GOT MILK: INFLUENCES OF PACKAGING AND SYMBOLISM ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIORS

A Thesis by

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GOT MILK: INFLUENCES OF PACKAGING AND SYMBOLISM ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Communication.

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PACKAGING is an overlooked method of advertising that plays an important role in promoting brand image and increasing consumers’ impulse to purchase specific brands. Gaining an understanding in consumer perception allows brands to make smarter decisions and better connections to their target audience. Packaging acts as a silent salesman in the world of advertising by subtly affecting consumers’ perception of a brand both in stores and in homes. These brands are infused with symbolism and meanings beyond their tangible presence — health conscious, environmentally friendly, frugal, etc. — and want to display their values just as much as they want to connect to the values of the target audience. Different design elements, such as color, text, images and materials, each hold their own meanings and consumers interpret them differently. However, when put together, brands can utilize the balance to connect with consumers. Through a series of four focus groups divided by age range of consumers, this research examined how symbolism within packaging influences consumers’ buying behaviors. Specifically, this study explored how consumers responded to packaging and design elements of milk. Research participants discussed their likes and dislikes of two designs (simple and colorful) and three different types of containers (plastic jug, carton and glass bottle) of milk packaging for a hypothetical brand, Moo Creamery. The participants’ purchasing decisions were found to be directly tied to the meanings that they personally associated with the different design elements as well as more socioeconomic driving factors like family dynamics, uses for milk, consumer age and familiarity with packaging. While each individual design and structural element held its own meaning for the participants, it was the combination of these elements in the overall packaging design that determined which version of Moo Creamery, as well as other products, they would purchase.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, over 21,000 new products were released on the market in 2016 (Martinez, 2017). With all of these new products, along with the existing products on the market, consumers are faced with an unprecedented number of product selections. When choosing between competing items, having a recognizable brand can be very useful for both the brand and consumers.

Brand awareness is defined by the American Marketing Association (2017) as “the likelihood that a consumer will recall a brand based on their experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary.” Consumer perception of a brand is determined by personal characteristics, demographic information, and other elements of the brand image. Therefore, exposure to different elements of a brand plays an important role in the unique associations consumers make with the brand and ultimately the equity of the brand. These associations can be made through direct contact with the brand itself and the people associated with the brand, as well as indirect influences through the brand name, logos, and taglines (Watkins & Gonzenbach, 2013).

There are multiple terms used throughout the literature to describe how brands showcase themselves. Terms like brand identity, brand image and visual identity are just a few that can be defined as the “way in which an organization uses logos, type styles, nomenclature, architecture and interior design, etc. in order to communicate its corporate philosophy and personality” (Balmer, 1995; Baker & Balmer, 1997). Brand image, as it will be referenced throughout this
thesis, is not researched as widely as other aspects of marketing, especially when considering product packaging.

The traditional role of the package has been to protect, contain and deliver the product to the retail shelf, gain the attention of the customer at point-of-purchase, convey a strong distinctive brand image, and swiftly communicate the brand’s features, quality and value (Shell, 1996; Feig, 1999). Shell (1996) describes packaging as a “silent salesman” because it “transforms ordinary things — like soap or hair spray or baby powder or muffin mix — into objects of desire. They make us hungry for things we do not need, even for things we do not want.” Consumers are not viewed as the “economical, rational beings of prior economic research,” but instead as “beings that view goods as symbols of personal attributes, goals, social patterns and aspirations” (Levy, 1959). Just as social norms change over time, so do macro social trends in product design and brand image. Contemporary economic and social trends such as the increasing number of women in the work force, separation of income and wealth, increasing sense of time poverty, aging society, increasing health and nutrition concerns, and environmental movements contribute to the shaping and modification of the products consumers buy and the brands they associate themselves with (Underwood, 2003). Brands such as Coca-Cola™, Crayola™, and Ivory soap are just a few examples of brands that have learned to adapt to societal changes over time with their marketing and brand image. Consumers also tend to equate the longevity of a brand with the quality of a brand. These brands benefit from visual equity, a term used to describe durable brands that build equity in their visual image as a result of continuity of imagery in package design. By having visual equity, a brand is enhanced for consumers which triggers recognition and purchase. It differentiates a brand from its competitors (Gordon, 1993).
There are several factors that may affect consumer expectations of products such as product name, packaging, nutritional information, cost information and product presentation. Often the biggest differentiating factor in product categories where only minor differences exist among competing brands is the packaging (Cardello, *et al.*, 1985; Underwood, 2003). For brands with low advertising support, packaging can play an important role in promoting brand image and increasing consumer impulse to purchase specific brands from product categories that typically have low brand loyalty.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Packaging

Just as a logo becomes synonymous with a brand, so can packaging. A product’s packaging can contribute to a brand’s image through logos, colors, fonts, package materials, pictorials, product descriptions, shapes and other elements to create instant recognition by the consumer. Because the time a consumer spends with a brand through a marketing campaign or advertisement is significantly lower compared to the time spent with the product itself, packaging has the ability to build values and relationships with consumers through extended use of the product which can drive brand equity and loyalty. Packaging has become an integral part of the product and is the first point of contact with the product for the consumer at the store.

Throughout the literature, there is not a clear definition of what packaging is. Some researchers describe packaging as a product-related attribute that is critical to the creation and communication of brand identity (Evans and Berman 1992; Underwood 2003). Other researchers describe packaging as an extrinsic attribute that can influence the perceptions of product quality (Olson & Jacoby, 1972; Rigaux-Bricmont, 1982; Bonner & Nelson, 1985; Stokes, 1985; Underwood, 2003). In Zeithaml’s means-end model (1972), packaging is classified as both an extrinsic and an intrinsic attribute, meaning that one cannot be changed without altering the nature of the product itself. For example, the packaging that is part of the physical component of the product, like a dripless spout for detergent or a squeezable ketchup container, is intrinsic, while any information, like a brand name, picture or logo, is an extrinsic attribute (Underwood, 2003). And these all contrast with another researcher who does not describe packaging as a
product-related attribute at all, but instead “an aspect of the purchase and consumption process, but, typically, not directly relating to product performance” (Keller, 1993).

Because packaging resides in the home of consumers, it has the opportunity to become an intimate part of the consumers’ lives. This phenomenon is known as a lived experience between the consumer and the brand (Lindsay, 1997). On the other hand, package imagery through design continuity, as well as the social meanings attached to the design elements of the brand’s image, works to create a shared understanding of the brand. This phenomenon is known as a mediated experience (Underwood, 2003).

Symbolism

Brands and product categories benefit from using package designs that incorporate elements that have a shared social meaning of status, wealth and positioning. And products that appeal both to the consumer’s actual self, the way the consumer currently is, and to the ideal self, who the consumer would like to become, can appear more upscale (Underwood, 2003). Products that are infused with symbolism are viewed by consumers as possessing meaning beyond their tangible presence (Hirschman, 1980). Symbolism communicated through packaging may include convenience, environmental consciousness, ethnicity, family, health consciousness, national or regional authenticity, nostalgia, prestige, value and variations in quality. Because packaging is an element of mass communication for products in the marketplace, consumers can experience symbolism without engaging in the actual purchase and usage of the product. This type of mediated experience can be found in two forms. The first is through processing package information at the point of purchase and the second is through processing the packaging in advertisements and promotional communication (Underwood, 2003).
Richins’ work (1994) extends consumer symbolism by distinguishing between public and private meanings. Public meaning refers to cultural symbols that are shaped and reinforced through social interactions. Social interactions lead to a considerable likeness in the meanings attached to symbols. Both graphic and structural elements of packaging have the ability to present symbolism as these attributes often share public meanings within a culture. The colors used in a package design can enhance brand image and create a visual distinction while also producing certain emotions and associations which reinforce a brand’s benefits or symbols. Private meaning refers to distinctive or personal subject meanings that form from the consumer’s interactions with or possession of an object. As a product, and its packaging, resides in consumers’ homes, it is continually communicating the brand image via public or private meaning elicited by its design (Underwood, 2003). A consumer might feel an enhanced self-image as a result of owning a product with a prestigious design or may find feelings of family or nostalgia by owning a product from a brand with a strong history and continuity in package design. For example, shampoo bottle designs reflect the company’s brand image and target audience. TRESemmé™ and Pantene™, two higher end shampoos, have sleek and prestigious packaging designs. The two brands use solid neutral colors for the base design and incorporate an accent color to distinguish between the different formulas. Johnson’s™ is well-known for their baby products and has a strong brand history. Its baby products have maintained consistent packaging over the years which contributed to consumers using this brand when they were children as well as using it with their own children. Consumers whose self-image includes being considered environmentally conscious confirm these beliefs each time they purchase a product that uses ecologically friendly or “green” packaging.
Not only is symbolism separated into public and private meanings, but it can also be separated by how the consumer experiences the symbolism of the product packaging. When interacting with products, consumers have mediated and lived experiences. Mediated experiences are gained through exposure to mass communication culture and mass media products. It provides consumers with exposure to events that are separated from their daily interactions by space and time (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). For example, advertising is a classic example of a mediated experience. The mediated experience of viewing the packaging serves to potentially alter the consumer’s existing perceptions of the brand. An updated package design can foster improved perceptions for a product. KrogerSM and Great Value™, two generic store brands, recently redesigned their packaging resulting in more modern design and typography which allowed them to better compete with other brands in their product categories. Lived experiences refer to consumers’ day-to-day activities and interactions, activities that are situated and immediate. It can also be referred to as a consumer’s personal interaction with a brand, typically resulting from purchasing the product and using it (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998).

