Kreator
Volume 13, Number 02, 2026 pp. 68-80
P-ISSN: 2354-9505 E-ISSN: 2548-9542
Open Access: https://doi.org/10.46961/kreator.v13i2.2097



Packaging As Instant Visual Communication In Skincare Products On Marketplaces And Social Medias

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received May 16, 2026
Revised October 30, 2026
Accepted November 02, 2026
Available online November 11, 2026

Kata Kunci:
kemasan digital, desain komunikasi visual, marketplace, hierarki visual, skincare, budaya visual mobile

Keywords:
digital packaging, visual communication design, marketplace, visual hierarchy, skincare, mobile visual culture



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ABSTRAK

Perkembangan marketplace dan media sosial telah mengubah cara kemasan skincare ditampilkan dan dipersepsikan secara visual. Kemasan tidak lagi terutama dirancang untuk tampilan rak fisik, melainkan untuk thumbnail marketplace, visual scrolling, dan layar smartphone. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis transformasi bahasa visual pada kemasan skincare digital melalui penggunaan warna, tata letak, hierarki visual, dan white space dalam konteks marketplace dan media sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode analisis visual. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi visual terhadap kemasan skincare yang ditampilkan pada marketplace digital dan platform media sosial, khususnya produk dari Glad2Glow, Skintific, Somethinc, Azarine, dan The Originote. Analisis dilakukan dengan menggunakan teori hierarki visual, tata letak, Gestalt, white space, dan representasi warna sebagai alat pembacaan visual. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemasan skincare digital mengalami penyederhanaan visual melalui hierarki instan, dominasi white space, warna-warna lembut, dan tata letak minimalis untuk mempertahankan keterbacaan dan kemudahan pengenalan pada thumbnail marketplace. Marketplace digital juga mendorong homogenisasi visual melalui dominasi estetika clean minimal dan estetika smartphone. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kemasan skincare digital kini berfungsi sebagai media komunikasi visual instan dalam budaya visual marketplace berbasis smartphone.

ABSTRACT

The development of marketplaces and social media has transformed the way skincare packaging is visually displayed and perceived. Packaging is no longer primarily designed for physical shelf display, but rather for marketplace thumbnails, scrolling visuals, and smartphone screens. This study aimed to analyze the transformation of visual language in digital skincare packaging through the use of color, layout, visual hierarchy, and white space within marketplace and social media contexts. The study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using visual analysis methods. Data were collected through visual observation of skincare packaging displayed on digital marketplaces and social media platforms, particularly products from Glad2Glow, Skintific, Somethinc, Azarine, and The Originote. The analysis applied theories of visual hierarchy, layout, Gestalt, white space, and color representation as visual reading tools. The findings showed that digital skincare packaging experienced visual simplification through instant hierarchy, dominant white space, soft colors, and minimalist layouts to maintain readability and recognizability in marketplace thumbnails. Digital marketplaces also encouraged visual homogenization through the dominance of clean minimal aesthetics and smartphone aesthetics. This study concluded that digital skincare packaging now functions as a medium of instant visual communication within smartphone-based marketplace visual culture.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital commerce has transformed how products are displayed and discovered by consumers. On marketplaces, products are presented through relatively small images, product names, prices, promotional labels, and other information embedded in the platform interface. Social media, meanwhile, enables products to be presented through photographs, videos, campaign materials, and posts that combine packaging with models, backgrounds, illustrations, or promotional narratives. Consequently, product representation in digital environments does not always correspond directly to the physical appearance of the packaging. Product images constitute a form of visual presentation that may retain the characteristics of the packaging while emphasizing or adding certain elements according to digital communication requirements (Clement et al., 2026; Pearce et al., 2020; Rose, 2023).

This issue is particularly relevant to skincare products because packaging contains various visual cues associated with brand identity and product information. Container shape, color, logos, typography, and label information establish visual characteristics that can be observed before consumers read all the product details. However, the influence of these elements cannot be explained independently of their overall composition. Orth and Malkewitz (2008), for example, demonstrated that holistic package design is associated with consumers' brand impressions. Their findings provide a basis for viewing packaging as an interconnected visual composition rather than merely a collection of separate attributes. Similarly, Silayoi and Speece (2007) examined the importance of packaging attributes in consumer evaluation, while the meta-analysis by Callebaut et al. (2026) synthesized evidence from various studies concerning the relationships between visual packaging elements—including size, color, shape, material, background, imagery, logo, and text design—and different consumer responses. Ampuero and Vila (2006) also examined the relationship between graphic packaging characteristics and consumer perceptions of product positioning. More specifically, Liao et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between container colors and the beauty benefits associated with skincare products. This literature indicates that packaging design is a complex subject of investigation and that the implications of each element need to be understood in relation to the context and type of response being examined.

