

THE ROLE OF PACKAGING IN BRAND ATTACHMENT

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Abstract: *Packaging plays an important role in creating and strengthening brand attachment, significantly impacting consumer perception and brand experience. It influences not only the product's first impression, but also how consumers interact with it in the long term. This article explains how packaging contributes to the brand attachment of a product. The primary research method was bibliometric analysis based on data collection from the Web of Science covering the period 2021-2025 to identify dominant trends and themes in the specialized literature in this field. The analysis was conducted by selecting 1075 relevant articles filtered by the keywords "packaging" and "brand." The results highlighted that interest in this field has remained constant over the past five years.*

Key words: *Brand, Brand attachment, Packaging, Bibliometric analysis.*

1. Introduction

Before World War II, packaging was mainly used to protect products during storage, transportation, and distribution. Some packaging was designed with an aesthetic appearance and even to be easy to use by the end consumer. However, after World War II, companies became more interested in marketing and promotion to attract customers (Adolfo, 2014).

Product packaging is as important as one of the marketing mix elements (price, product, placement, and promotion (Auttarapong, 2012)). If the packaging was initially considered just a simple "packaging" containing a product, it currently represents a central component of the product. Within the marketing policy, the packaging reflects the most important message about the product that is addressed to the consumer (Neacşu, Madar, 2014). When consumers buy daily-use products, they base their purchase decision on the characteristics and external appearance of the product (Fenko et al., 2010). Packaging is one of the most important processes, and without it, today's products would not be completed (Grundey, 2010).

The purpose of packaging is to make a product easy to sell, as well as to prevent its deterioration during transport and storage (Deliya, Parmar, 2012).

Packaging is not only a tool for protecting and presenting the product, but also an

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essential element in creating an emotional connection between the consumer and the brand. It influences consumers' perceptions, emotions, and behaviours, strengthening brand attachment and fostering long-term loyalty. Packaging contributes to brand attachment in several ways (Rehman and Elahi, 2024):

- **First visual impact:** Packaging is often consumers' first contact with a product and brand. Attractive, innovative packaging that reflects brand values can capture consumers' attention and create a positive first impression. The colours, design, and materials can evoke emotions and build an emotional connection with the brand.
- **Creating a unique experience:** Packaging can contribute to a pleasant brand experience, providing a sense of exclusivity and sophistication. For example, high-quality or innovative packaging can make a product be perceived as more valuable and desirable. This can be a decisive factor in creating a strong brand attachment, especially in the case of luxury or premium products.
- **Reflecting brand values:** Packaging can convey a brand's values and mission, helping build a more authentic and lasting relationship with consumers. For example, using environmentally friendly materials or designs that reflect sustainability can attract consumers who prefer socially and environmentally responsible products.
- **Repeatability and familiarity:** Consistency in packaging design contributes to brand recognition and strengthens the connection with the consumer. Consistent packaging that remains familiar creates a sense of security and comfort, and consumers can develop a long-term preference for that brand due to this familiarity.
- **Communicating product quality:** Packaging can convey important information about product quality, which is essential for brand loyalty. Well-designed packaging can create a positive perception of product quality and influence the purchase decision, with a long-term impact on brand loyalty.
- **Interactivity and personalization:** Many brands now offer personalized or interactive packaging that allows consumers to feel part of the experience. For example, packaging that can be reused contains personalized messages or offers digital interaction (QR code for access to exclusive content), which can increase consumer attachment to the brand and contribute to their loyalty.
- **Creating a sense of belonging:** Packaging can contribute to forming a brand identity that responds to consumers' needs and desires, strengthening a sense of belonging. Consumers can associate packaging with special moments or a desired lifestyle, and this emotional attachment to the brand becomes an important factor in their long-term purchasing decisions.

This paper aims to identify the role of packaging in brand attachment using a bibliometric analysis.

2. Literature Review

Recent studies have agreed on several roles of packaging in marketing, from creating awareness using innovative, attractive designs to identifying the brand and creating its competitive advantage (Rundh, 2013).

In addition to the role of packaging in marketing, there are several other important

roles such as physical protection against shock, vibration, compression, temperature, etc., providing a protective barrier against oxygen, water vapor, dust, etc., conveying information regarding the use, transportation, recycling or disposal of the packaging or product, preventing theft, adding convenience in distribution, handling, display, sale, opening, reclosing, use, and reuse. Also, products should be packaged to occupy as little space as possible so they can be transported as compactly as possible (Grundey, 2010).