As a continuation of lived and mediated experiences consumers experience with packaging, sensory consumer research looks at how extrinsic product cues, such as packaging and branding, can influence how consumers evaluate food products (Deliza & MacFie, 1996). Specifically with food consumption, consumer expectations play an important role in how a brand markets itself because expectations may improve or degrade the perception of a product before it is even purchased or tasted. These expectations can be broken into two categories: sensory-based and hedonic (Cardello, 1993; Deliza & MacFie, 1996). Sensory-based expectations lead consumers to believe that the product will possess certain sensory characteristics based on previous interactions or purchases and will influence subsequent
perception during and after consumption. This can include the way a product or its packaging looks, tastes or sounds. After consumers have purchased the product, their expected sensory attributes will either be confirmed or denied when using the product. Confirmation of expectations will lead to consumer satisfaction and probable repeated product use. Disconfirmation of expectations will lead to consumer dissatisfaction and the rejection of the product or potentially the brand (Deliza & MacFie, 1996). Either response affects consumer perception of the product and either raise or lower expectations for future purchases.

Hedonic expectation is related to the likes or dislikes a consumer has of a product to a certain degree. These expectations do not take senses into account, but instead focus on the happiness that a product brings a consumer. Hedonic expectations lead consumers to believe that the product will increase the consumer’s happiness based on previous interactions or purchases and will influence subsequent perceptions during and after consumption. After the product is purchased and used, a consumer’s hedonic expectations will either be confirmed or disconfirmed based on if the product enhances happiness (Deliza & MacFie, 1996). However, consumer happiness is not fixed. Brands must continuously work to maintain or increase consumer happiness while sensory-based expectations can remain relatively the same over time. Take OREO™ for example. When a consumer buys a package of OREO cookies, they know the cookies inside will be relatively the same as the previous purchase. They have preexisting sensory-based expectations for how they will look and taste. Each time the cookies are purchased, the consumer either maintains satisfaction or becomes dissatisfied with the product or brand.
Packaging acts not only as a method of communicating symbolism, but is also important for its own symbolic contributions to help consumers to better understand the brand and what it stands for (Rapheal & Olsson, 1978).

Color

Color is the easiest element of design to research and begin to understand on a surface-level because it is a concept that people learn early in life. From an early age, people learn how colors work together, as well as the basics of complimentary colors and values, and they begin to assign meaning and associations to color. Because of this, color associations are triggered by memories and contributes to the perception of a brand (Labrecque & Milne, 2012; Labrecque et al., 2013). Marketers then can use this association to strategically choose colors for a brand’s packaging to influence the purchase intent, likability and familiarity of a brand.

Much of the research around color comes to the conclusion that color is one of the most powerful elements in establishing a brand’s image. Many disciplines of study, such as neuroscience, psychophysics, visual cognition and biology are using new technologies to gain insights in understanding the complex nature of color perception and the mind. Frito Lay™, a PepsiCo, Inc. brand, used results from a 2008 neuromarketing study into consideration when deciding on ads, products and packaging. The study found that using matte beige bags featuring images of potatoes and other perceived healthy ingredients did not trigger activity in the anterior cingulate cortex — the area associated with guilt. These findings resulted in Frito Lay stopping production of shiny packaging in favor of matte packaging and healthy design elements (Burkitt, 2009).
As a marketing tool, color attracts consumers and shapes their perception of a brand or product by influencing their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It has the ability to facilitate recognition of different product categories, communicate product positioning in the market, serve as a code within a product category, and serve as a cue for abstract attributes (Plasschaert, 1995). Through color, a brand can establish an effective brand image and connect to its target audience while positioning itself among competitors in the marketplace (Labrecque & Milne, 2012).

Consumers experience color at three different levels: physiological, cultural and associational (Hine, 1995). The physiological response is universal and involuntary. The color red, for example, can increase pulse rates, raise blood pressure, and can increase appetite. These effects are known as chromodynamics. Chromodynamics are closely connected to the “temperature classification” of colors which stems from nature. With temperature classifications, the color wheel is broken into two halves: warm colors and cool colors. The warm colors include reds, oranges and yellows. They may mentally stimulate and can create excitement or even anger. The cool colors include blues, purples and greens. They are thought to have a calming effect due to a lower excitement level and are often associated with restfulness, nurturing, and peace.

The cultural experience connects to the visual conventions that have been established over time in various societies. Within Western culture, colors have a wide variety of associations, however, within other cultures around the world, color associations can be much more specific. For example, in the United States, the color orange is associated with autumn and the fall holidays, as well as courage and caution depending on the hue. In the Netherlands, orange is considered a national color and is most commonly used to signify royalty. In Indian
culture, orange, specifically the hue of saffron, is sacred, while in Japan, orange tones are symbolic of love and courage. In the Middle East, orange is associated with mourning and loss. Another example of a color with a variety of meanings is yellow. The United States and the Middle East associate yellow with warmth, happiness and friendliness, as well as transportation, like taxis or school buses. In Eastern and Asian cultures, members of the royal ruling class wear yellow as it is considered sacred and imperial. In many African nations, only people with high rank in society can wear yellow. In Latin America and Egypt, yellow is associated with death and mourning (Cousins, 2012). So, while smaller brands may not have to worry about how the world interprets their brand image, large brands and corporations must consider the cultural experiences and psychology behind the colors they use in their logos and brand images and how different countries interpret those colors.

The associational experience reflects the color expectations for specific product categories and products as a result of marketing efforts over time. Throughout history, certain products have been associated with specific colors and when that association is broken, it can be confusing and “seem wrong” to consumers. For example, white has been associated with medicine, dairy and low-fat products; yellow refers to lemon in scents of cleaning products; and bright colors are used with laundry detergents and candies. If yellow were to be used for dairy products, it would break previously formed associations and may alter the perception of that product. When referring to dairy products, yellow could be thought of as not fresh, rotten, or even fatty.
Shape

People think visually. That is why great brands have visually strong logos and are readily identifiable icons (Peters, 1999). Strong, simple images are memorable to people and strong, simple shapes connect with people’s memories. Similar to color, shapes are a subject that people begin learning early in life. Over time, people create associations with shapes. For example, stop signs and octagons. Eventually this evolves into a logo association, like Apple® is an apple and Nike™ is a swoosh. Seeing shapes triggers associations with consumers (Walsh et. al., 2010). When it comes to product packaging, shapes can be divided into two categories: graphic and structural.

The first component of package design is the graphic element. From a graphic design perspective, shapes refer to the labels or stickers used on packaging. Geometric shapes are most easily identifiable and come with suggestive induction (Adir et. al., 2012). Circles suggest perfection and balance, squares suggest stability and power and triangles suggest harmony and urge upward. Two distinct design shape characteristics found in logos are circular and angular. Each shape resonates differently with consumers. The roundness of a design gives the perception of being harmonious and natural (Walsh et. al., 2010). It is also associated with being approachable and friendly. In contrast, the angularity of a design is associated with energy, toughness, and strength. Another aspect of shapes that influences perception of packaging is a label’s relative height. Labels and designs that are taller than wide are perceived as dominant or proud, while wider designs are perceived as sturdy (Rompay et. al., 2011). Shapes do not have to be as simple as a circle or a square but can also be categorized with symbols or icons. These kinds of shapes can be represented by animals, fruits, insects, daily units or suggestive symbols of actions (Adir et. al., 2012).
The second component of package design is structural elements which include package shape, size and materials. According to Young (1996), the structural elements of a package reflect “a great deal about the nature and personality of a product.” Many functional package features that relate back to a product’s shape and functionality include features such as no-drip spouts, microwavable containers, tamper-proof seals and zip-lock bags. These features generate a measure of symbolic utility in addition to the expected functionality associated with enhanced usage capability, ease of disbursement and improved security. These structural elements create symbolism in the form of convenience, enhanced quality or role associations (e.g. women who identify as dual career, busy, convenience-oriented shoppers). Packaging that fails to enhance product use or convenience, or even worse, provides a level of functional disutility, negatively impacts the consumer’s perception of the brand and hurts the consumer-brand relationship.

Cultural dynamics also contribute to changes in consumer perceptions of packaging by shifting focus from commodity and cost to a consumer demand for easy access and readability, easy-fit storability, eco-sensibility and portability (Doyle, 1999). A study done by the Consumer Research Network suggested that for products in the cracker and cookie category, 60 percent of users will make a purchase decision based on improved packaging functionality (Doyle, 1999). For brands like Oreo, this kind of statistic played an important role in their decision to enhance product functionality by redesigning the packaging to include a resealable opening. Brands that utilize a strategic package design convey a sense of enhanced concern or recognition of the consumers’ needs and desires, which, overall, improves the consumer-brand relationship.

