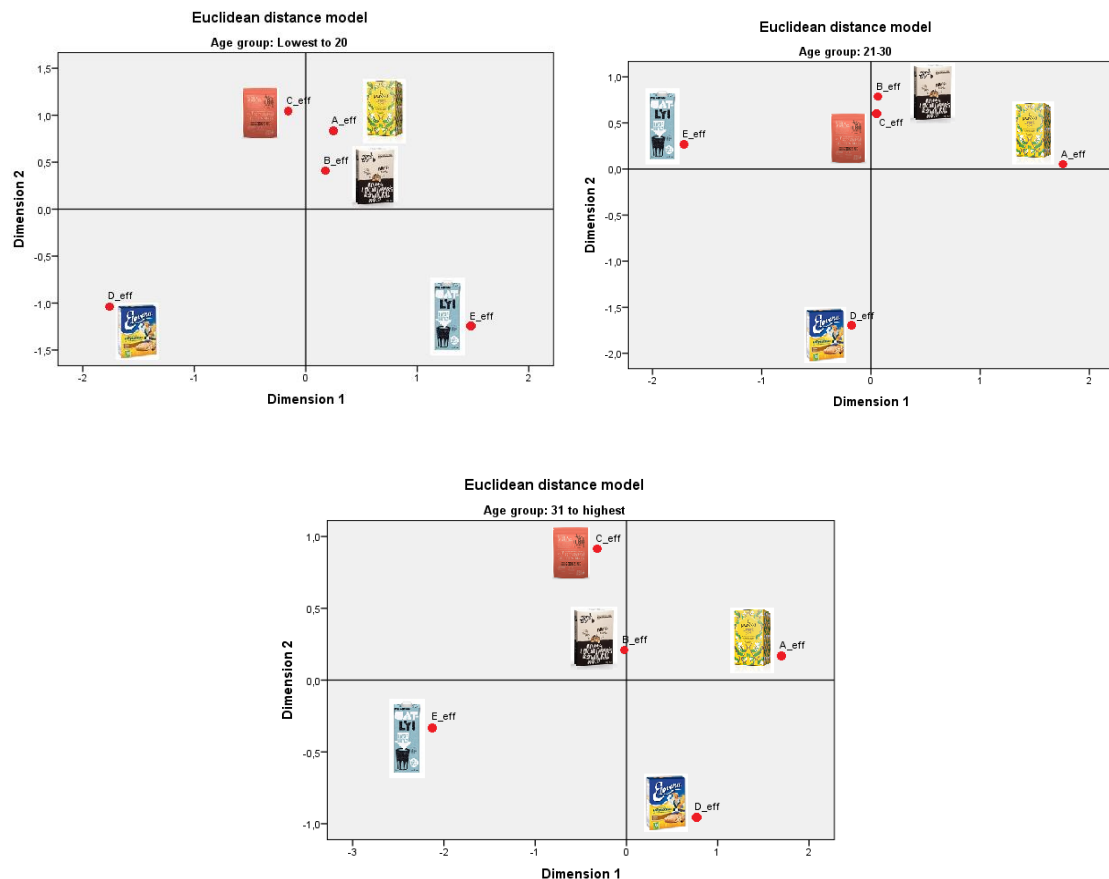


Figure 21 Packaging storytelling effectiveness multidimensional map across age group

In terms of storytelling effectiveness, respondents under 20 years old found packaging A, B, and C quite similar, while packaging D and E share dissimilarities between each other and packaging A, B, D. On the other hand, respondents from 21 to 30 years old only found packaging B and C similar to each other. Meanwhile, dissimilarities between five packages in the above-30-age-group were found according to the respondents' storytelling effectiveness results.

In conclusion, multidimensional scaling solution indicates that there were dissimilarities in respondents' perception of five packaging across gender in terms of packaging attractiveness and in-store availability, while respondents' perception of storytelling effectiveness of five packagings was quite consistent for both female and male. In terms of age group, there were dissimilarities between age groups in terms of packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness.

## 5 DISCUSSION

This final section discusses the empirical research result in accordance with the theoretical framework. The final result of respondents' storytelling approach on packaging is analysed and discussed. Meanwhile, results of the quantitative survey are analysed in accordance with previous theories stated mentioned in the literature review section.