Packaging plays a significant role in consumer purchasing decisions (Cicco et al., 2021). The design and aesthetic elements present in product packaging influence consumers' expectations regarding product quality (Schifferstein et al., 2013). Their importance is so great that they can contribute to the success or failure of a business, especially considering that a good presentation of commercialized products creates a first image that plays an essential role in the purchase decision (Abdelazim-Mohammed et al., 2018). Moreover, the packaging is influential as a store sales assistant (Grant et al., 2015). It is considered an important component of our modern lifestyle and a significant element of the branding process (Shekhar, Raveendran, 2013). Also, design is the "silent salesman" that attracts consumers more than other communication tools (Grant et al., 2015). The more pronounced the uniqueness of a product's packaging, the better the product will be recognized, successfully distributed, and purchased by consumers (Madar, 2015).

The multiple design-economy interferences offer companies substantial, specific, and tangible benefits:

- a. An attractive identity from a design point of view allows for the establishment of an appropriate offer and a superior price;
- b. The attractive message and forms of repetition increase the durability of visual signs in the minds of consumers, and as a result, products are recognized and selected more efficiently at the time of purchase;
- c. The more substantial and prominently the design manifests itself, the more identity elements there are, and the easier it is for the company to be protected from competition attacks, especially counterfeits (Straistari, 2017).

Product design plays an increasingly important role in fierce competition in the market (Zhang et al., 2009). When competition is as high as it is today, the products of competing companies become very similar in their functions. More than ever, customers choose products not according to their functional characteristics, but according to the characteristics of their packaging. From a branding perspective, packaging acts as a brand enhancer and identifier to attract consumers' attention on store shelves and serves as a brand positioning and competitive advantage (Grundey, 2010).

Product packaging not only influences the purchasing decision, but also advertises directly to the consumer. Some manufacturers lose a significant percentage of their revenue due to a lack of skills in proper product design (Auttarapong, 2012).

An aesthetically designed package impacts attention and product choice. A study found that products with aesthetically designed packaging are perceived as satisfying and are preferred over products with standardized packaging of well-known brands despite higher prices (Husic-Mehmedovic et al., 2017).

While marketing strategies try to convince consumers to purchase the product, packaging could reflect its quality and features. The use of design and aesthetic

elements is among the important approaches to conveying the product's value, thus influencing the buyers' decision (Chind, Sahachaisaeree, 2012).

Packaging plays a huge role in shaping brand preferences. Due to the era of constant consumption, consumer expectations are becoming increasingly important, as they are never fully met (Abdelazim-Mohammed et al., 2018).

This provides marketers with a great benefit, leading to the creation of fast-to-market offerings that could benefit consumers by satisfying their rapidly changing needs and the benefits of their brands (Baruk, Iwanicka, 2016).

Emotions have gained interest in sensory and consumer sciences, as emotional attachment to products is important for repeat purchases (Gunaratne et al., 2019).

Through quality packaging design, a brand can become consumers' preferred brand (Geambaşu, 2017). Consumers' brand preferences depend on two things: previous positive experience and associative learning. The preference for a particular colour, shape, or graphic may come from a previous positive experience or learning that specific colours, shapes, or graphics are more suitable than others for a particular product type (Arabi, 2018).

Product packaging design has been stated as the most important factor in interacting face-to-face with consumers and increasing positive brand image, thus increasing retail performance (Aday, Yener, 2014).

3. Methodology

The article aims to identify the role of packaging in brand attachment. To achieve this purpose, the author used bibliometric analysis.

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method of evaluating scientific literature on a topic based on statistical indicators of publications, such as the number of articles, citations, authors, or journals. It is used to study research trends, the influence and impact of scientific works, and the identification of prominent authors or the most important works in a particular field of research.

The Web of Science database was selected for this analysis due to its rigorous selection of publications, reliability of bibliometric indicators, impact factor, and H-index.

The purpose of the bibliometric analysis is to analyse the role of packaging in brand attachment in the cosmetic market. To achieve this purpose, the following relevant keywords were used. Starting with the keyword "packaging" as the primary topic term, the following keyword, "brand," was used to direct the analysis to the brand attachment.