The digital environment introduces an additional concern because product images may combine the characteristics of physical packaging with graphic elements created for promotional purposes. Elements printed on containers or labels, such as logos and product names, are conceptually different from decorative backgrounds, models, illustrations, benefit icons, or promotional text placed outside the packaging. If these two layers are not distinguished, an analysis may incorrectly attribute characteristics of promotional materials to the physical packaging design. In visual research, this distinction is important because images do not merely record objects; they also present them through processes of selection, arrangement, and framing (Rose, 2023). Pearce et al. (2020) demonstrated the relevance of cross-platform visual approaches for researching social media images. Therefore, the production and presentation contexts of images need to be considered when comparing materials from digital environments.

In addition to the sources of visual elements, image size and arrangement are important considerations in online product presentation. Through their research on thumbnails as online product displays, Lam et al. (2007) highlighted the importance of considering image arrangements within virtual shopping environments. Clement et al. (2026) specifically examined the challenges of packaging design for small-sized product displays on marketplaces. Their study employed interviews with five packaging designers and eye-tracking tests involving 61 respondents to develop and examine packaging design guidelines for online retailing. Meanwhile, Orquin et al. (2020) analyzed the visual characteristics of product packaging and demonstrated that brand-related elements may have different levels of visual prominence compared with other types of information, such as sustainability and nutritional information. Through an eye-tracking analysis of print advertisements, Pieters and Wedel (2004) also demonstrated that brand elements, images, and text exhibit different patterns of visual attention. These studies provide a basis for examining image size, position, salience, and information organization, although their contexts and units of analysis are not entirely identical. Nevertheless, visual attention should not be equated with comprehension, liking, or purchasing decisions. Husić-Mehmedović et al. (2017), through an eye-tracking study, emphasized that seeing an element does not necessarily mean liking it. Therefore, visual analysis of skincare materials needs to distinguish observable characteristics from consumer effects that require separate empirical testing.

Based on these issues, this study uses the term *instant visual communication* as an analytical concept to examine the potential of visual cues to support the initial recognition of products and brands. The term *instant* does not refer to a measured recognition duration or imply that consumers

always understand a message immediately. Rather, it refers to the initial stage at which consumers encounter visual cues before reading more comprehensive product information. Within this framework, two analytical functions are distinguished. The first is product-category recognition, referring to visual cues that may guide initial judgments about the type of product being presented. The second is brand-identity recognition, referring to visual cues that may help distinguish one brand from another. These two functions may be related, but they are not identical. Container shape, for example, may provide an indication of product type, but it is not necessarily sufficient to determine the product category or variant. Conversely, brand recognition may involve a combination of names, logos, colors, typography, and design consistency. Henderson and Cote's (1998) study of logo characteristics associated with recognition and image communication supports the importance of examining visual identity as a combination of characteristics rather than as a single isolated element. Keller (1993) explains the concept of customer-based brand equity, while Wheeler (2017) emphasizes the consistency of identity elements as an important aspect of brand identity design. These perspectives help distinguish the presence of visual identity elements from consumers' actual ability to recognize a brand through those elements.

To examine these visual cues systematically, this study employs six analytical categories: color, typography, visual hierarchy, layout, Gestalt principles, and white space. Color is analyzed in terms of palette use and contrast between elements; typography in terms of relative size, weight, and legibility; visual hierarchy in terms of the relative prominence of logos, product names, and supporting information; layout in terms of the positioning and relationships between elements; Gestalt principles in terms of grouping, similarity, proximity, and figure–ground relationships; and white space in terms of the distribution of areas not occupied by graphic elements or text. Ambrose and Harris (2011) and Tondreau (2019) provide a foundation for describing layout and relationships between visual elements, while Koffka (1935) serves as a classical reference for Gestalt principles of perception. Pieters and Wedel (2004) can be used as an empirical point of comparison regarding the relationship between the size and characteristics of visual elements and attention to advertising. However, findings concerning attention to advertisements do not automatically validate the six analytical categories employed in this study. These categories are used as descriptive tools to explain how visual information is organized, rather than as a communication-effectiveness scale validated through consumer testing.

This study focuses on visual materials featuring products from five skincare brands: Glad2Glow, Skintific, Somethinc, Azarine, and The Originote. These five brands are used as contexts for identifying variations in visual representation, rather than as a sample that automatically represents the entire skincare industry. The analysis considers packaging shapes, color use, logo and information placement, image composition, and the relationship between elements inherent to physical packaging and additional elements in digital materials. Comparisons also need to consider product categories, variants, container sizes, image types, and source traceability. Packaging photographs, product packshots, promotional images, and lifestyle-oriented materials, for example, cannot be treated as entirely equivalent forms of representation because each may have a different composition and communication purpose. Research on container colors in skincare products by Liao et al. (2018) provides a relevant reference for examining color associations in the skincare context; however, its findings cannot be directly used to determine the meaning of colors for every brand examined in this study.