The shape of the package itself is a critical element when it comes to functionality and adds to the creation of imagery for brand image as evidenced by brands like AriZona Tea™, Coca-Cola, and Heinz™ (Lindsay, 1997). Cosmetic brands also utilize unique package shapes to
separate themselves from competitors. Perfume and cologne bottles historically have used unique packaging shapes to convey experience or symbolic benefit. Some brands have reached an almost iconic status due to consumer recognition, familiarity and consistency in package design. For example, the original glass Coca-Cola bottles are a distinctive hourglass shape. Mrs. Butterworth’s™ is bottled in a grandmotherly-figure and has become an iconic symbol in Western culture. During the buying process, consumers seek information from their memory and from their external environment. When a brand uses a shape that really sets itself apart from competing products, consumers store that unique shape in their memory to use later for other similar purchases.

Another aspect of the structural elements of packaging comes from the material used. Paper, corrugated board, and other similar paper materials are the most commonly used packaging material and account for one-third of consumption. However, over time, the use of plastic packaging has grown due to its low weight and barrier properties. Higher pushes by consumers to address ergonomic and environmental issues has forced brands to reconsider and redesign product packaging in order to compete in the international market. An early example of these pushes includes the European Union in the 1990s placing additional demands on packaging in order to minimize packaging waste where appropriate and to reuse and recycle materials. More recently, the United States has seen this in brands like Starbucks in their attempt to reduce plastic straw waste by redesigning their drink lids to not require a straw. Packaging becomes an essential part of a product, especially for food products, because it gives full protection for the product and enables efficient distribution. At the same time, the packaging also serves as a vital source of information and creates a powerful shelf presence while actively promoting brand image.
Typography

Typography can be used in a variety of ways when it comes to design and packaging. It is used to provide information to the consumer about the brand and product, and it can also stand alone as a logo or be mixed with symbols and shapes. Typography refers to the fonts, sizing, alignment, color and spacing of text. It is a versatile design element because not only does it help to convey information or a message, but also it makes words more attractive.

Selecting a font, typeface and size can make a huge difference in the way a brand is interpreted by consumers. It is important to take into consideration not only the tone of a brand image, but also who the brand’s target audience is (Hagen & Golombisky, 2013). For brands with an older target audience, it is better to go larger rather than smaller. Fonts play a large role in brand image as well. There are four general categories fonts fall under: serif, san serif, script and novelty. Serif fonts are most often seen as classical and are very easy to read in print. San serif fonts are most often seen as modern or contemporary. Script fonts can either be formal or casual in style and are often reminiscent of handwriting or cursive. They should be used sparingly due to their reduced readability with small type or large quantities of type. Because script fonts are similar to handwriting or cursive, they often have a more feminine appearance and tone. Novelty, or decorative, fonts are highly stylized. Similar to script fonts, novelty fonts should be used sparingly due to their reduced readability. Depending on the design style of a novelty font, a wide variety of tones can be created.

Creating visual hierarchy through relative positioning and contrasting size of text is another way to shape brand image and draw in consumers through an organized layout while still providing information (Hagen & Golombisky, 2013). Hierarchy tells viewers what parts of the
layout are more important than others and to look at the important things first. This could include the brand name, product details or an emphasis on nutritional information.

Imagery

The interpretation of imagery differs from culture to culture and has fewer standard interpretations. For example, in the United States, daisies are a visual representation of spring, freshness or love while in France it is a representation of mourning, sorrow and sadness. As the old saying goes, “a picture is worth a thousand words,” and consumers look at images before they read text which is why images play a key role in design and product packaging.

Imagery — including photographs, illustrations, and infographics — can make a strong visual impression by setting tone, adding interest to a design, creating emphasis and providing additional information (Williams & Tollett, 2007; Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2012; Hagen & Golombisky, 2013). The right image can add color texture, line and movement to a design. It can be simple allowing consumers quick recognition of a concept, like Apple, TargetSM or Nike’s logos, or it can be complex or subliminal, like the hidden arrow in FedExSM, the people sharing a chip in Tostitos™ or the “31” hidden in Baskin Robbins™, requiring consumers to analyze the image to understand its meaning.

The appropriate use of imagery can play a key role in communicating product features or brand image. For example, liquid imagery allows the brand or product to utilize qualities of water to enhance a product attribute or brand image. It can portray qualities like refreshing, thirst-quenching, steamy or frosty. Liquid imagery can depict splashing, pouring, bubbling or sweating. Liquid imagery can be found in images of flowing water on contact lens or contact lens solution packaging, in advertisements featuring beverages being poured, and face wash
commercials are famous for their face splashing water scenes. Each depiction of liquid imagery provides a unique visual for the specific product and brand (Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2012).

The images of characters or mascots can be developed to enhance and embody a brand image or promote product attribute. These characters and mascots can be depicted as illustrations or photographs and incorporated into the product packaging design. Depictions of characters on packaging attract children and even adults through nostalgia. There are numerous examples of character use in packaging design: Mr. Clean, Tony the Tiger from Frosted Flakes™, the Brawny™ man, Little Debbie™, Snuggle Bear from Snuggle fabric softener, Poppin’ Fresh™ (the Pillsbury Doughboy™), the baby on Gerber™baby foods, Charlie™ the Tuna from StarKist™, the Quaker Oats™ Quaker, etc. These characters have become synonymous with their brands and survived brand redesigns over the years. Their use on packaging plays a role in representing a brand and reflects a brand’s personality and image.
CHAPTER 3
THEORIES

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theory that focuses on the relationships among individuals within a society. George Herbert Mead is considered a founder of symbolic interactionism, though he never published his work on it. Instead, Mead’s student Herbert Blumer coined the term and outlined the basic premises Mead had created. These premises include humans interacting with things based on meanings ascribed to those things; ascribed meaning of things coming from people’s interactions with others and society; and the meanings of things are interpreted by a person when dealing with things in specific circumstances (Blumer, 1969; Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). This theory can be applied to product packaging through the associations and symbols consumers place on brands based on design elements like color and shape.

Consumer Culture Theory is an interdisciplinary field of research focused on developing a better understanding of consumer choices and behaviors from a social and cultural point of view as opposed to an economic or psychological one. It is described not as a unified, grand theory, but instead as “a family of theoretical perspectives that address the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). This theory focuses on four research areas: consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, sociohistorical patterning of consumption, and mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers’ interpretive strategies. While the name suggests it is a Theory, researchers typically use it as a framework to draw from and build on theories rooted in sociology, media studies and communication, marketing, history and cultural studies (Arnould & Thompson,
2005). This theory, or framework, can be applied to product packaging in order to analyze the relationships consumers form with brands and how packaging enhances that relationship.
CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this research is to understand how elements of design, when used for product packaging, are interpreted by consumers. Understanding those results will allow the researcher to explore the impact that product packaging can have on a brand image and the buying decision.

1. When looking at the same product, what makes one brand’s packaging more desirable than another?

2. How do structural elements affect consumer perception of a brand?

3. How do design elements affect consumer perception of a brand?

4. How strongly does symbolism or associationism affect consumer buying decisions?
CHAPTER 5
METHODOLOGY

By conducting four focus groups, the researcher learned how consumers ages 18 to 86 react to different packaging designs for the same product. The focus groups allowed the researcher to see what elements of design persuaded consumers to select one brand over another and what associations they made to the design elements and structure materials. By showing the participants three different types of packaging material and two different package designs for milk, the researcher saw what each participant liked or disliked about the structure and design. The researcher believed the results would answer how packaging affects consumer perception of brands and buying decisions.

The research was conducted through the use of focus groups. The researcher held four focus groups containing seven to ten people who were broken down by age demographics. The first focus group used participants ages 18 to 24, the second focus group used participants ages 25 to 34, the third focus group used participants ages 35 to 50, and the fourth focus group used participants ages 50 and older. These four focus group demographics were selected to see how generational buying habits vary. While the millennial generation consists of people ages 18 to 34, these consumers have very different buying habits. On the lower end, consumers ages 18 to 24 are typically still in college or recently graduated, are beginning to build their careers and accrue income, as well considering marriage and families. On the higher end, consumers ages 25-34 have had the opportunity to settle into a career, are typically more educated and have accrued (some) wealth and are more likely to have already married and started a family.

These participants were recruited through Wichita State University and members of the Wichita community. Communication was distributed through university channels, community
channels and social media in order to increase participants and reach a diverse audience. Screening questions, such as buying habits, were asked along with demographic requirements.

The participants completed an anonymous demographics survey before the focus groups began which included a section asking them to choose which provided adjectives describe them best. There was not a limit to how many or how little they could select. The adjectives that were selected by more than half of the participants in the focus group were recorded to represent the age group. This was not a large part of the study, but instead provided the researcher insight into what characteristics may affect the participants’ buying decisions and what symbolic associations they may have.

