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How Archetype-Based Packaging Design Shapes Visual Attention and Ease of Use

ABSTRACT

Brand archetypes are established tools for differentiating visual identities, but their effects on physical packaging remain underexplored. This study combined a self-report survey and eye-tracking to examine how two coffee-package designs—Fikaféa (Everyman archetype) and Kaffari (Explorer archetype), each with a tear-notch and a standard opening—shape attention to product information and perceived ease of opening. A brand-level survey first confirmed that both identities communicated their intended values: the familiar Everyman identity was rated more aesthetically appealing, whereas the Explorer identity was perceived as more innovative. At the package level, a 2 × 2 repeated-measures design showed that the tear notch improved perceived ease of opening and attracted more fixations to the opening area. Brand design also shaped attention: the high-contrast Everyman layout was rated clearer for product information and drew longer fixations on informational AOIs, whereas the Explorer layout directed relatively more attention to brand-related elements. Because the survey and eye-tracking datasets could not be linked at the participant level, convergence was assessed only at the condition level. At that level, self-report ratings, fixation measures, and qualitative heat maps showed a consistent pattern: opening cues supported ease-of-use perception, while brand design redistributed attention between functional and brand-related package content.

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Packaging design, eye-tracking, brand archetypes, visual attention, consumer perception

1. Introduction

Brands increasingly compete by building emotional connections with consumers, not only through price or function. Brand personality is central to this process (Aaker, 1997), and Jungian archetype theory adds a layer of widely recognisable symbolic meaning (Jung, 1981). Mark and Pearson systematised this approach into twelve archetypes that help brands construct coherent narratives and values (Mark & Pearson, 2001). Recent work likewise emphasises the role of archetypal meaning in customer–brand relationships (Merlo et al., 2023; Friebe, 2026). Visual identity carries this personality through logotype, typography, colour and imagery (Van den Bosch, De Jong & Elving, 2005; Childers & Jass, 2002). On a coffee package, however, the same surface must both express the brand and communicate mandatory product information. Whether an archetype-driven aesthetic supports or obstructs this functional task remains open. Self-report alone is insufficient, because what consumers say they notice often differs from what they actually look at (Gunaratne et al., 2019; Clement, Kristensen & Grønhaug, 2013). Eye-tracking addresses this gap by recording fixation count, fixation duration and time to first fixation on defined areas of interest (AOIs). These measures are commonly used as indicators of attention and interest (Guo, Kim & Lee, 2024; Lacoste-Badie & Droulers 2020).

This paper therefore focuses on the package as the central object of study. After a preliminary survey estab-

lished what each identity communicated at the brand level, the package-level study examined how these identities direct attention to functional information and how the opening mechanism shapes perceived ease of use.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Archetypes and visual identity

Mark and Pearson group the twelve archetypes by core human motivation. The Everyman belongs to the "belonging" cluster and communicates equality, accessibility and everyday warmth; the Explorer belongs to the "freedom" cluster and communicates autonomy, discovery and novelty (Mark & Pearson, 2001). These two archetypes were selected as a deliberate contrast between a familiar identity typical of the Croatian instant-coffee market (e.g. Franck, an Everyman brand) and a less common Explorer identity. Visual identity translates such values into colour, typography and imagery (Van den Bosch, De Jong, & Elving, 2005; Childers & Jass, 2002), while recent Jungian-branding scholarship continues to frame brands as symbolic systems built from archetypal meanings (Friebe, 2026).

2.2. Eye-tracking in packaging research

Eye-tracking is widely used in packaging research because it captures visual behaviour that recall-based methods may miss (Gunaratne et al., 2019; Clement, Kristensen, & Grønhaug, 2013). Fixation duration and fixation count are standard indicators of attention to package elements [10]. An elemental AOI approach further allows attention to be assigned to specific components, such as brand name, information label or imagery. Attention and liking, however, do not always coincide. Gunaratne et al. found that fixation on familiar chocolate packaging correlated with positive emotion, whereas novel designs showed no such link. Prior work also shows that low contrast can make relevant information harder to locate. These findings motivate the present combination of brand-level evaluation, gaze metrics and self-report.

3. Brand identity context

Two instant-coffee identities were developed for the contrasting archetypes. Fikaféa (Everyman) refers to Swedish fika, the shared coffee-break ritual (Blom, 2024), and uses beige-brown tones, a handwritten logotype and a stylised cup motif to communicate warmth, simplicity and belonging. Kaffari (Explorer) combines associations of coffee and safari, using a bold sans-serif logotype, a coffee-bean mark and plantation imagery in earth-and-green tones to communicate discovery and adventure (Figure 1.).