The initial search using the term "packaging" returned a total of 308,110 articles. Adding the term "brand" with the logical operator AND reduced the set to 1,026 documents. To obtain the final dataset, the following filters were applied: period and document type. Only articles published between 2021 and 2025 were selected, reducing the dataset to 262 documents, and articles and procedural papers considered most relevant to academic research were retained. After applying this filter, the final dataset contained 262 articles.

The table below shows the number of articles published each year and their percentage of 262 articles. As Table 1 shows, scientific interest in the analysed field remained constant from 2021 to 2025.

Temporal distribution of articles

Table 1

Year of publication	Number of articles in the dataset	Percentage out of total
2021	9	3.44
2022	50	19.08
2023	67	25.57
2024	62	23.67
2025	74	28.24
TOTAL	262	100.00

Source: Authors' own research

4. Results

To achieve the research objectives, the author conducted several analyses based on data from the Web of Science, including various bibliometric indicators

Indicators regarding the impact and relevance of the publication

First, the volume, impact, and relevance of the publications included in the study were analysed (Table 2). The dataset includes 1075 publications, explicitly focusing on articles relevant to packaging and branding between 2021 and 2025.

Main indicators of dataset

Table 2

Indicator	Value	Explanation
Publications	262	Total number of publications included in the bibliometric analysis
Citing Articles	1203	Total number of articles citing the publications in the dataset
Citing Articles (excl. self-citations)	1136	Number of citing articles, excluding self-citations
Times Cited	1435	Total number of citations received by the included publications
Times Cited (excl. self-citations)	1326	Number of citations received, excluding self-citations
Average Citations per Item	5.48	The average citations per publication, indicates the impact of each article
H-Index	18	The H-Index value shows that 40 articles have been cited at least 40 times

Source: Author own research

The 262 papers written in this field between 2021 and 2025 are not high, indicating insufficient scientific exploitation of these topics.

In 2021-2025, 1203 citations were found in the 262 papers analysed, 1136 without self-citations. This confirms that most citations come from independent sources, thus strengthening the objectivity of this indicator.

The H-index shows us the authors' productivity combined with the academic relevance of their publications. Another indicator is the value of the H-index, which means that at least 18 articles in the dataset have been cited at least 18 times each.

The results indicate that topics such as packaging, brand, and brand attachment are insufficiently exploited and researched from a scientific point of view, have high potential, and may constitute future research topics.

Packaging is considered the premise of brand sales and influences sales results (Wu, 2015). It must convey much information to potential customers quickly because the modern consumer is often in a hurry and does not have enough time to read product descriptions and technical data, thus making a decision based on instinct. These instinct-based decisions lead to choosing the most attractive packaging, which gives rise to the feeling of trust in the consumer's conscience (Geambaşu, 2017).

Country of origin of papers

The research continued by analysing the distribution of articles by country of origin of the papers. The results contained contributions from a total of 25 countries, highlighting the international nature of the research on the role of packaging in brand attachment.