Based on the literature review, this study does not assume that previous research has failed to address packaging design, brand identity, visual attention, or online product images. Instead, it positions these studies as a foundation for developing an analytical framework that explicitly distinguishes physical packaging from digital representation and connects visual organization with two different recognition functions. The proposed novelty lies in formulating a conceptual framework of instant visual communication and applying consistent analytical categories to describe visual sources, visual organization, product-category recognition, and brand-identity recognition. This framework brings together research on holistic package design (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008), attention to visual packaging elements (Orquin et al., 2020), packaging design for online product displays (Clement et al., 2026), and cross-platform visual analysis (Pearce et al., 2020). This contribution is conceptual and analytical; the study does not claim to have demonstrated the effectiveness of particular designs or established empirical generalizations about all brands and platforms.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the visual representations of skincare packaging from five brands based on color, typography, visual hierarchy, layout, Gestalt principles, and white space, while distinguishing physical packaging elements from additional elements in digital presentations. The analysis is used to formulate a conceptual framework connecting visual sources, visual organization, product-category recognition, and brand-identity recognition. The expected contribution

of this study lies in providing an analytical framework for examining packaging representations more systematically in digital environments. Since the research focuses on visual materials and does not experimentally measure consumer responses, its conclusions are limited to the description and interpretation of the images analyzed. Further research using appropriate designs and data is required to examine recognition accuracy, response time, actual visual attention, comprehension, preference, and purchasing decisions.

2. METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using comparative visual analysis. This approach was selected to identify visual characteristics, explain relationships among visual elements, and compare how skincare product materials are organized in digital images. The visual analysis is not intended to measure the effectiveness of design in influencing consumers. Rather, it aims to describe observable features and interpret their visual organization based on relevant design concepts and literature (Rose, 2023). Within this approach, images are treated as representational materials that need to be examined in terms of their visual elements, modes of presentation, and contexts of appearance.

The research examines visual materials representing products from five brands: Glad2Glow, Skintific, Somethinc, Azarine, and The Originote. The brands were selected purposively based on their relevance to the research focus and the traceability of available visual materials. Marketplace materials, particularly product images displayed on Shopee product pages or search results, serve as the primary context for visual observation. Social media materials are considered part of the digital representation context only when the source of the post or account can be identified and the relevant documentation is available. This distinction is consistent with the importance of considering platform contexts and forms of representation in digital visual research (Pearce et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study does not claim to have established a balanced corpus covering all brands and platforms.

The unit of analysis is an identifiable visual item with a traceable source, such as a main product image or a social media post displaying the packaging. For each item included in the analysis, the research documentation records the brand, product name or variant where available, type of material, platform, source URL, access date, and source status, such as an official account, official store, retail seller, or third party. This documentation helps maintain source traceability and distinguish official materials from content uploaded by other parties. Materials whose sources cannot be adequately traced are excluded as the basis for brand-specific or platform-specific claims. This documentation also helps distinguish the object being represented from the way it is presented in digital images (Rose, 2023).

Product comparisons are conducted with attention to category equivalence. Products belonging to different categories are not treated as fully comparable when drawing conclusions about differences in packaging design. For example, material displaying a sunscreen product cannot automatically be grouped with moisturizer products as samples from the same category. Differences in container size, product type, variant, and informational function are also considered when describing visual variations. This principle is necessary because research on packaging design indicates that consumer responses to packaging are associated with various attributes and product contexts; therefore, comparisons require careful consideration of the objects being analyzed (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008; Silayoi & Speece, 2007). Since the documentation and product-category equivalence have not been fully confirmed, materials that cannot be directly compared are used as descriptive examples rather than as a basis for comparative generalization.

The analysis is conducted in three stages. The first stage is visual description, which involves recording directly observable elements, including container shape, dominant colors, logos, typography, label information, backgrounds, models, illustrations, icons, and promotional text. The second stage is the classification of elements according to their sources. Elements that are part of the physical packaging are distinguished from those added to digital materials, insofar as this distinction can be established from the available images. The third stage is interpretation and comparison, which involves explaining how the elements are organized and how their arrangement may provide cues for product-category recognition or brand-identity recognition. These stages combine the description of visual materials with an examination of their representational structures, consistent with methodological approaches to visual research (Rose, 2023; Pearce et al., 2020). Such interpretations are not treated as evidence that consumers actually perform these recognition processes.

The analytical categories comprise color, typography, information hierarchy, layout, Gestalt principles, and white space. Color is examined in terms of its use and contrast relationships; typography in terms of visibility, relative size, and legibility; information hierarchy in terms of the

prominence of key elements; layout in terms of the positioning and relationships among elements; Gestalt principles in terms of grouping, proximity, similarity, and figure–ground relationships; and white space in terms of the space separating or surrounding visual elements. These categories serve as descriptive tools for examining visual structures rather than as a quantitative scale for measuring design effectiveness (Ambrose & Harris, 2011; Koffka, 1935; Tondreau, 2019). Studies of visual attention to packaging demonstrate the relevance of examining visual characteristics and the prominence of individual elements. However, visual attention cannot be directly equated with consumer recognition, comprehension, or preference (Husić-Mehmedović et al., 2017; Orquin et al., 2020).