» **Figure 1:** *Fikaféa and Kaffari coffee packaging, standard and tear-notch opening*

A brand-level survey (N = 43, predominantly aged 18–25) confirmed that both identities conveyed their intended values. It also revealed an instructive asymmetry (Table 1): Fikaféa was rated more aesthetically appealing and elicited higher purchase intention, whereas Kaffari was chosen as more innovative in direct comparison. In this context, aesthetic appeal appeared to derive from familiarity and simplicity rather than novelty, consistent with the attention–liking dissociation reported for packaging [11]. This brand-level pattern frames the package-level analysis.

Table 1

Brand-level perception of the two identities — Wilcoxon signed-rank test (N = 43)

Attribute	M Kaffari	M Fikaféa	Z	p	r
Aesthetic appeal	4.00	4.51	-2.68	.007	0.51
Innovativeness	3.84	3.81	-0.45	.655	0.09
Purchase intention	3.81	4.26	-2.16	.031	0.42

Note. Five-point scale. Z = standardised test statistic; r = effect size. Innovativeness did not differ on absolute ratings, but Kaffari was chosen as the more innovative brand in direct comparison (binomial test, p = .014).

4. Aims and hypotheses

The study examines how the two identities perform on the physical package. Six hypotheses were specified. Directional hypotheses were used where the pilot data supported a clear expectation, while H2 expressed the expectation that opening mechanism would not substantially affect perceived information clarity or overall affective impression.

H1. The tear-notch opening is rated easier to open than the standard packaging, irrespective of brand design. **H2.** The opening mechanism is not expected to substantially affect perceived information clarity or the overall affec-

tive impression. **H3.** Brand design influences perceived information clarity; the high-contrast Everyman layout (Fikaféa) is rated higher than the illustration-dense Explorer layout (Kaffari). **H4.** The tear-notch mechanism attracts more fixations to the opening area than the standard packaging. **H5.** Brand design governs attention allocation: the high-contrast layout elicits longer fixation on informational AOIs, whereas the illustration-dense layout elicits longer fixation on brand AOIs, producing a design-level dissociative pattern. **H6.** Self-reported ease of opening and information clarity converge with the corresponding eye-tracking metrics at the condition level.

5. Methodology

5.1. Design and stimuli

A 2 × 2 within-subjects design crossed packaging Design (Kaffari vs. Fikaféa) with Opening mechanism (tear notch vs. standard closure), yielding four conditions. Stimuli were photorealistic 3-D renderings of each pouch, shown from the front and back so that brand and informational elements could be assessed separately. All participants saw all conditions, and presentation order was recorded.

5.2. Participants

The packaging questionnaire was completed by 26 participants, and the eye-tracking sub-sample comprised 21 participants. The sample was predominantly female and aged 18–23, limiting generalisability. Because the questionnaire included no identifier matching the eye-tracking records, the two sources were linked only at the condition level.

5.3. Subjective measure

For each condition, participants completed an 11-item five-point-scale block: four information items (quantity, ingredients, expiry date, recycling), a six-item semantic differential for overall impression (e.g. dull–interesting, unappealing–appealing, clumsy–functional), and one ease-of-opening item. The semantic-differential items formed a composite impression score (Cronbach's α = .70–.85 across conditions), and the four information items formed a composite information score.

5.4. Objective measure

Gaze was recorded during stimulus inspection with a Tobii Pro Fusion at 120 Hz. Participants were seated approximately 65 cm from a 1920x1080 px display. A 9-point calibration was performed before the task and accepted when average error was below 0.7°.

Each stimulus was shown for fixed 3-6-second exposure. Participants were instructed to inspect the package freely, as if evaluating it before purchase. Fixations were extracted using Tobii Pro Lab. For the opening region, fixation count and time to first fixation (TTFF) were extracted.

For brand and information processing, total fixation duration was computed per AOI across both faces. AOIs were then aggregated into a brand group (brand name, brand story) and an information group (expiry date, quantity, contents, preparation, recycling, barcode, strength). Individual AOIs present in both designs were also analysed separately.

5.5. Qualitative support

Aggregated heat maps were generated for every condition and both package faces. They were used qualitatively to visualise the spatial distribution of attention and support interpretation of the statistical findings; no inferential test was applied to them.