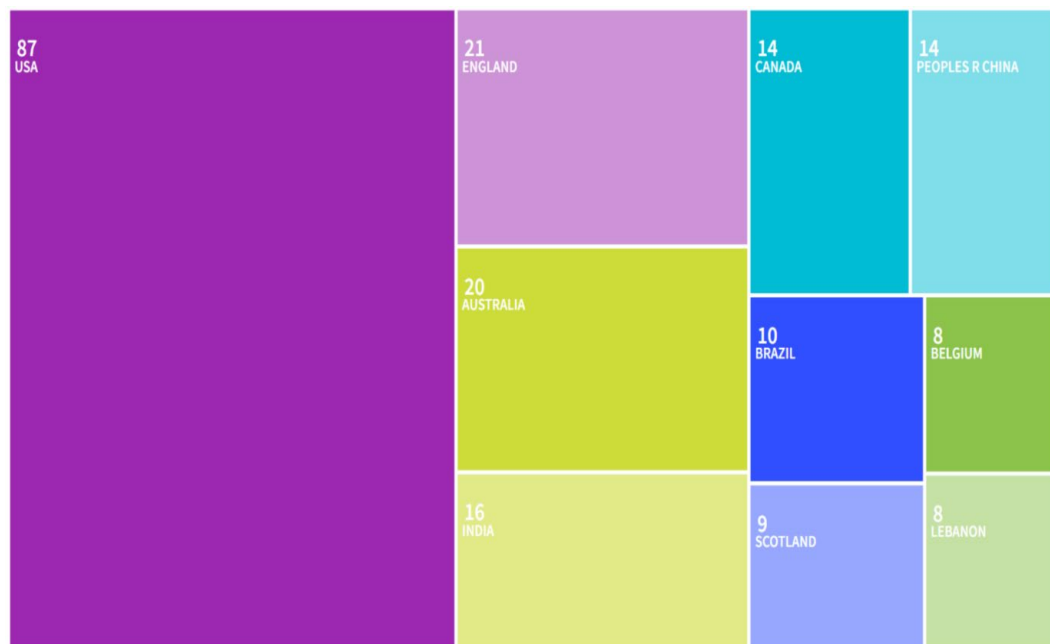


Fig.1. *Top 10 contributing countries*

Source: Web of Science.

Among the 25 countries, 10 stand out with a significant number of publications (fig. 1), representing almost 79% of the 262 articles in the analysis. The most prolific authors in terms of scientific research on the role played by packaging in brand attachment are from the following countries: USA - 87 articles (33.2%), England - 21 articles (8%), Australia - 20 articles (7.6%), India - 16 articles (6.1%) and Canada - 14 articles (5.3%).

Thus, the results in Figure 1 indicate the following conclusions:

- US dominance in scientific research in this field – Approximately one-third of the articles are written by US authors, reflecting the country's significant influence on academic or journalistic production.
- Geographic diversity – There is also a significant presence from other English-speaking countries (England, Australia, Canada) and emerging countries such as India, Brazil, and China.
- European and Asian presence – Although Belgium and Lebanon have a relatively small number of articles, they contribute to the global diversity of authors.

Top institutions and contributors

Another aspect that the analysis focused on was the authors' institutional affiliations. Thus, in this aspect (Figure 2), Johns Hopkins University leads with 20 publications, followed closely, with a difference of only one paper, by Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Rutgers University-New Brunswick and Rutgers University System follow with 11 publications, and the University of Waterloo has 10 papers.



Fig.2. Top 10 affiliations

Source: Web of Science

From Figure 2, we can see:

- Strong presence of US institutions – US universities (Johns Hopkins, Rutgers, University of Pennsylvania) dominate the list, suggesting a strong influence of US academia on these publications.
- Johns Hopkins and Bloomberg School of Public Health – If we take the two entities related to Johns Hopkins together, they total 39 articles (14.9%), making this university

the most prolific source of research.

- Rutgers University – If we combine the three Rutgers entities (New Brunswick, System, Biomedical Health Sciences), they total 29 articles (11%), indicating a significant academic contribution.

- Other notable contributors include the University of Waterloo (Canada), the University of London (UK), and the University of Pennsylvania (USA).

In terms of individual contributions, the dataset included a total of 1050 authors. Thus, the most prolific author is Cohen J.E., who contributed 15 publications, representing 5.725% of the total. He is followed with 13 publications (4.962%) by Welding K. and Smith K.C. with 9 publications (3.435%).



Fig. 3. *Top 10 contributing authors*

Source: Web of Science

These findings highlight a strong correlation between institutional affiliation and author productivity, with prestigious institutions frequently associated with the most active contributors. This global and collaborative effort highlights the importance of partnerships across regions and disciplines in addressing the complex challenges of packaging's influence on brand engagement.

5. Conclusions

Packaging gives consumers their first impression of the product. It is one of the most powerful factors influencing their purchase decision, playing a crucial role in the marketing mix. The most important function of packaging is to protect the products. However, the

graphic design and shape of packaging also determine the appeal to customers and influence their purchase decisions. In fact, packaging is not only a promotional element, but also a part of the company's marketing strategy. Attractively designed packaging – in terms of colour, graphics, shape, and material – that includes appropriate product information attracts consumers' attention and influences their purchase decisions. Studies have shown that, when buying a product, customers first look for visually appealing and familiar packaging. In a market defined by intense competition and time-pressured consumers, a product's packaging plays a decisive role in drawing the consumer toward or away from it. The more prominent a product's design and identity elements are, the easier it is for the company to protect itself from competitive attacks.

The development of attractive packaging designs has been influenced by technology, transportation, and changes in society. Any design concept adopted must consider that it should be attractive and convincing to the audience to create an emotional connection.

The analysis in this article also has limitations since WoS does not include all relevant studies. Other databases, such as Scopus, IEEE Xplore, or SSRN, include a selection of other studies on the topic addressed.

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