During each focus group, participants were shown three different types of packaging materials and two different packaging designs for milk. After the participants had the opportunity to view the packaging, they participated in conversation guided by a predetermined list of questions asked by the facilitator. These questions covered the participants’ likes and dislikes about the packaging design and packaging materials, symbols and associations with design elements, and general influences the participants face with buying decisions. Participants were also encouraged to comment on other participants’ responses and ask follow-up questions.
CHAPTER 6
RESULTS

Participant Background & Buying Habits

Consumer buying habits vary greatly based on health conditions, income level, marital status and living conditions. While all of the participants purchase milk to either drink or use in cooking, they had very different reasons for selecting their brand of milk. The following analysis breaks down each age group to explore their backgrounds and what influences their buying habits.

The first focus group consisted of eight participants ages 18 to 24 — six female participants and two male participants. Participants described themselves as active, frugal, adventurous, career-driven and family oriented. All of the participants were students at Wichita State University in varying majors and employed at least part time. This age group showed the most variety in household income and living conditions. Household income for these participants varied across the spectrum from less than $20,000 to more than $100,000 due to some participants living at home with parents, living alone or living with a partner or roommate(s). Although some of the participants live at home with parents, they still contribute to the grocery shopping by either going to the grocery store with a parent, requesting certain items or buying their own groceries. On average, these participants have made or contributed to the buying decisions of their household for two to three years.

When asked about milk specifically, these participants stated they purchase milk roughly every other week and it is whichever brand is cheapest for the type of milk they want. Some frequently purchased brand names that were listed include Kroger, Great Value and Silk™.

1 For a further breakdown of participants self-described personality traits, refer to Appendix A.
Overall the brand did not matter as much as the type of milk. “I’m the only one in my family not lactose intolerant so we typically had to buy the lactose free ones. So, a lot of the times it’s based on benefits, additional ingredients, anything extra like minerals or vitamins,” said a participant, Male 22².

The second focus group consisted of seven participants ages 25 to 34 — six female participants and one male participant. Participants described themselves as active, health conscious, ambitious, adventurous, career-driven and family oriented³. All of the participants were employed at least part time and some were students at Wichita State University. This age group had more people with average household income, but overall a wider range. Household income for these participants ranged from less than $20,000 to $74,900 with one outlier with a household income of over $100,000. A wide diversity of living arrangements existed as well with participants living alone, living with a partner or living with family. Two participants mentioned during the focus group they have children. On average, these participants have made the buying decisions for their household for three to five years.

When asked about milk specifically, these participants stated they purchase milk either every week or every couple of weeks. Some frequently purchased brand names that were listed include Dillons℠ and Braum’s™. Others mentioned they buy a lactose-free or organic milk but could not remember the name of the brand. Price was also a driving point for this age group, but some also factor flavor into their decision. “It’s the cheapest brand with the best flavor for me,” said one participant, F25(B), about choosing a brand of milk. “If it didn’t taste good, I’d pay more for [a different brand], but since I like it, that’s what I’ll continue to buy.”

² Throughout the rest of this thesis, participants will be referred to by M for male or F for female, followed by their age. If there were multiple participants of the same gender and age, a letter (A or B) is attached to their identifier to distinguish between them.
³ For a further breakdown of participants self-described personality traits, refer to Appendix B.
The third focus group consisted of seven participants ages 35 to 50 — five female participants and two male participants. These participants described themselves as active, frugal, ambitious, adventurous, social and family oriented. All of the participants are employed with household incomes between $35,000 and $74,900 with two with a household income of over $100,000. Three participants mentioned during the focus group they have children, elementary school age to grown. These participants have made the buying decisions for their household over a large span of time, ranging from “since college” to 25 years.

When asked about milk specifically, these participants stated they typically purchase milk once or twice a week, but one only purchases milk once a month. “We’re somewhat carb conscious and obviously milk has a lot of carbs,” said the participant, F39. “So, I think from a lifestyle perspective that’s why we buy something that lasts a little bit longer because we cook with it or do things like that. We don’t drink milk. Nobody puts it in coffee. It’s more for cooking purpose than anything.” Simple Truth™, Silk, Fairlife™ and Hiland were a few brand names participants mentioned by name, but they stated their selection depends on price and shelf-life.

The fourth focus group consisted of ten participants ages 51 to 86 — nine female participants and one male participant. These participants described themselves as environmentally friendly, active, health conscious, social and family oriented. Participants’ level of employment ranged from full time to part time to retired, but all had regular income. Household income for these participants varied across the spectrum from less than $20,000 to more than $100,000; however, the majority of participants’ household income fell above $50,000. These participants either live alone, live with a partner or live with family. Out of the

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4 For a further breakdown of participants self-described personality traits, refer to Appendix C.
5 For a further breakdown of participants self-described personality traits, refer to Appendix D.
participants who have children, most are grown and no longer living at home, and one has grandchildren who live with her. These participants have made the buying decisions for their household for the majority of their lives, ranging from 30 years to 50 or more years.

When asked about milk specifically, these participants stated they purchase milk on a weekly basis or sometimes twice weekly. Some frequently purchased brands that were listed include Dillons, Hiland and Kroger. This age group also put an emphasis on purchasing milk based on the price and preferred simplicity. “The Kroger is pretty plain,” said one participant, F58(A), who purchases milk for her family as well as almond milk for her son. “Now, like the almond milk, that’s a specialty, it’s a little fancier packaging. There’s more decoration and color to it. It’s a cardboard container. The others are all plastic containers.” The same participant later on also mentioned, “The price would affect me more than the packaging, or the color or the picture. I’m going to look at the price first. That’s just me being a frugal shopper.”

Package Structure & Materials

When it comes to package structure for consumers, functionality is the most important aspect. During the focus group, three different types of packaging material were presented: a plastic jug (64 fl. oz.), a carton (59 fl. oz.) and a glass bottle (32 fl. oz.), all containing a water-paint mixture to represent milk. The packaging materials were not branded, so this portion of the focus group focused entirely on the participants’ experiences using these materials and their preferences of package material and shape.
Across all of the focus groups, participants agreed that the plastic jugs were the easiest to use out of the three types of materials because it has a handle. They felt it was easiest to carry and easier to handle. “I help take care of my grandmother and she’s pretty shaky when she moves,” said one participant, F29. “So, she needs something she can grip onto pretty well.” Plastic jugs were also determined to be safer to handle in cases of drops because the plastic will not break, nor will it leak. Participants with children felt they did not have to worry as much if their child tried to pour themselves a glass of milk. “I can trust [my daughter] to pour her own cup if it’s in plastic,” said a participant, F35. “Unless the lid is off, it’s not going to make a mess.”

A major perk to the plastic jugs is that consumers can also see how much of the product is left in the container. However, while plastic jugs are recyclable and appeal to environmentally friendly consumers, one participant, F45(A), who also considers herself to be health conscious and environmentally friendly, voiced concerns about toxins that could be in the plastic. “I don’t like plastics because I know how harmful they can be when in contact with foods,” she said.

Out of the 32 participants, eight purchase some type of milk substitute either regularly or in addition to milk. Any time almond milk or another type of milk substitute was discussed in
relation to packaging, it was described as coming in a carton instead of a plastic jug. “I don’t think I’d ever buy almond milk out of a plastic jug,” said a participant, F19.

Cartons were considered to be the second easiest to use by all of the focus groups. While it does not have a handle to help with pouring, participants felt they did not have to worry about also cleaning up glass if dropped. “I’d go for the glass, because I think it’s more eco-friendly,” said one participant, F25(A). “But we have a seven-year-old so I’d go for the carton because if he drops it, it’s just spilled milk. It’s not a big disaster.” A concern that was brought up during the focus group with ages 50 and older was the difficulty of removing the safety seal for consumers with arthritis or other physical ailments as well as the extra waste it creates. “It’s hard to pull,” said one participant, F66. “And if you break the little circle, you’ve got to figure out how to open it up.” Unlike the plastic jug, consumers felt a major downside to purchasing cartons is they cannot see how much of the product is left. “When I do grocery inventory – open up the refrigerator, see I’m out of milk – I need to see it. I’m just too lazy to shake it,” said a participant, M45. “We have orange juice that comes in [a carton] and I always forget to buy orange juice because I can’t tell how much is in there.” Although it is becoming more common for milk and milk substitutes to be packaged in a carton, across all of the focus groups the participants stated the carton still reminded them of orange juice.

Glass bottles were considered to be the least convenient material when it came to functionality of packaging among the participants ages 35 and older. Their biggest concern surrounded the mess that glass bottles can bring. They expressed concerns of the mess from dropping glass bottles, dripping while trying to pour and not being able to hold the glass well while pouring. One participant, F39, said, “If you set it out and it gets moisture on it, kids pick it up and it slides around in their hands.”
Participants ages 18 to 34 did not express these concerns as much and instead expressed they enjoyed the look of the glass and its ability to be reused or recycled. Multiple participants made comments in passing about the bottles reminding them of HGTVSM, Magnolia Farms™ and the rustic or farmhouse décor trend that is popular now in interior design. Participants within this age group who have younger children agreed with the older participants that while it looks nice, it was not the best packaging for their household due to the risks that came with it.