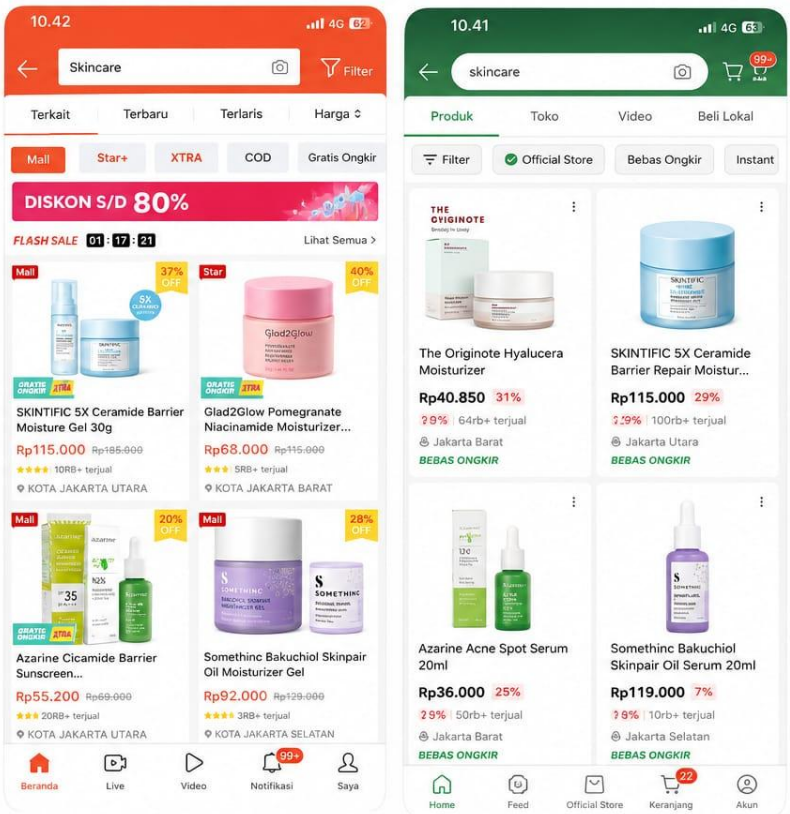
The descriptive findings are organized in an analytical matrix linking visual sources, observed elements, potential functions, and interpretive limitations. The distinction between observation and interpretation is maintained throughout the analysis. For example, stating that an image uses a light-colored background constitutes a visual description, whereas claiming that the background enhances brand recognition constitutes an effect claim that requires separate empirical testing. Accordingly, the findings are limited to the documented visual materials and are not used to draw conclusions about consumer responses, sales performance, or the empirical effectiveness of visual communication.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Results

3.1.1. Visual Representation of Packaging in Digital Environments

The visual representation of skincare packaging in digital environments needs to be analyzed through two interconnected layers with different sources: physical packaging and digital presentation. Physical packaging includes container shape, packaging color, logo, typography, and information printed on the label. In contrast, digital presentation may incorporate backgrounds, models, illustrations, benefit icons, promotional text, and platform interface elements. This distinction provides the basis for the analysis because the elements visible in a single image do not necessarily originate entirely from the product's packaging design.



.Figure 1. Display of Skincare Products in Shopee Marketplace Search Results. (Source: Researcher's documentation)

On marketplaces, product images are displayed within an interface that also contains product names, prices, promotional information, seller details, and navigation elements. Consequently, users' visual experiences are shaped by the relationship between product images and the environment in

which they appear. Lam et al. (2007) investigated thumbnail processing in online shopping environments through an eye-tracking experiment. Their findings indicate that image position within a thumbnail arrangement is associated with visual scanning patterns and product search speed. These findings support the importance of considering layout context when analyzing digital product images, but they do not demonstrate that all consumers process skincare images in identical ways.

Figure 1 illustrates the context in which products are presented on the marketplace. When the screenshot displays several products simultaneously, the object of analysis includes both the product images and their accompanying interface elements. Prices, promotional labels, product titles, and seller information constitute part of the presentation context rather than the physical packaging characteristics. This distinction enables the analysis to determine which elements are inherent to the product and which are added or arranged by the platform or promotional content creators.

Orquin et al. (2020) provide further evidence of the importance of visual distribution in packaging design. They analyzed images of 158 consumer products and found that brand-related elements tended to be more visually prominent than information concerning attributes that require consumer trust, such as sustainability and nutrition. This prominence was examined through characteristics such as visual salience, surface area, and the distance of elements from the center of the package. These findings demonstrate that spatial distribution and element positioning are relevant aspects of visual analysis. However, because their study examined consumer products in general, its findings should not be directly interpreted as evidence concerning all skincare products or every marketplace display.