The obtained results of quantitative research have shown that majority of respondents prefer the combined use of verbal and visual storytelling approach on product packaging and ranked the package that utilizes both approaches as the most effective in communicating stories. On the other hand, there were similarities and differences in terms of consumers' storytelling effectiveness, in accordance with packaging attractiveness and in-store visibility.

### 5.1 Consumers' storytelling approach preference

Based on the literature review and questionnaire result on packaging style preference, it is obvious that packaging with storytelling elements have significant influence on consumers' opinion of the packaging itself, since 47.8% of respondents choose that they prefer storytelling packaging over other generic packaging with no storytelling elements. However, there were 46.4% of respondents stated that they were not sure, and their preference are based more on other factors of the packaging, such as package design. This result guarantees the importance of package's visual design, including colour, image, and typeface, that with or without storytelling elements, good visual cues will significantly influence consumers' package impression, in-store visibility, etc.

In terms of storytelling approach for packages with storytelling elements, the majority of respondents (58%) prefer packages that utilizes both verbal and visual storytelling approach, while only 13% of respondents prefer written storytelling, and 29% prefer visual storytelling. This verbal-visual storytelling approach preference is quite consistent across gender, age group and nationality. Based on the result analysis on the correlation between storytelling approach preference and gender, age group, and nationality (Section 4.3), it is concluded that there are not many observable differences in the order of consumers' preference. The only difference in storytelling approach ranking is for under-20-year-old age group, in which respondents prefer verbal and visual storytelling approach to verbal-

visual combined method. In terms of nationalities, while Asians, Europeans, Africans, Finnish preferred verbal-visual combined approach most, visual storytelling second and verbal storytelling last, most of North American respondents prefer visual storytelling approach most, followed by verbal-visual combined approach.

## **5.2 Packaging ranking discussion**

In the questionnaire, five different packages are chosen for ranking, each of which uses one or more specific storytelling elements and verbal, visual storytelling or combination of both as the main approach to communicate stories with consumers. Packaging A use the combination of verbal and verbal storytelling; however, the main story was put inside of packaging. Packaging B also integrates both verbal and visual storytelling, with typeface and colour as the main visual elements and a very short brand story for verbal element. Meanwhile, packaging C uses only verbal storytelling as the main approach, and the written stories are much longer when compared to packaging B. Packaging D is an iconic Finnish packaging that utilizes visual storytelling using colour and image. Lastly, packaging E combines the use of both verbal and visual storytelling, with all of its storytelling elements including written brand stories, colour, image and typeface.

Since the integration of storytelling elements on product package does not guarantee packaging's high ranking in consumers' eyes and visibility on product shelves, the researcher asked respondents to evaluate the packagings based on three different factors: attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness.

### **5.2.1 Packaging analysis**

#### **Packaging A**

Firstly, packaging A ranks quite high in terms of in-store visibility (second place), but only comes in last place on both attractiveness and storytelling effectiveness. According to some respondents, the reason why they rank packaging A best in terms of in-store visibility are “because it's yellow”, “it looks very colourful and will stand out the most on the shelf”. This means that visual elements, especially colour, play a key role in drawing consumers' attention to a product in the first place. This result corresponded well with



the theories mentioned previously in the literature review, that the use of warm colour (e.g. yellow or red) has more influence on the brain when compared to cold colour, such as blue and green, since they are more noticeable and able to make a person's blood pressure increase and breath more frequently (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999).

However, for storytelling effectiveness, packaging A scores worst in its effectiveness in storytelling communication. The reason why respondents rank packaging was that the stories are put inside the packaging. Even though most of them really like the way stories are designed inside with the use of both written and non-written elements, they still prefer being able to see the story right at first sight.

### **Packaging B**

For packaging B, the ranking for attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness are second, third, second place respectively. A respondent who ranks packaging B high stated that “the integration of colour, typeface on the packaging communicates the story of product (oat) very well. Written text also explains more about the origin of the product”.

Although the packaging B in general rank quite high, the ranking of packaging B in terms of attractiveness and for the older age group (above 40 years old) is not as high. When asked why, a respondent stated that “this is not very my style”. Meanwhile, the ranking of storytelling effectiveness is quite consistent between age group. This proves that the packaging design style should differ based on the target consumer segmentation.

### **Packaging C**

Packaging C uses only verbal storytelling as the main approach to communicate brand story. For storytelling effectiveness, packaging C ranks second-last place. The main reason that respondents give for their ranking is that the packaging “This contains too much text”, “It looks too busy”. This result corresponds well with the literature review, that a good brand story on product package should be short, due to space limitations, but able to arouse interest instantly, and a shorter brand story has positive influence on consumer purchase behaviour (Solja, 2017).