One benefit of glass bottles that participants ages 35 to 50 discussed was bottle deposits. Brands like Shatto™, Hildebrand and Oberweis™ currently have programs where consumers can pay a deposit for the glass bottle in addition to the milk, and once empty, can either return the bottle for a refill or receive their deposit back. “I think that would sway more people to go for the glass if you could do that with more brands,” said one participant, F45(B).

Family size and the uses of milk impacts how frequently consumers purchase milk and the size of container they purchase. For participants who live alone or with a partner, they purchased half-gallon or smaller sized packaging. For participants who live with family or more than one other person, they purchased half-gallons more frequently or purchased one-gallon containers. Another factor that played a role is how the family used milk. Families that use milk for cereal, drinking and cooking usually buy the gallon size while families that only use it for cooking prefer half-gallon or smaller containers. Multiple participants discussed storing milk in the door of their refrigerator and finding a size that would sit well in there, but one participant had a different situation that affected her buying decisions. “I live in a loft with a tiny kitchen and tiny old school fridge,” said the participant, F36. “Nothing will fit in the fridge unless it’s small and square so the container of milk is very appealing to me.”
Another topic that was discussed in relation to packaging materials was the amount of packaging used. Brands that use excess packaging come across as wasteful or not environmentally friendly to consumers. “Even though it’s just my husband and I at home, I do not buy single serve items,” said one participant, F51. “Yes, it might be easier when you’re making your lunch to throw it in there, but I see that as very wasteful, environmental-wise … I will not buy a product knowing it’s going to create a lot of waste.” Another participant, F28, had a similar response. “I look at if it has a lot of waste or a lot of plastic or wrapping because I don’t want to buy things that are individually wrapped because that’s a lot of trash,” she said. Most participants were not sure if they would be persuaded one way or another to a brand changing its packaging amount or type. “[I would consider switching] if a company goes from plastic to something more eco-friendly to support the company, support the movement,” said a participant, F25(A). “But I don’t think I would notice if they went from plastic to something else, like they would have to say it.” There were also mixed feelings about rebranding. Packaging serves as a mediated experience, similar to advertisements. It acts as exposure to a brand outside of a consumer’s daily life. So when a brand changes its appearance or rebrands, it also changes the consumer’s shopping experience and alters their perception of the brand. Most consumers would say the rebranding does not bother them. As one participant, F58(A), said, “As long as it’s still the same thing, it doesn’t bother me.” But what these consumers do not realize is that they are already loyal to the brand and the rebranding is not necessarily for them. The brand is not trying to convince already loyal consumers to continue buying. It is for the brand to gain new consumers’ loyalty. Another participant, F51, agreed but stated that even though she is product loyal, it still irritates her and makes shopping more difficult. She used the example of hair dye boxes changing their packaging or changing the model. Consumers looking to dye their hair go
to the store looking for the same dye color and look for the model rather than reading the dye color names. Consumers become used to looking for the same color or graphic on a specific brand. If that is changed or removed, they have to relearn what to look for. Referring back to the Moo Creamery colorful design, she said, “I buy into I’ll look for three little bumps and the dairy cow and then they change it, so it throws me off.”

Participants discussed the use of clear packaging as well. However, it seems that the clear packaging matters more to consumers for some products and not others. “I usually buy salad in a bag,” said a participant, F28. “If the bag was completely covered, I probably wouldn’t buy it. But like [when buying] chips, you don’t really care.” Products like bakery cookies were also discussed in relation to clear packaging. The 50 and older focus group all agreed that the product can sell itself with looks. There is not a need for solid packaging. There was no mention of brand name cookies like OREO or Chips Ahoy!™ changing their branding to use clear packaging though. It is assumed that because grocery bakery cookies are closer to “homemade,” they are each a little unique and consumers would want to buy the package that has the best-looking cookies. Compared to name brand cookies like OREO that are factory-produced, there is not doubt in what the cookies will look like. Consumers expect each cookie to look the same each time they buy it.

Package Design

Different design elements like color and shape can be eye-catching for consumers, but it is how much or how little design that is used that really makes an impact on their different buying decisions. The design of the packaging can say a lot about what a brand represents and the people who buy products with a certain design.
Across many different products, participants felt that packaging with a simpler design looked more local or had a small town, homegrown look to it. For some participants, that simpler look with Moo Creamery meant it looked more organic. “The simplicity makes me feel like there’s not a whole lot of extra stuff in it. It’s just milk,” said a participant, F25(A). Another participant, M45, echoed her comment and said “I just want milk. I don’t want to sing and dance. I just want milk in my cereal. It doesn’t have to be pretty.” Shelf-life was also a concern for more organic looking products. “Typically, I like a longer shelf-life,” said a participant, M22. “I know most organic foods don’t have any sort of preservatives that keep them longer. I typically buy store brands because they’ll last longer.”

The participants’ opinions of more complicated designs across different products were that they have a bigger brand look. When looking at the colorful design of Moo Creamery, one participant, M22, stated that, “To me, this [colorful] one is more familiar. I know what I’m getting versus that [simple] one that’s more artisanal.” Another participant, M25, liked that with the carton design, the design covered the entire packaging and felt they did not skimp when creating it. The designs were also compared to other brands. “[It’s] kind of like if you were to go and get ice cream,” said the participant, M22. “This [colorful design] feels like Ben & Jerry’s™. That [simple design] feels like a local place, like Reverie or Milkfloat.”

However, price points for both designs received various answers. None of the focus groups could pinpoint what price range they believed either design of Moo Creamery would fall into. Some believed the simple design would be more expensive while others thought it would be that simplicity indicated a lower price. “Based on the design and style I do prefer [the simple design],” said a participant, F22. “But at the same time because I associate it with the more expensive milk, I don’t see myself buying it mostly because I’m the type of person who would
use milk in like coffee or just to have a small glass. I don’t drink enough to warrant spending an exorbitant amount on milk. I’d be more likely to buy the cheaper brand.” When asked to describe the type of consumer who would buy the simple design of Moo Creamery, some participants said college students, older generations and people who are frugal while others agreed with the participant’s comment that it looked more expensive. Similar to the ice cream comparison, another participant, F21, compared the colorful design of the carton to a name brand. “If it were put on the shelf, its main competitor would be Horizon,” she said. “It looks nice and you could easily put a bigger price tag on it compared to the simpler [design].” Again, when asked to describe the type of consumer who would buy the colorful design of Moo Creamery, the participants said families or the common consumers and it was more affordable.

**Color**

Color can have many effects in the way a product or brand is interpreted by consumers depending on what it represents. While discussing milk, color only seemed to be important to the participants when it comes to selecting a specific type of milk by lid color. “I’m pretty much blind to actually reading a label. I just kind of pick if it’s a pink top or blue top,” said a participant, F19. Another participant, F25(A), had a similar comment. “When it comes to milk, I think of the colors,” she said. “Like red is the vitamin d and the blue is the two percent. I don’t really think of the pictures. I can’t even think of what’s on the front of it. I just think of the lids.” Throughout the focus groups most participant who drink milk mentioned selecting a specific color, however there is not a universal color-coding system for dairy types across all brands. Some brands, like Hiland, Great Value, Kroger, Fairlife and Borden Life™, have overlapping color-coding systems — red is used for whole milk and dark blue is used for two percent, but the
color varies for one percent between light blue and green and for skim between pink, light blue and purple. Braum’s has a different system that uses blue for whole milk, green for fat free, red for low fat and purple for reduced fat. Most participants stated they primarily shop at one grocery store, so either they did not realize there was a change or having a different color-coding system does not bother them.

Consumers did agree that using colors to differentiate different flavors or types of the same product was helpful. For example, one participant, M22, discussed OREO. “Anytime there’s a different flavor you can see the frosting is a different color,” he said. “The packaging is a little bit different, so you want something with a little bit of differentiation based on what’s new or what stands out versus the original.” This same idea was applied to Gatorade™. Gatorade’s most recent packaging design features a gray label with a clear lightning bolt and clear box where the flavor is listed. They are able to incorporate the color of each flavor through the use of these clear sections.

Images

Today’s culture has become very visually dominated, so it is no surprise that either images of the product itself or the basic ingredient(s) used in making the final product are incorporated into the packaging. There were many mixed thoughts about including images when discussed with the four focus groups. Chips and other snack foods were a common example used by participants to express their opinions. Two participants used Lay’s™ as an example for including an ingredient on the packaging. One participant, F25(A), had a positive opinion of showing an actual potato on the front of a chip bag. “If I’m going to buy potato chips and there’s a picture of a potato on there, I’m more likely to go toward that because it’s food, like a real
thing that grows in the ground,” she said. “It makes me crave stuff I see in pictures.” But a
different participant, F19, had a negative opinion of including a potato, considering it somewhat
misrepresentative of the actual product. “If it’s like Lay’s potato chips and it has a potato, like, I
know there’s five pounds of salt,” she said. “You’re not kidding me.” Another product that had
positive opinions was Naked Juice™ and V8™. “Like with V8 I find it helpful to see what kinds
of fruits and vegetables are in it,” said a participant, F18. “I’ll be more inclined to get that than
just a plain bag that just says ‘pretzels.’” More positive opinions of having the actual product
displayed on the packaging were also discussed. “If it’s like a natural popped popcorn and has
little popcorns on the front, I’m more inclined to buy that because I feel like they’re not trying to
trick me,” said a participant, F19. Another participant, M45, had the same opinion towards real
chips being shown on the packaging. “I like when they put the product right in front of you,” he
said. “Like it’s right there. Like they’re dipping the chip in the salsa.”