A broader perspective is provided by Callebaut et al. (2026) through a meta-analysis synthesizing 1,213 effects from 280 studies across 119 articles. The analysis covered eight visual packaging elements: size, color, shape, material, background, imagery, logo design, and text design. This scope demonstrates that the relationship between packaging design and consumer responses has been investigated through various visual characteristics and research outcomes. For the present study, these findings support the need for an analysis that considers not only dominant colors but also shape, identity, text, and relationships among visual elements. Nevertheless, the figures reported in that meta-analysis represent evidence from previous literature, not measurements conducted on the five brands examined in this study.

The distinction between physical packaging and digital representation is also relevant when products are presented through social media. Posts may combine packaging with models, illustrations, slogans, and graphic elements that establish their own visual contexts. Pearce et al. (2020) discuss cross-platform visual analysis as an approach to examining social media images. Rose (2023) also emphasizes the importance of understanding images as representations associated with processes of production, circulation, and interpretation. These approaches provide a methodological foundation for distinguishing the represented object from the way it is presented.

Although marketplaces and social media both serve as environments for product presentation, incomplete documentation does not allow the identification of comprehensive patterns of cross-platform differences. Therefore, this study does not claim that one platform produces more effective or more attractive representations than another. The finding that can be supported is the importance of distinguishing packaging characteristics from additional digital elements so that visual analysis does not conflate two different layers of representation.

3.1.2. Visual Characteristics of Five Brands and Two Recognition Functions

Preliminary observations of visual materials from Glad2Glow, Skintific, Somethinc, Azarine, and The Originote reveal variations in color use, container shape, information placement, and image composition. These variations provide a basis for describing the visual organization of each material. However, the observations are insufficient to rank the brands in terms of ease of recognition, attractiveness, or communication effectiveness.

In the observed Glad2Glow material, pink-toned packaging with red accents appears against a relatively simple background. This description indicates the relationship between packaging color and the background in the image. In the Skintific material, a blue-and-white combination is presented alongside relatively prominent promotional text. This arrangement can be analyzed in terms of the relationship between the product image and its accompanying promotional information. However, the visual prominence of promotional text does not establish that users pay more attention to it than to the logo or product name.

The observed Somethinc material displays red tube-shaped packaging against a white background. The object's position can be described as a layout characteristic, whereas the assumption that this position enhances brand recognition requires separate testing. In the Azarine material, the visual example shows a combination of white and green packaging for sunscreen,

accompanied by a model or benefit icons. If the study uses moisturizer products as a comparison category, the sunscreen material cannot be treated as an equivalent sample without a clear methodological justification. Meanwhile, the observed The Originote material displays white packaging with color accents and a composition involving a cream-yellow background or repeated product images.

The descriptions above should be understood as observations of the available materials rather than definitive characteristics of all products from each brand. Differences in products, variants, container sizes, image angles, lighting, and promotional formats may produce different visual representations. Therefore, each brand-specific description in the final manuscript must be supported by the actual images included in the research corpus. If the image source or product type cannot be verified, the description should not be treated as a final finding.

Conceptually, these visual characteristics can be analyzed through two distinct recognition functions: product-category recognition and brand-identity recognition. This distinction provides the foundation for the instant visual communication model proposed in this study.

Product-category recognition concerns visual cues that may help direct an initial inference about a product's type or function. Container shape, product names, label information, and image composition may serve as sources of such cues. However, container shape alone is not always sufficient to identify a product category. For example, jar-shaped containers may be used for several types of skincare products. Therefore, shape needs to be interpreted together with label information and other visual cues.

Brand-identity recognition concerns the ability to distinguish one brand from another through a combination of names, logos, colors, typography, and design characteristics. Henderson and Cote (1998) analyzed 195 logos based on 13 design characteristics to develop guidelines for logo selection and modification. Their study indicates that logo characteristics are associated with different communication objectives, including recognition and image formation. These findings support the importance of examining visual identity structures, but they do not mean that every logo observed in this study has been proven to produce accurate recognition.

Through seven studies, Orth and Malkewitz (2008) developed a typology of holistic packaging design and examined its relationship with consumer brand impressions. They identified five design types: massive, contrasting, natural, delicate, and nondescript. Their research indicates that brand impressions are associated with overall design characteristics rather than a single element. For the present study, this holistic perspective strengthens the rationale for analyzing the relationships among color, shape, logo, typography, and image composition collectively.

The two recognition functions may be related, but they are not identical. A person may infer that an image represents a skincare product without being able to identify its brand. Conversely, someone familiar with a particular brand may recognize its identity without immediately determining the specific product type or variant. This study identifies the potential functions through visual characteristics but does not test recognition accuracy, response time, or consumers' ability to distinguish among the five brands examined.

3.1.3. Visual Organization: Color, Typography, Hierarchy, Gestalt, and White Space

Visual organization refers to the relationships among elements within a composition. In skincare product images, elements such as color, typography, logos, promotional text, container shapes, and white space do not appear only as separate components. Instead, they form a visual structure that can be examined through relative size, position, contrast, grouping, and figure–ground relationships. Layout principles and the use of grids provide descriptive tools for explaining these relationships (Ambrose & Harris, 2011; Tondreau, 2019).