In terms of attractiveness and visibility, packaging C scores third place for attractiveness but last for in-store visibility. This contradicts with Grossman & Wisenblit's theory on

the effectiveness of warm colour mentioned previously in the literature review section. In this this situation, although the packaging has warm colour, which is stated to be more noticeable, the respondents don't think that the packaging is more visible in store comparing to other packaging with colour.

### **Packaging D**

Packaging D is an iconic Finnish packaging that utilizes visual storytelling to tell brand stories. The image on the package has a picture of a stereotypic Finnish blond girl, with sickle and sheaf in her hand representing labour and work in the field. The main colour used on the package are blue and yellow: Blue on top symbolises clear sky (good harvesting condition), and yellow field indicating ripe and plentiful crop. Also, the blue and white colour in the logo represents the national flag of Finland.

For storytelling effectiveness, packaging D scores third, after packages that combines the use of verbal and visual storytelling. However, for this package only, there was a difference in viewpoint between Finnish respondents and respondents from other countries. While packaging D raises positive responses from Finnish respondents in terms of storytelling effectiveness and visibility, respondents from other countries said that the story was not very clear to understand and looking at. This result supports Sametz & Maydoney's theory (2003) mentioned previously in the literature review, that visual elements may carry cultural meaning and associations that may be tricky for consumer from other cultures and backgrounds to understand.

### **Packaging E**

Packaging E is the packaging that ranks highest in terms of attractiveness and storytelling effectiveness, according to the questionnaire results. Packaging E utilises the combination of verbal (short written brand story) and visual storytelling (colour, typeface and image). This result shows that for an average consumer, packaging E is the most effective in communicating brand story because of its written text, colour, typeface and picture. Respondents who were in favour of packaging E states that the written text was interesting to read, and the images on the packaging also tells the brand stories very well.

### **5.2.2 Multidimensional scaling analysis**

The empirical study's multidimensional scaling results suggest that there were major differences in terms of consumers' perception of packaging in terms of packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness. In general, consumers might find two packagings similar in terms of storytelling effectiveness but different when it comes to in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness. This result corresponds well with the packaging's ranking result that packaging that ranks high in terms of packaging attractiveness doesn't necessarily rank high in terms of in-store visibility or storytelling effectiveness.

On the other hand, multidimensional scaling results also indicate that there are major differences in female and male consumers' perception of packaging attractiveness and in-store visibility. However, perception across gender on packaging's storytelling effectiveness does not vary as much. Female and male consumers have quite similar perception on storytelling effectiveness of packagings, and similarities or dissimilarities between between investigated packages when it comes to storytelling effectiveness. As for age group, there were clear variations in perception between age groups in terms of packaging attractiveness, in-store visibility and storytelling effectiveness.

## **5.3 The most effective storytelling approach for consumers**

According to the survey result, consumers prefer the combined use of verbal storytelling (using short written brand stories) and visual storytelling (using visual semantics like colour, typeface and image). This result also corresponds with respondents' ranking results of five packages. The two packages (B and E) that combine the use of both verbal and visual storytelling rank first and second in terms of storytelling effectiveness. Meanwhile, packaging D (visual storytelling) scores a little higher than packaging C (verbal storytelling). Although packaging A also uses both verbal and visual storytelling to communicate brand messages, the effectiveness of storytelling comes last because stories are put inside the product package, while most consumers prefer seeing stories right at first sight.

Firstly, in terms of visual stories, besides its function as storytelling elements, visual cues have sensory effect that can draw consumers' attention to a product and have huge influence on consumers' perception as well as purchasing behaviour. According to the survey result, almost all consumers are attracted by nicely designed packaging, therefore, it is effective as well as easy if brands can incorporate storytelling function into packaging's visual design to make the product more interesting to look at and more meaningful. Visual communication on packaging by the use of image, colour and typeface can definitely successfully communicate a story without the involvement of verbal communications.