Similar to how color can distinguish different flavors of a product, images can do the
same. “If it varies from the original product, I think the pictures make it helpful,” said a
participant, M22. “Natural Light came out with a new strawberry lemonade beer. Their normal
design is pretty loud — silver, red and blue versus one that’s half yellow, half pink. I didn’t
know what it was until I turned it around and saw a lemon on the front and realized it’s probably
lemonade flavor.” Ingredients were interpreted the same way. “When I see whole ingredients on
packaging that makes it more appealing than a sugar cereal that has a cartoon character doing
something weird on it,” said a participant, F27. “But if I see like a whole grain or a nut or
something like that, it’s more appealing. It’s more realistic.”

Actual products and ingredients are not the only images that are showcased on packaging.
Mascots, cartoons, and celebrities can also be found, as the participant, F27, pointed out above.
“I’ve bought organic cereal before and they just have an animal on it, so [my kids] just know it from the animal, not the name of the cereal,” said one participant, F31. “Like the brand name stuff, they know those are Trix or Cocoa Puffs.” Pop culture has also played a role in the designs of packaging. During peak sporting seasons, such as the Super Bowl™ or the World Series™, beverage brands such as Coca-Cola, Pepsi™ and Dr. Pepper™ direct their marketing efforts towards consumers who attend watch parties and tailgating by redesigning their cans to look like footballs or to include athletes on the packaging. Beverages have also utilized popular movies in limited edition cans or bottles. AriZona Tea released limited edition can designs featuring Alita, a character from the recently released adaptation of the manga Battle Angel Alita. “[My boyfriend] was obsessed with that package and he’s always drawn to those limited edition ones,” said a participant, F22.

The use of text on packaging has one primary purpose: to provide product information. This is something that all products require but can be used in different ways to appeal to different target audiences. In the younger focus group, ages 18 to 24, text on the front of the packaging was not as important and they would rather see images. For the two focus groups with ages 25 to 50, they preferred a combination of the text and photos, but preferred certain key nutritional facts be presented on the front of the packaging. One participant, F25(B), said, “If it has on there ‘no preservatives,’ ‘no high fructose corn syrup,’ things along those lines, and it’s very prominent on the package, I’m more likely to go for it even if I have to pay more for it just because I don’t want that stuff in my food. If they make it easy to tell ‘oh, this brand doesn’t have those things in it,’ then I’m more likely to just grab it and go.” Another participant, F27, had a similar response.
“The almond milk that I buy, they always put the calories on the front of it,” she said. “Since I just use it for cereal, I don’t care what it tastes like at all, so I just go for the lowest calorie option they have.” Some agreed, but to a different extent. They felt that if it is important nutritional information, it should be big. “If we’re just talking about the product packaging, and not looking at the nutritional facts, I am drawn to that,” said a participant, F25(A). “But if they put too much of it on the front then they’re just trying to sell something and I’m not really about that because it’s more just advertising than anything else.” Another participant, F36, had a similar response. “I don’t like containers where they blast things on there,” she said. “I think it overwhelms me and I won’t even go near it if it’s too huge. But it still has to be legible. Like if it’s tiny and I have to squint to read what kind of milk it is then that’s not good either.”

Brands taking advantage of dietary trends was another use of text that this focus group did not agree with or understand. “Like with a lot of corn products, it will say ‘gluten free’ in big letters, but it’s always been gluten free. They just now put it on there because it’s trendy,” said a participant, F28. However, consumers with health concerns do appreciate what they consider legitimate health information on packaging. “My mother was a dialysis patient, so we all got into the habit as a family when we went shopping for her to look for specific things she could not eat,” said a participant, F58(C). “I like to see [that information] on the front of the package.” Participants who either have these health concerns themselves or someone in their family has them expressed the importance of finding nutritional information on labels. While not for medically-related reasons, a participant, F36, said, “If it says ‘low fat’ or ‘low calorie’ I’m always going to look at the sodium and sugar because that’s going to take the place of fat and sugar.”

There was a unanimous agreement among the participants in the 50 and older focus group that the text on packaging should be bigger. They joked that this is why they were in the ages 50
and older focus group. “I would rather have lesser graphics and bigger words,” said a participant, F58(B). “It seems like anymore you need a magnifying glass to read.” Another participant, F58(A), said, “I want to be able to go up to that display case and immediately be able to find the kind [of milk] that I want. For that particular case, or if you’re looking for a sugar-free item, it can be a little bit smaller. But it’s nice that it’s right there… I want it right there where I can see it and know when I grab it, I’ve grabbed the right thing.” Relating back to including images, one participant, F51, said, “I want to be able to immediately read what the product is. I don’t need to think I’m trying to solve a puzzle as to what’s in there. Show me a picture. Say what it is. Don’t tell me happiness. I’ll decide if this granola bar brings me happiness.”

Symbolism & Associations

Consumers buy certain brands or products due to a variety of influences. Most often it is simply habit to buy a particular brand. This habit can be formed through consumers growing up with their parents buying the brand or through trial and error. For most consumers ages 18 to 24, the brands that they purchase are influenced by their parents, but some of their choices have been made through trying different brands to see which they like best. “My parents are very brand loyal,” said a participant, F22. “Sometimes I stick to those products, but as I’ve gotten older and I’m looking at cheaper or healthier items, I tend to sway. But Jif I grew up eating with my dad so to this day I won’t buy any other brand than Jif.” For consumers ages 50 and older, most of their buying decisions have been made through trial and error over time. “I love Rice Krispie Treats,” said a participant, F68. “And I tried to get the cheap ones at a different place and it is not like Kellogg’s. It’s not the same.” Consumers between 25 and 49 have a mix of influences between these two groups. The consumers on the younger side still have more influence from their
parents and the nostalgia of growing up with a specific brand but are also exploring new brands more than they were when they were younger. The consumers on the older side are experimenting with different brands more often than sticking with brands they grew up with and are beginning to form new loyalties based on that trial and error experience.

The adjectives collected about participant groups in the anonymous demographics survey helped create an understanding of who these groups were as consumers. Because symbolism can be communicated through packaging, it was important to understand how each of these age groups described themselves to see how it relates to the products they are buying.

Most participants agreed or commented on how price affected their buying decisions. When discussing milk brands, most participants stated they purchase which brand is cheapest. However, only two groups — 18 to 24 and 35 to 50 — considered themselves to be frugal in the survey. It can be argued that there is a difference between being frugal and being cheap. For example, those who consider themselves frugal look for deals, use coupons or buy in bulk when products are on sale. “I’m going to buy [Special K] when it’s on sale and I have a coupon,” said a participant, F58(A). “If I’m just buying Kroger brand sandwich bags or something, I don’t pay attention to price.” A similar situation occurred with participants considering themselves health conscious. In all of the focus groups, most participants participated in discussions about buying healthy food options and checking nutrition labels, but again, only two groups — 25 to 34 and 50 and older — considered themselves to be health conscious. However, all of the groups considered themselves to be active. This difference may stem from different interpretations of these words. Active can have a more diverse meaning including anything physical from exercising to walking regularly. Health conscious can mean being proactively aware of how

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6 While this participant was in the 50 and older focus group that did not overall identify as frugal, she did.
healthy one’s diet and lifestyle are while just healthy could refer to simply choosing foods because they are considered good for you or checking sodium or sugar level on a label but overall putting less thought into choices. Three out of the four focus groups — 18 to 24, 25 to 34, and 35 to 50 — considered themselves to be adventurous. This can be translated into how they make their buying decisions. All of these groups discussed forming their buying habits through trial and error. Consumers have to be adventurous, or willing to try new things, in order to create new habits. The focus group with ages 50 and older did not consider themselves to be adventurous which can be reflected in the fact that they have been making their buying decisions between 30 and 50 years. They probably have already gone through the trial and error stage and have solidified their buying decisions and brand loyalties.

In the discussions about Moo Creamery and its design and target audience, the participants were presented two scenarios. The first scenario asked: “You go to the grocery store to buy milk and find that your preferred brand is not available. Your only two options are these two designs of the brand, Moo Creamery. Which design would you choose?” The second scenario asked: “After choosing your design, you watch others begin to choose a design. How would you describe the people choosing the simple design? How would you describe the people
choosing the colorful design?” Each design was presented as being the same price so that the design was the primary focus of the discussion.

Two focus groups — ages 18 to 24 and 35 to 50 — had the majority of participants selecting the simple Moo Creamery design. A common thought among the participants was that it looked like a healthier milk. “When I saw [the simple design] and it was a lot more simple [than the colorful design], it reminded me of a lighter, fresher milk which is something I’m personally used to,” said a participant, F19. They also believed the simple packaging looked fancier. “I love the modern packaging with the glass and the clear sticker,” said a participant, F36. “It makes it look kind of fancy.” Another participant, F45(A), had a similar response, “I like the [simple] design because it’s different,” she said. “This [colorful] side looks like all of the other designs you see.” There was a consensus among all of the participants in all four focus groups that the simple Moo Creamery design looked best on the glass bottle.