Color is a visual element that can be observed on both physical packaging and the background of digital images. The color of a container or label needs to be distinguished from colors added as part of a promotional composition. Both may interact within a single image, but they do not necessarily originate from the same source. Callebaut et al. (2026) included color as one of eight visual elements in their meta-analysis. This scope reinforces the relevance of color in packaging research while indicating that color should be examined alongside shape, size, material, imagery, logos, and text. Accordingly, a dominant color cannot automatically be identified as the cause of brand recognition or consumer preference.

Typography serves to present brand names, product names, functional information, benefit claims, and supporting descriptions. In visual analysis, font size, weight, contrast, and position can be recorded to explain the relative visibility of different information. Visual hierarchy concerns the degree of prominence among elements. If promotional text appears larger than the product name, the defensible finding is that the promotional text has greater relative prominence in that particular

image. Concluding that the text diverts attention or reduces consumer comprehension requires additional evidence.

The importance of element positioning and size can be explained through the research of Orquin et al. (2020), who found that certain visual characteristics are associated with the salience of elements on consumer product packaging. Meanwhile, Lam et al. (2007) demonstrated that image position within a thumbnail arrangement may be associated with product processing and search in online environments. Both studies support the analysis of visual positioning and prominence, but they examine different research contexts. Findings concerning thumbnails on shopping pages cannot be directly equated with findings concerning the positioning of elements on physical packaging.

Layout concerns object positioning, relationships between text and images, and the distribution of elements within the visual field. Gestalt principles help explain grouping based on proximity, similarity, and figure–ground relationships (Koffka, 1935). In skincare images, for example, the proximity between a product name and its packaging can be recorded as a compositional characteristic. However, interpreting this proximity as facilitating comprehension remains a hypothesis unless it is tested with users.

White space refers to areas that are not occupied by major graphic elements or text. Such spaces can establish distances between information groups and form part of the compositional structure. Conversely, repeated product images, additional icons, and multiple promotional messages may make a display appear denser. Nevertheless, a minimalist display is not automatically more effective than a dense one. Evaluating effectiveness requires consideration of communication objectives, product categories, presentation contexts, and user responses.

These interpretive limitations are consistent with Husić-Mehmedović et al. (2017), who investigated visual attention to packaging design using eye-tracking. Their findings indicate that visual attention is not necessarily associated with design preference. In other words, an element that attracts attention is not necessarily the element that is preferred or considered the most appropriate. Therefore, color, typography, hierarchy, layout, Gestalt principles, and white space are used in this study as descriptive categories for identifying visual organization, rather than as indicators of empirically established effectiveness.

3.1.4. Distinguishing Physical Packaging from Digital Representation

The distinction between physical packaging and digital representation is a central principle in interpreting the findings. Physical packaging includes container shape, material or label color, logos, printed typography, and information attached to the product. Digital representation may contain these elements but can also incorporate decorative backgrounds, models, illustrations, benefit icons, slogans, promotional markers, and graphic compositions that are not part of the physical packaging.

This distinction determines how visual evidence should be described. If a logo appears on the container, its presence and position can be recorded as packaging characteristics. If the brand name is displayed again in large text outside the container, its prominence forms part of the digital composition. Similarly, benefit icons placed beside the product image cannot be considered label elements unless there is evidence that they are printed on the packaging.

Rose (2023) provides a methodological foundation for analyzing images by considering the relationships among objects, representational processes, contexts, and interpretation. Pearce et al. (2020) extend the relevance of visual analysis to social media images and cross-platform contexts. These sources support the distinction between the represented object and the way it is presented, but they do not provide direct evidence concerning the visual practices of the five brands in this study's corpus.

Analytically, separating these two layers helps prevent attribution errors. An image may appear visually prominent because the packaging has a contrasting color, but its prominence may also result from the background, image size, promotional text, or repetition of the product. Without distinguishing the sources of visual elements, researchers risk concluding that packaging design is responsible for a visual characteristic that actually originates from digital presentation materials.

Although marketplaces and social media both serve as environments for product presentation, this study does not yet have sufficient cross-platform documentation to establish consistent differences between them. Comparative claims require materials from each platform with traceable sources, consistent selection criteria, and sufficiently comparable products. Therefore, the findings are limited to the analytical principle that physical packaging and digital representation need to be distinguished, rather than claiming that all brands have been proven to use particular visual strategies on every platform.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Synthesis of the Conceptual Model of Instant Visual Communication

Based on the visual observations and literature reviewed, this study formulates a conceptual model of instant visual communication that connects visual sources, visual organization, and two recognition functions. The model is intended to explain how visual cues can be analyzed in skincare product representations, rather than to claim that recognition occurs within a specific duration or always produces correct responses.

The model identifies two groups of visual sources. The first group consists of physical packaging, including container shape, color, logos, typography, and label information. The second group comprises additional elements in digital representation, such as backgrounds, models, illustrations, promotional text, and image composition. Both groups may appear together in a single display, but they must be distinguished to prevent packaging characteristics from being conflated with digital presentation decisions.