However, the major drawback of visual stories is its ambiguity. Each consumer may "read" a visual story in his or her own way, depending on their cultural background, personal experience, etc (Solja, 2017). This is when written story serves as an important partner. A written story on its own with full of text on a product packaging may seem unattractive to some people, however, along with the use of visual story on a product package, the short-written text may serve as a clarifier for visual story and minimize unintended interpretation of the visual story.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In the field of marketing, storytelling has been utilized by marketers for many years to communicate brand messages and values with consumers. Especially in recent years, with the robust of social media and content marketing, brands have been incorporating more and more story-typed content into their marketing strategies via many different forms such as social media posts, video, articles, etc. As a result, the use of storytelling in advertising context has been realized and studied, yet, packaging as a context for marketing has been neglected. Since most of consumers' purchasing decisions are made at the point of purchase, and packaging is the only communication stimulus that consumers encounter at the time and place of purchase, packaging is indeed a perfect tool for brand to communicate brand messages and values to consumers in the easiest and most direct way.

In this thesis, the researcher discusses the two languages of storytelling on packaging, which consists of verbal storytelling using written brand stories, and visual storytelling using visual semantics such as colour, typeface and images. Both types of stories, whether used on its own or combined, have certain influences on consumers and influence consumers' perception of the brand and its product. The consumers' perceptual process when exposed to a brand story starts with narrative processing and narrative transportation, which is followed by consumers' affective, attitudinal and behavioural responses such as positive brand attitude, willingness to price sensitivity, increased level of purchase intention and more-word of mouth intention. From a consumer perspective, the combined integration of verbal and visual stories on packaging is preferred, as it helps communicate the story to consumers more effectively and reduce the ambiguity when processing a story.

Based on the result of the quantitative empirical study, one can recommend companies to integrate storytelling on packaging in the form of both verbal and visual stories to attract consumers' attention. For verbal stories, it is important that brands keep the stories short and concise while maintaining the emotional engaging aspect of it. Meanwhile, visual elements like colour, typeface and image should be used along with the written brand story as a perception influencer and message communicator, besides its use as an aesthetic

tool to gain store visibility and attract consumers' attention. Also, since perception on packaging's storytelling effectiveness may vary across age group while not varying much across gender, brands might take target market and segmentation into consideration when designing packaging for better brand story communication.

In this thesis, the result of literature review and quantitative study suggests that for an average consumer, storytelling through packaging is effective in communicating brand stories and messages for consumers and has certain influence on consumers' brand perception and opinion, and visual-verbal storytelling approach is preferred by consumers. For further research, the researcher recommends a qualitative study to examine more in depth the consumers' perception on packaging that carries storytelling elements, how consumer perceive the stories, especially visual stories. On the other hand, the research could be replicated on a much larger scale, with larger sample size and greater number of packagings could help generate more precise data and better analysis.

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# APPENDICES

## Questionnaire

This questionnaire is a part of my bachelor's thesis research on “Storytelling through packaging and its influence on consumer perception”, which will take only 5-7 minutes to answer.

1. What is your gender? ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Prefer not to say
2. What is your age? .....
3. What is your nationality? .....
4. Please rank the given packagings in the order of which one you like best or find most attractive (1-least, 5-most)  
A: ..... B: ..... C: ..... D: ..... E: .....
5. Please rank the given packagings in the order of product visibility in a specific store (1-least, 5-most)  
A: ..... B: ..... C: ..... D: ..... E: .....
6. Please rank the given packagings in the order of packaging effectiveness in communicating brand stories (1-least, 5-most)  
A: ..... B: ..... C: ..... D: ..... E: .....
7. Which approach to storytelling through packaging would you prefer?  
☐ Verbal storytelling using short written brand stories  
☐ Visual storytelling using visual semantics (colour, typeface, image)  
☐ Combination of visual and verbal storytelling  
☐ I don't like packaging with storytelling elements
8. Do you prefer packaging with storytelling elements to other generic packaging?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure



Figure 22 Packaging A

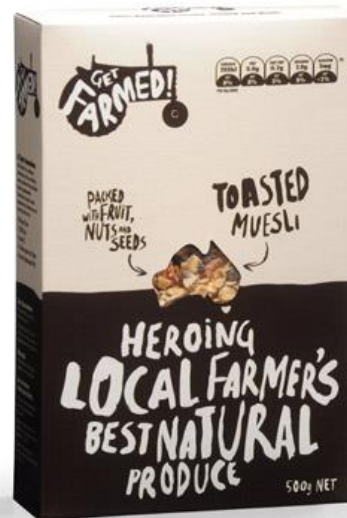


Figure 23 Packaging B



Figure 24 Packaging C



Figure 25 Packaging D



Figure 26 Packaging E