5.6. Statistical analysis

Each dependent measure was analysed with a 2 × 2 repeated-measures ANOVA (Design × Opening), using generalised eta-squared (η^2G) as the effect-size estimate. Because normality was violated in some conditions, principal effects were additionally checked with the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, with concordant results. The threshold was $\alpha = .05$. Repeated-measures models required complete data across all four conditions. For opening-area metrics, two of the 21 participants did not fixate the opening AOI in at least one condition and were excluded, leaving 19 complete cases (error df = 18). The brand and information AOI models retained all 21 participants.

6. Results

6.1. Ease of opening

H1 was supported. The tear notch was rated easier to open than the standard closure (M = 4.90 vs. 4.21), $F(1, 25) = 14.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2G = .20$, with no effect of brand design ($p = 1.000$; Tables 2–3). The gaze data supported H4: the tear notch attracted more fixations to the opening area (M = 5.21 vs. 3.18), $F(1, 18) = 16.97$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2G = .22$ (Table 4). Heat maps showed clustered attention on the labelled tear-notch zone and more dispersed attention along the top edge of standard packs. The higher variability of ease ratings for the standard closure (SD ≈ 0.92 vs. 0.20–0.37) suggests that the opening was located more reliably when an explicit cue was present.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics of the packaging survey by condition (five-point scale; N = 26)

Measure	Kaffari Tear notch	Kaffari Standard	Fikaféa Tear notch	Fikaféa Standard
Information clarity	4.38 (0.58)	4.50 (0.61)	4.59 (0.54)	4.63 (0.51)
Overall impression (SD)	3.99 (0.57)	4.07 (0.56)	4.12 (0.57)	4.12 (0.63)
Ease of opening	4.85 (0.37)	4.27 (0.96)	4.96 (0.20)	4.15 (0.92)

Note. Means with standard deviations in parentheses. SD = semantic differential composite.

Table 3

Packaging survey: 2 × 2 repeated-measures ANOVA (N = 26)

Measure	Effect	F	df	p	η^2G
Ease of opening	Opening	14.81	1, 25	< .001	.203
	Design	0.00	1, 25	1.000	.000
	Design × Opening	2.74	1, 25	.110	.007
Information clarity	Design	6.62	1, 25	.016	.023
	Opening	4.22	1, 25	.051	.006
	Design × Opening	0.38	1, 25	.542	.001
Overall impression	Design	0.51	1, 25	.483	.007
	Opening	0.98	1, 25	.333	.001
	Design × Opening	1.21	1, 25	.282	.001

Note. η^2G = generalised eta-squared. Significant effects ($p < .05$) in bold.

6.2. Information and brand attention

H3 was supported. Fikaféa was rated clearer for information (M = 4.61 vs. 4.44), $F(1, 25) = 6.62$, $p = .016$, and drew longer fixation on informational AOIs (M = 5.02 s vs. 4.06 s), $F(1, 20) = 11.20$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2G = .11$ (Table 5). Conversely, Kaffari drew longer fixation on brand AOIs (M = 3.04 s vs. 2.56 s), $F(1, 20) = 5.22$, $p = .033$. This dissociative attentional pattern supports H5: the designs differed not in total attention, but in its allocation between functional and brand-related content. Exploratory per-element comparisons with Holm correction (Table 6) showed greater attention to the expiry date and preparation instructions for Fikaféa, and greater attention to the brand name and quantity block for Kaffari.

Table 4

Eye-tracking metrics for the opening area by condition: descriptive statistics based on available cases

Metric	Kaffari Tear notch	Kaffari Standard	Fikaféa Tear notch	Fikaféa Standard
Fixation count	4.71 (2.26)	2.80 (1.64)	5.57 (2.16)	3.47 (1.68)
TTFF (s)	0.71 (0.46)	1.00 (0.84)	0.55 (0.35)	0.71 (0.45)

Note. Means with standard deviations in parentheses, computed on all available cases per cell (n = 19–21); the ANOVA was estimated on the 19 participants with complete data across all conditions. TTFF = time to first fixation (lower = faster).

Table 5

Eye-tracking total fixation duration: 2 × 2 repeated-measures ANOVA for brand and information AOIs (N = 21)

Measure	Effect	F	df	p	η^2G
Information AOIs	Design	11.20	1, 20	.003	.111
	Opening	0.91	1, 20	.352	.010
	Design × Opening	0.31	1, 20	.586	.003
Brand AOIs	Design	5.22	1, 20	.033	.039
	Opening	0.10	1, 20	.753	.001
	Design × Opening	2.52	1, 20	.128	.020

Note. η^2G = generalised eta-squared. Significant effects ($p < .05$) in bold.