These visual sources are then examined through six categories of visual organization: color, typography, visual hierarchy, layout, Gestalt principles, and white space. These categories are used to describe how elements are arranged, emphasized, grouped, or separated. The descriptive findings are subsequently connected to two distinct analytical functions: product-category recognition and brand-identity recognition.

Product-category recognition concerns cues that may guide an inference about the type of product being presented. Brand-identity recognition concerns cues that may help distinguish one brand from another through its name, logo, color, typography, and design characteristics. Both functions may rely on the same visual elements, but they do not necessarily produce the same level of recognition. Since this study does not involve consumer experiments, both functions are positioned as possibilities examined at the conceptual level.

Table 1. Conceptual Analytical Framework of Instant Visual Communication

Component	Observed indicators	Analytical function	Interpretive limitations
Physical packaging	Container shape, color, logo, typography, label information	Identifying cues inherent to the product	A single shape or color does not confirm product category or brand identity
Digital representation	Background, models, illustrations, icons, promotional text, image composition	Identifying additional elements in product presentation	Additional elements do not automatically constitute part of the physical packaging
Visual organization	Color, typography, hierarchy, layout, Gestalt principles, white space	Explaining relationships and relative prominence among elements	Visual prominence does not establish actual attention or comprehension
Product-category recognition	Shape, product name, label, functional information	Examining visual cues that may indicate product type	Recognition accuracy requires consumer testing
Brand-identity recognition	Name, logo, color, typography, design characteristics	Examining visual cues that may distinguish brands	Successful recognition cannot be established from images alone
Platform context	Image format, display arrangement, interface elements	Explaining the conditions of digital representation	Cross-platform comparison requires a comparable corpus

(Source: Researcher's synthesis based on literature on packaging design, brand identity, visual attention, and visual methodology)

Table 1 demonstrates that the model does not position any single element as the sole cause of recognition. Instead, it distinguishes the sources of visual cues, the ways in which those cues are

organized, and the recognition functions being examined. This approach is consistent with research on holistic packaging design (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008), visual salience in packaging (Orquin et al., 2020), and the distinction between attention and preference (Husić-Mehmedović et al., 2017).



Figure 2. Comparison of the Visual Organization of Skincare Product Packaging from Five Brands (Source: Researcher's documentation of verified visual materials)

Figure 2 should present materials that were actually included in the analysis. Each image should be identified by brand and product name or variant, where available. The comparison should consider product categories and material types so that observed differences are not merely attributable to differences in product functions or image formats. If the available documentation is insufficient to support the inclusion of all five brands, the figure title and scope should be adjusted to reflect the materials that can actually be verified.

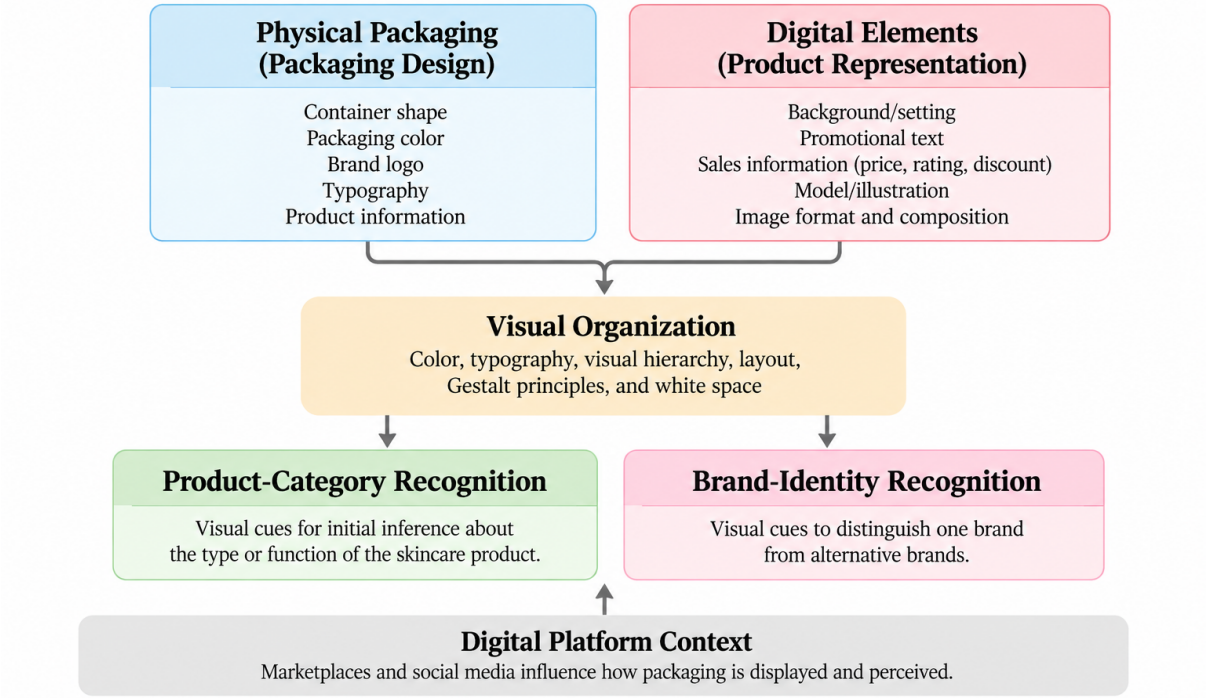


Figure 3. Conceptual Model of Instant Visual Communication in Skincare Packaging Representations in Digital Environments (Source: Researcher's synthesis based on the literature and visual documentation used in the study)

