

Packaging and Its Effect on Consumer's Decisions to Purchase Jewelry

Reflective Critique

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Introduction

When it comes to jewelry, packaging is often overlooked. Packaging is important because it protects the product, informs the consumer about the product, and catches the shopper's attention. For my Honors Capstone I decided to observe modern packaging designs for jewelry and research how those designs correlate to consumer's ratings and reviews of jewelry brands. I conducted an analysis of 65 jewelry brands, focusing on how they use packaging to contain, protect, identify, and market their products. After analyzing the packaging, I researched the average rating for each brand's jewelry products to decide what type of packaging designs are better.

Review of Existing Literature

There are many ways to consider packaging design, one is by looking at a package's 3D form, graphics and text, and the material it is made from (Chamberlain, 2014). Is it a rectangular prism or is it a cylinder? Does it have fancy illustrations or a clean minimalistic design? Is the package made of metal or paper? These are just a few examples of how package design can vary. The graphics on a package are probably the most important for catching shopper's eyes. Most consumers find that "the products brand name stands out as the most influential factor" when choosing a product to purchase (Kumar, et al., 2014). Other than the brand name, the overall color and design also influences consumers. Choosing colors to use in any design is important. Colors have different meanings and associations such as the "association of the color pink with femininity" (Wooten, 2023). If a brand's target audience is men, then pink probably would not be the best color to use. One way to make a package stand out more in its graphics is by using specialty inks when printing. Neon, pastel, or metallic inks can make a package stand out, but "application of special inks... increases the cost" of production (Đurđević, et al., 2015). Other

than the visual appearance of a package, the material used to make is also important. One of the purposes “of packaging is to protect the product that is packed in it” (Bolanča et al., 2018). The material used has a big impact on that. Paper is one of the most common materials for packaging (Bolanča et al., 2018). Paper is popular likely due to its “sustainability, usability and affordance”, which are three key factors considered during production (Chamberlain, 2014). Paper, which also includes cardboard, is not the sturdiest option for packaging, but it is affordable to make and easy to print on. Another reason paper is a good material option is because it can easily be reused and recycled by consumers. For all these reasons, packaging plays a critical role in influencing consumers.

The visual aspect is not the only thing that makes a consumer decide to buy a product. Part of packaging includes the experience. The experience of unboxing a product has become somewhat of a trend in the past couple decades. Some people record videos of the experience of unboxing products and share them online (Chamberlain, 2014). This shows just how valuable the experience of a package can be. The experience a consumer had with packaging can be divided into three areas “promise, interaction, and legacy” (Chamberlain, 2014). Promise is the overall feeling a person gets from the package and the information it provides about the product. Interaction includes how the package is opened and if it is easy or difficult to open. Legacy is what happens with the packaging after it is opened and the product is obtained. It is possible that a consumer can use the package for something else or it could just be thrown away. All these things affect the experience a consumer has with the package.

When considering packaging of jewelry, one may think of high-end brands like Jared or Kay. Those brands have stores where all the jewelry is on display, and nothing is individually packaged. For those stores, the atmosphere of the building provides the experience instead of the

box. Non luxury jewelers, however, do use individual packaging for their products. Some use boxes, some use flat pieces of card stock, while others use card stock in a plastic wrap. Products are often synonymous with their packaging which is why many consumers make their decision based on the packaging (Kumar, et al., 2014). Jewelry packaging is often overlooked, so what does that mean for the jewelry? I aim to find out how different approaches to packaging jewelry make consumers decide to purchase a product

Methods

To begin my analysis of jewelry packaging, I collected photographs of packaging samples from both in-person and online retailers. All selected samples were for jewelry priced under \$100, as the focus of my research was on affordable, everyday jewelry rather than luxury or fine jewelry. In total, I gathered 65 packaging samples. For each sample, I documented key design characteristics, including the package's shape, materials used, graphic elements, and any text displayed on the front. This data provided a basis for identifying common trends and design conventions in jewelry packaging.

Next, I researched product reviews and ratings from each brand. I visited between one and five retail websites per brand, deliberately excluding the brand's own site to avoid potentially biased or curated reviews. For each brand, I examined multiple product listings, looking at only those with at least 10 customer reviews in order to determine a reliable average rating.

With both the packaging design data and the average customer ratings compiled, I then compared the similarities of packaging design between brands with the same average rating.