Table 6

Total fixation duration per AOI element by design (main effect of design; N = 21)

Element (AOI)	Kaffari M (s)	Fikaféa M (s)	F	η^2G	p	p (Holm)
Expiry date	0.02	0.20	10.84	.135	.004	.015
Quantity	0.79	0.53	7.38	.069	.013	.040
Preparation	0.52	1.41	33.23	.228	< .001	.001
Contents	0.40	0.66	3.84	.053	.064	.128
Brand story	0.71	0.93	1.33	.015	.263	.263
Brand name	2.33	1.63	11.43	.149	.003	.015

Note. Means in seconds, summed across opening mechanism; main effect of design from a 2 × 2 repeated-measures ANOVA, df = (1, 20) for each test. η^2G = generalised eta-squared. These per-element analyses are exploratory; the p (Holm) column gives p-values adjusted for the six tests with the Holm correction, and significance (in bold) refers to the adjusted value ($p < .05$).

6.3. Independence of factors

H2 was largely consistent with the data, with one borderline exception. The opening mechanism had no significant effect on overall affective impression in the survey ($p = .333$) or on either gaze AOI group (information AOIs, $p = .352$; brand AOIs, $p = .753$). For survey-rated information clarity, the opening effect approached conventional significance ($p = .051$), so H2 is qualified on that measure. No interaction reached significance, indicating that design and opening operated largely independently.

6.4. Condition-level convergence of self-report and gaze

H6 was supported at the condition level only. Because the survey and eye-tracking records shared no participant identifier, self-report and gaze could be compared between conditions but not within individuals. The aggregated means agreed in direction: tear-notch conditions were rated easier to open and received more fixations on the opening area, while Fikaféa was rated clearer for information and drew longer fixation on informational AOIs. This does not establish that individuals who looked longer at a zone also rated it more highly.

7. Discussion

The study makes two connected contributions. Methodologically, self-report, gaze metrics and qualitative heat maps point in the same direction, although only at the condition level because the two datasets could not be linked by participant (H6, Section 6.4). Conceptually, the study connects archetype-based branding with the functional readability of packaging. It shows that the same surface carrying the brand identity also governs whether mandatory information is seen. Within this scope, the triangulation is informative: an explicit opening cue improves both perceived ease of opening and attention to the opening area, consistent with evidence that low-contrast packaging can hinder information search [10, 12].

The two study levels show a parallel pattern. At the brand level, Fikaféa was more appealing and generated higher purchase intention, whereas Kaffari was perceived as more innovative [11]. At the package level, Fikaféa directed gaze toward functional information, whereas Kaffari directed gaze toward brand identity. This finding should be read cautiously. The observed effect is tied to the concrete visual properties through which each archetype was realised—contrast, illustration density and information-panel organisation. Because only one design represented each archetype, the results demonstrate differences between two concrete identities rather than effects of the archetypes in general.

Practically, a high-contrast layout that separates mandatory information into dedicated panels can improve both attention to information and perceived clarity. A brand-forward, illustration-dense design can strengthen brand attention, but may do so at the cost of functional information. In markets where familiar, warmth-oriented coffee identities are common, an Explorer-oriented identity may therefore support differentiation, provided that its brand-first profile remains aligned with the communicative goals of the package.

8. Conclusion and limitations

Using a multi-method design, this study showed that two concrete archetype-driven packaging identities differed in how they directed attention to brand and product-information elements. The tear-notch mechanism improved perceived ease of opening and attracted more attention to the opening area. The high-contrast Everyman layout supported attention to product information, whereas the illustration-dense Explorer layout concentrated attention on the brand. The central result is the condition-level convergence of survey, eye-tracking and heat-map evidence.

Several limitations temper these conclusions. The samples were small and demographically homogeneous, limiting generalisability and statistical power. Because only one design instantiated each archetype, archetype and visual execution are confounded; stronger future designs should test several executions per archetype. The AOI sets also differed across designs and package faces, so aggregate information comparisons combine non-identical elements, while per-element tests remain exploratory. Finally, survey and eye-tracking data were linked only at the group level. A preregistered study with a larger, balanced sample and a shared participant key is therefore recommended to test individual-level correlations between attention and ratings, ideally including price, taste and shelf context.

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