Figure 3 should illustrate the flow from visual sources to visual organization and then connect these elements to two analytical functions: product-category recognition and brand-identity

recognition. The diagram should present both functions as targets of conceptual interpretation rather than as experimentally established outcomes. Recognition speed, response accuracy, preference, and purchasing decisions should not be presented as tested model outcomes because this study has not measured these variables.

This model contributes conceptually by positioning visual sources, visual organization, and recognition functions within a single analytical framework. However, it does not yet constitute a predictive model or an empirically validated model of communication effectiveness. To test it, future research could compare physical packaging displays alone with displays incorporating additional digital elements, and then measure product-category and brand recognition accuracy as well as response time. Variables such as image size, logo visibility, contrast, and element density could be controlled to determine whether the proposed relationships are supported by empirical data.

3.2.2. Theoretical Implications and Research Limitations

Theoretically, this study proposes a framework that connects packaging design research with the analysis of visual representation in digital environments. The framework combines three components: visual sources, visual organization, and recognition functions. Its contribution lies in distinguishing physical packaging from additional digital elements and separating product-category recognition from brand-identity recognition.

Previous literature provides support for each of these components. Orth and Malkewitz (2008) demonstrate the relevance of holistic packaging design to brand impressions; Orquin et al. (2020) examine visual distribution and salience in packaging; Lam et al. (2007) investigate thumbnail processing in online shopping environments; while Pearce et al. (2020) discuss methods for cross-platform visual analysis. Callebaut et al. (2026) further synthesize research evidence concerning various visual packaging elements and consumer responses. This literature supports the relevance of the proposed framework, but does not, by itself, establish the empirical validity of the instant visual communication model formulated in this study.

In practical terms, this framework can be used as an analytical tool to examine whether packaging characteristics and digital materials have been described separately. Designers can use it to examine the relationships among shape, labels, and brand identity, while promotional content creators can use it to assess the relationships among product images, text, backgrounds, and additional elements. However, these recommendations represent analytical implications rather than guarantees that a particular design will improve recognition or sales.

This study has several limitations that need to be explicitly acknowledged. First, the visual documentation is insufficient to support generalizations about all products, variants, and platforms associated with the five brands. Second, differences in product categories and material types may limit the comparability of the materials. Third, the study does not examine consumer responses through experiments or surveys. Fourth, visual descriptions cannot establish which elements actually attract attention, are understood or preferred, or influence purchasing decisions.

Future research should develop a more comprehensive corpus, establish consistent image-selection criteria, and ensure product-category equivalence. Consumer testing could then be used to evaluate product-category and brand recognition accuracy, as well as response time. In this way, the instant visual communication model could be developed from a conceptual framework into an empirical model with measurable indicators.

4. CONCLUSION

This study formulates instant visual communication as a conceptual framework for analyzing the relationships among visual sources, visual organization, and two recognition functions in digital representations of skincare packaging. These two functions are product-category recognition and brand-identity recognition. Container shape, color, logos, typography, and label information may provide visual cues, while backgrounds, models, illustrations, icons, and promotional text may serve as additional elements in digital presentation. Therefore, physical packaging needs to be distinguished from digital representation when analyzing visual materials.

Preliminary observations of materials from Glad2Glow, Skintific, Somethinc, Azarine, and The Originote reveal variations in color use, packaging shapes, information placement, and image composition. These variations can be described through the analytical categories of color, typography, information hierarchy, layout, Gestalt principles, and white space. However, visual observations alone do not demonstrate that a particular design improves recognition speed or accuracy, effectively attracts attention, shapes consumer preferences, or encourages purchasing decisions.

The main contribution of this study is a conceptual framework that distinguishes visual sources,

visual organization, product-category recognition, and brand-identity recognition. This framework can serve as a basis for more systematic visual analysis while helping formulate empirical research questions. Limitations in visual documentation and the absence of consumer response measurements mean that the proposed model cannot yet be regarded as an empirically validated model of communication effectiveness. Future research should employ a documented and comparable visual corpus and examine consumer recognition accuracy and response time to evaluate the proposed relationships.

5. ACKNOWLEDGE

The author would like to express gratitude to the institution and all parties who provided support throughout the research process. Appreciation is also extended to those who assisted with the documentation of digital marketplace visuals and the collection of visual data on skincare packaging from social media and online marketplaces.

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