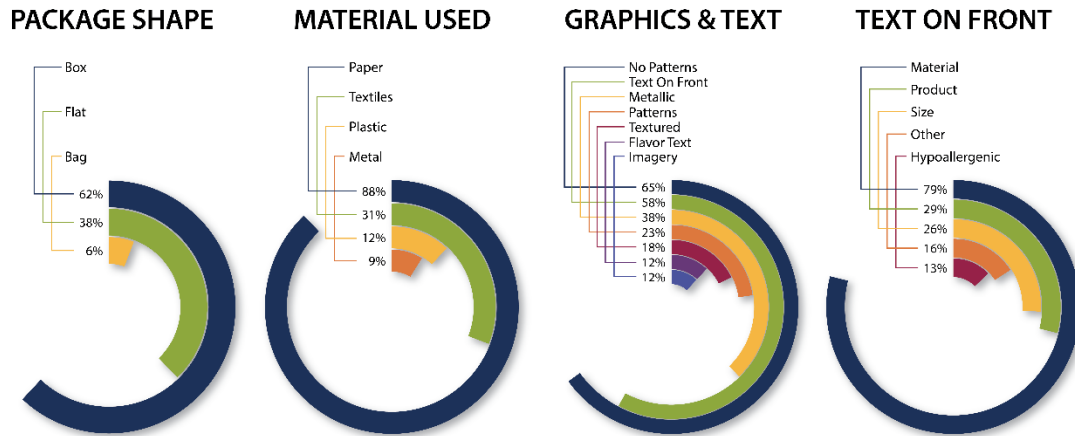
Results

The first noticeable aspect of packaging is its shape. Boxes were the most commonly used form, particularly for online purchases. Flat card stock packaging was more frequently found in physical retail stores. Bags were never used independently; instead, they either enclosed a flat cardstock insert or were placed inside a box.

In some cases, identifying the packaging material by appearance alone was difficult, so I only recorded materials that were visibly distinguishable. The most common material category was paper, which includes cardboard and cardstock. This was expected, as paper-based materials are the foundation for most flat packaging and many boxes. The next most common materials were textiles, including fabric and velvet. These materials were typically used as accents such as drawstring bags, interior box cushioning, or pull tabs on boxes. Plastic was used less frequently and in various ways, including as a transparent cover for flat packaging, a structural foundation for boxes, or zip ties securing the jewelry. Metal was the least commonly used material and appeared only in the form of small wires used to hold items in place.

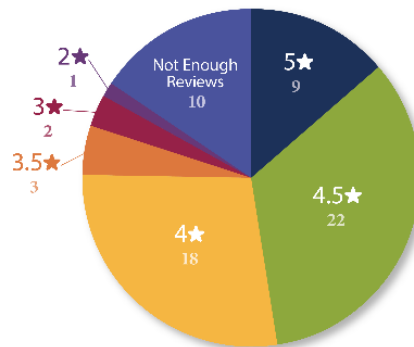
Graphic elements and text played a key role in packaging design, serving both aesthetic and informational purposes. Most packaging had no patterns or imagery on them. Patterns, metallics, textures, “flavor” text, and imagery are all features that are not necessary, but make packaging stand out from other brands. One consistent element of all packaging was the brand’s logo, which was always prominently displayed on the front. Fewer than half of the brands did not include any other text on the front of the package. When present, the most common information included on the front of the package was the material of the product, followed by the product type, and then the size.

Jewelry Packaging Research Data



The second major component of the study was analyzing customer ratings for each brand's jewelry. Of the 65 brands that I reviewed jewelry for, I could not find a sufficient amount of ratings for 10. Most brands had an average rating between 4.0 and 4.5 stars out of five. A smaller portion, 9%, had an average rating below 3.5 stars, while 14% of the brands had an average of 5 stars.

AVERAGE RATING OF JEWELRY FROM BRANDS



Findings

By analyzing the relationship between packaging design elements and the average product ratings of each brand, several trends emerged that suggest which design choices are associated with higher-rated jewelry brands:

- All but one of the brands with a 5 star average rating used boxes as their primary form of packaging.
- All but one 5 star brand incorporated at least one additional design feature—such as patterns, textures, flavor text, or velvet—into their packaging. A few additionally use metallic accents.
- Surprisingly, most 5 star brands did not include any additional text on the front of the packaging beyond the brand name.
- All boxes that featured a solid color other than white on both the exterior and interior had at least a 4 star rating.
- Bags were uncommon for packaging, but the brands that did use them in packaging were rated at least 4 stars.

Project Assessment

One of the key strengths of this capstone project was that I was able to analyze a lot of research samples to make solid conclusions. The consistency observed among higher rated brands' packaging choices also helped me make solid conclusions. Another strength is that this a subject I am particularly interested in as I am starting to sell my own handmade accessories. This personal interest kept me engaged and motivated throughout the research process, contributing to the project's overall success.

The most significant limitation was the scope of the study. Although I focused on jewelry priced under \$100, there were still many variables that could have been explored in more depth. For instance, recording the specific price of each item might have revealed a correlation between price and packaging style. Additionally, I collected only one or two packaging samples per brand, which may not fully represent how a brand packages their jewelry. This is particularly visible with companies that sell a variety of jewelry types. For example, a necklace might come in a box, while earrings might be packaged on a flat card. This variation could have influenced the results.

Future research could refine the analysis by examining packaging separately for each jewelry type, allowing for more specific insights. Another useful expansion would be to consider the size or scale of each brand, as company size may influence packaging choices due to budget constraints.

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