Participants within these two groups described others who would purchase the simple design as modern, health conscious and shops at Whole Foods Fresh Market™ or an organic store and could buy more expensive brands. One participant, F19, described the hypothetical consumer as “definitely wearing Lululemon,” and another, F36, described them as “boujee” and “not someone who uses coupons at the register.” The participants ages 18 to 24 thought the consumers would be anywhere between 19 and 35 or someone in college or just recently graduated and starting their first job. The participants ages 35 to 50 did not state a specific age range but instead said “[it’s] definitely a family that doesn’t have kids,” which could fall into a similar age range.\footnote{Participants in the 18 to 24 age group believed the colorful design was “too childish” due to all of the colors. Both focus groups had a target audience of moms with young children. Some believed it looked affordable while others believed it looked expensive.}
One focus group — ages 50 and older — had the majority of participants selecting the colorful Moo Creamery design. A frequent comment about the colorful design was about how colorful it was. “I like the nature-y stuff,” said a participant, F58(B). “I like clouds and cows and hills and trees. I like the colors.” Another participant, F75, chimed in to say it looks pleasant and said, “You go to pour the milk in the glass anyway, you might as well smile while doing it.” The majority of participants in all of the focus groups agreed that the colorful Moo Creamery design looked best on the carton. Some participants agreed but also liked the look of the colorful design on the glass bottle. Participants in this group described others who would purchase the colorful design as someone in their 30s, trendy (or yuppies as this group described them) or someone with children. “[Kids] always want something that looks pretty,” said a participant, F66. “I think sometimes when you have children in your household, you might not think too much of [the packaging], but they look for things that stand out to them.”8

One focus group — ages 25 to 34 — was divided in selecting the simple design and the colorful design. The comments about each packaging design were similar to what the other groups had said. Although price was not a factor in selecting a design, some believed the simple design of Moo Creamery looked less expensive. One participant, F29, made a comment that “it doesn’t feel like you’re paying for packaging.” They also believed that the colorful design looked more expensive. “It’s more appealing and looks expensive,” said a participant, F31. “It looks like they put more care into their packaging so maybe they put more care into their milk.”

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8 The participants in the 50 and older age group believed the simple design looked “basic” and its target audience would be families with children or someone who is not affluent with money. They also described a consumer who would purchase this design as “not a millennial” or frugal.
Color Associations

Color can be experienced at three different levels: physiological, cultural and associational. Within packaging, associational experiences stood out to the participants. “You learn what color your items are in and you look for that when there’s a whole wall full of the same thing,” said a participant, F75. The participants’ first response to being asked about color was to list brands that they associated to certain colors such as red and Lay’s or Coca-Cola or dark blue and store brands like Kroger or Great Value. Other associations they had to color were greens or light browns and those products being healthier. However, for some participants that also meant more expensive. “If I see that my shopping cart is mainly green or at least green labels, I know it’s going to be way more expensive,” said a participant, M22. “So, I’ll get the colorful cart if it’s going to be a lot cheaper.” Others did not think of this as a negative and instead saw it as recognizable branding. One participant, F21, said, “If I see the green circle, I know what it is,” referring to the Dillons brand, Simple Truth Organic™.

Neutral colors, such as black, white, gray or brown, had mixed responses from participants. Most considered neutral colors to be paired with non-food products, products that are geared towards men or special edition. “I think black is great for fashion,” said one participant, F51. “But not for when I’m going to eat it.” Participants noted that a lot of soda brands use a black can design to differentiate between low calorie or low sugar versions. “Most times anything I get that has a black label or packaging is a special edition,” said a participant, M22. One participant, F36, who supported neutral colored packaging said, “I like a lot of black, white, clear and neutral toned packaging. It’s easy on the eye and I enjoy that kind of stuff.” Another participant, F25(B), did not share the same appeal. “My family typically buys Land-o-Lakes [butter] whenever it’s on sale. But there was this one kind they came out with that’s black,
like a European butter, and my mother grabbed it … I was very skeptical.” The participants did not have very many other specific aversions to color when it comes to packaging. Yellow was one color that stood out to the 18 to 24 focus group. “If it’s not lemonade, I’m not getting it,” said a participant, F21. Another, F22, said, “I immediately associate it with either chips or something lemon or citrus. Otherwise if it’s on anything else I’m kind of cautious.” One participant, F19, commented that nothing natural is purple. Another, F75, said, “I think everyone has a particular color they don’t care for for some reason or another… purple is mine. So, if I had the choice between several colors and [that was the only difference], I wouldn’t buy the purple.” Participants also could not imagine certain brands changing their color. “You’d never buy blue Pepto-Bismol,” said a participant, F25(A).

**Image Associations**

Typical image associations with packaging come from brand mascots, but images of real ingredients or products, celebrities and illustrations also carry associations between the brand and consumers. One participant described an image association to a specific AriZona Tea flavor. “I immediately can relate the image on the can to which flavor I’m getting,” said a participant, F22. “I always get the one with the golfer because I know it’s zero sugar, zero calorie. My boyfriend usually gets the green can with the cherry blossoms because he likes the green tea with honey.” Another participant, M22, followed up by saying, “The golfer is Arnold Palmer – it’s half tea, half lemonade.” Although the first participant never said a name, the other participants immediately knew who she was talking about due to the association formed around the golfer and his well-known drink. “I’m that person that if it’s somebody I watched playing football or
something growing up, I like the association,” he said. “I like to see them. It’s a little more familiar, a little more friendly and open.”

Although many participants believed the overall designs of Moo Creamery looked more organic because of the design style, there were not any direct references to either design looking natural or more organic because of the cows. Instead, the participants thought the cows made the brands look more inviting. With the colorful design, one participant, F39, referenced to the grassy knoll with cows and that it was like a “sunshiny day.”

Material Associations

The type of material used to create packaging may seem as straightforward as how it functions but looking deeper shows the associations consumers make to these different materials. With each unbranded container, the participants were able to reference something from their past.

The plastic jugs held the most nostalgia across all of the focus groups as something they grew up with or something they bought for their own children. “I buy the same thing my family has always bought,” said a participant, M19. Another participant, F45(B), said, “[Buying plastic has] been easy. It’s what I always bought my kids and even though my kids are all grown up, it’s still what I buy.” Sometimes simply the long-term association of milk and plastic jugs forms a mental image of what milk should be that is hard to overcome, even if not logical. One participant explained this in terms of trying to force change on a stubborn seven-year-old child who has strong, although sometimes even contradictory, views on what he likes. “I don’t know how easy it would be to get the seven-year-old to drink out of the glass or [carton],” said a participant, F25(A). “He’s at the age where loves cheese pizza. He won’t eat any other kind but
cheese pizza. Yet, he says he hates cheese. So, I don’t know if he would transition from the plastic to the other two. He’d be like, ‘This isn’t milk!’”

The cartons held nostalgia for a slightly different reason. “It reminds me of school milk as a kid,” said a participant, M22. “It looks like the little milk cartons.” The other participants in the 18 to 24 focus group agreed. The different groups also had a harder time associating milk to a carton. “I associate it more to soy milk and almond milk,” said a participant, F24. Overall, most participants primarily associated orange juice to cartons rather than milk at all.

The glass bottles held the widest variety of associations across the three materials. The most common association for bottles was the price. “I just assume the glass is more [in price,]” said a participant, F51. “To me, when anything comes in glass, I see it as, ‘oh, they’re not frugal.’” That association to being more expensive was shared with most of the participants. Others saw associations between bottles and certain personality traits. “If I saw anyone grabbing one of the glass bottles, I would think environmentally-friendly, and probably a little health conscious,” said another participant, F27. A different participant, F19, thought the glass had the impression of “straight from the udder” and had the opposite take. “I automatically think the ones in the glass are fattier for some reason.” The 50 and older focus group saw the glass as nostalgic to their childhood or their parents. “When I was a little girl, it was all glass bottles,” said a participant, F85. Another participant, M45, had a similar memory. “When I was growing up, you could sometimes get milk out of the bottle and it was so much fresher.” The younger participants, though have never experienced getting milk from the milk man, also were able to associate the glass bottles to having milk delivered. There was also a connection to the Got Milk™ campaign, which was introduced in 1993 and was still very popular in the 2000s while these participants were in elementary school. Some of the Got Milk advertisements and
promotional pieces featured celebrities holding glass bottles of milk, but more often glasses of milk. It is something that they have grown up referencing. A more current trend that participants of all ages were able to reference was the use of glass bottles in the rustic or farmhouse décor trend that is popular. They made comments about how the appearance of the glass bottles looked like the decor they would see on HGTV or used by Chip and Joanna Gaines, two home renovators featured on the channel.
Everyone has a different frame of reference in how they view the world — packaging included. The Consumer Culture Theory explores this frame of reference from social and cultural perspective which affects consumers’ lifestyles, what products they buy and how they perceive different brands. It is understood that marketers should understand the ins and outs of their target audience, and it is no different for designers. These two positions must work together to develop packaging that appeals to its consumers while still promoting the brand’s values. It does not matter how pretty or decorative the packaging is if it does not relate to the consumer whether that is through structure, material, color, images, text or the overall look of the packaging. However, there is not one singular element that makes a specific brand stand out to all consumers. For products whose quality does not necessarily vary between brands, the product packaging acts as the distinguishing feature.

As part of symbolic interactionism, one way meanings are ascribed is through the interpretations a consumer makes when dealing with things in specific circumstances. When applying this to the structure and materials used for packaging, functionality is the most important feature for some products. In milk’s case, who in the household uses milk greatly affects the structure type and material purchased. Consumers with children and older consumers are drawn to the plastic jug because of its sturdiness and the handle feature. The plastic jug will not break if dropped and the handle allows for easy holding and pouring. Consumers who do not have children or are in the younger demographic do not have the same considerations. They look more at the aesthetic element of the glass bottle or the environmental aspects of the material. Glass can easily be recycled or repurposed. While Consumer Culture Theory does not look at
consumer choices and behaviors from a psychological perspective, nostalgia certainly plays into the dynamic relationship between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings. Nostalgia plays a role in deciding between plastic, glass or cartons. Most consumers grew up drinking milk out of a plastic jug so there is an attraction to that when making a buying decision. There is also an association to the plastic jug being the cheaper option or the glass bottle being the more expensive option. The carton is typically favored by consumers who purchase milk substitutes such as almond or soy milk because they are primarily sold in cartons. Since milk purchasing decisions are often made quickly, most consumers simply buy what looks right after a quick glance in the dairy section.

The colors incorporated into product packaging yields very different results depending on what the product is. Some products, such as milk, benefit from using a color-coding system to help consumers differentiate between the different types of milk. Snacks and beverages also benefit from the color-coding system for flavors, such as Lay’s and their many different flavored chips, OREO cookies and their different flavor cremes or soft drinks and their regular, diet and zero sugar or calorie versions. Consumers also create associations and build brand recognition through color. Again, although Consumer Culture Theory does not delve into the psychological perspective of consumer buying behaviors, color associations are deeply rooted in social and cultural points of view and create a dynamic relationship between a consumer’s action and the marketplace. As some participants pointed out during the focus groups, consumers have memorized what their choice products look like externally and look for that color when shopping. This color recognition cuts down on a consumer’s shopping time which is seen as a benefit. While rebranding to different colors is not seen as bad, it can frustrate loyal consumers and cause them to spend extra time searching for their products.
Images create associations to different products, similar to how color does. Using pop culture images builds upon the dynamic relationship a consumer has with the marketplace, society and culture. If there is a mascot or celebrity featured on packaging, there is a greater chance that consumers will make a connection to it, memorize the image and look for that when shopping. This also allows for quicker shopping times and can stand out on an aisle shelf. Images can also help a brand visually portray their values. One way of doing this is through the use of symbolic interactionism with representations such as images of cows and rolling hills or farms for organic products and brands. Another way is by showing real ingredients like with V8 juice, where consumers cannot tell what ingredients are in the final product by simply looking at the product itself. Showcasing images that represent the brand or the product allows consumers to better connect their personal values to that brand.

Beyond the artistic or attention-grabbing value of text, text is important for all products so that consumers understand what the product is and what it contains. This is another example of how symbolic interactionism builds meaning based on a consumer’s interactions with a product under specific circumstances. Older consumers, in particular, want easily legible text on the front of the bottle. Consumers of all ages, however, are more likely to pick up a product if they can easily read the text on the packaging. If they have to stand in an aisle for an extended amount of time to read the text or have to search for specific information, the packaging has failed to meet their needs. While packaging does act as a form of advertisement, consumers do not want to feel like they are being advertised to while shopping. Finding that perfect amount of text will also improve the consumer’s experience with and attraction to the packaging.

The price of a product has a heavy influence on a consumer’s buying decision and the type of packaging used can affect the consumer’s perception. As seen with the Moo Creamery
designs, designs that feel familiar to consumers or have a generic design will appeal to a wider audience because it does not feel out of their price range. Although price is not a tangible aspect of packaging, it does play a large role in how consumers perceive the brand or product. In accordance to both symbolic interactionism and Consumer Culture Theory, the price forms meaning for consumers based on what society tells them about money as well as their relationship to the marketplace. Overall, the participants agreed that the plastic jugs seemed like the cheapest milk option and the glass bottles seemed like the most expensive option. The cartons fell somewhere in the middle with some participants thinking they were closer to the plastic jug’s price point while others thinking they were closer to the glass bottle’s price point. It is important for brands to consider the price range their target audience is in and if their packaging looks like it falls in that range. Consumers are price conscious. Upon first seeing a brand’s packaging, if they think it might be out of their price range, they may move on to a different brand without checking the price tag.

In order for a brand to be successful and establish a relationship with consumers, it has to meet the needs and expectations of those consumers. Brands that have a specific target audience will have an easier time addressing those needs. If the target audience of a brand is an older demographic, focusing on the text size and the functionality of the structure is a priority over images or color. If the target audience includes families with children, focusing on how easy it is for a child to hold or open the packaging will be more appealing to the parent making the buying decisions than how bright the colors are or what characters are featured. However, brands that have a wide spectrum of consumers in their target audience often will do better staying generic with packaging and not catering to one demographic over another.
CHAPTER 8
LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

When this study was proposed, it seemed like milk was a product that did not have strong brand loyalties compared to products like chips, soda, shampoos or soaps. However, through this research, it is clear that consumers still form loyalties to other aspects of packaging like the structure. If this study were to be recreated, a few changes might yield new insights. The first change would be the order of the questions during the focus group. Starting with the milk packaging put the participants in the mind set of only thinking about milk. Then when it came time to discuss products and packaging in general later in the focus group, some of the participants had a hard time broadening their answers beyond milk. Discussing packaging in broader terms first, and then narrowing it down to milk could yield more diverse answers for the general packaging and design questions.

Another limitation to this particular study was number the participants for each age range. In the interest of time and resources, this study was limited to one focus group per age range. Conducting three or four focus groups for each age range would have allowed the researcher deeper understanding on how these demographics think about packaging as well as allow for verification of answers and richer data.

There were also only six male participants compared to 26 female participants. While this may reflect that it is more common for women to do the grocery shopping, the male participants definitely had different opinions when it came to packaging and buying habits. It was surprising that something as generic as milk yielded such different opinions. One male participant, M45, made a comment about how word-of-mouth recommendations from his friends weighs into his buying decisions more than packaging. Another, M25, solely focused on the price and did not
pay attention to how the packaging was designed. Again, because of time and resources, the researcher was unable to conduct focus groups comprising of only male participants, but future research should consider separate focus groups for male and female shoppers.

Another limitation and change to this study would be in the anonymous survey participants filled out before the focus group. The only questions asked on the survey were about gender, age, household income and personality traits. In retrospect, it would have been helpful to have known more about the number of people these participants were buying for, how many have children in their household and if they buy regular milk or a milk substitute. Some of these questions were mentioned in some of the participants’ answers, but many did not answer these questions during the discussion. Having this information to look back on would have been helpful when drawing results and conclusions.

Although this research answered the proposed research questions, it also created many more questions for the researcher about packaging and how consumers perceive it. It was known that consumers hold loyalties to specific brands, however, it would be interesting to explore what other kind of products, both food and non-food, do not hold strong brand loyalties for consumers and would those products or brands have other features that would create preferences, like the packaging structure of milk does. A topic that the participants brought up that the researcher had not considered was further use of clear packaging. Typically, clear packaging is seen with beverages, but some of the participants made a point to mention the clear packaging of bakery cookies in stores or bags of salad. This creates the question of what other products would benefit from having clear packaging and how do brands that use clear packaging compare to brands that use solid packaging.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

This study looked to answer how elements of design, when used for product packaging, are interpreted by consumers by looking at what makes one brand’s packaging more desirable over another, how structural and design elements affect a consumer’s perception of a brand and what kind of associations are attached to elements of the packaging. By breaking down packaging structure and design during the focus groups, the researcher was able to better analyze how each of the elements plays a role in a product’s packaging and how different demographics interpreted those pieces. Packaging is an overlooked method of advertising that can play an important role in promoting brand image and increasing a consumer’s impulse to purchase a specific brand. When breaking down individual design elements, they each can have their own influence and impact on a consumer’s perception. However, when put together, one element may overpower another and completely change the way a consumer sees that brand or its packaging. Each of these design elements must balance out in order for the brand to display its values as well as for the consumer to relate to it. Packaging is not ‘one size fits all’ so gaining an understanding in consumer perception allows brands to make smarter decisions and better connections to their target audience.
BIBLIOGRAPHY
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APPENDICES
The number associated with each adjective reflects the number of participants in this age group that described themselves as such.

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APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP 2: AGES 25-34

1. F25(A)
2. F25(B)
3. M25
4. F27
5. F28
6. F29
7. F31

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APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP 1: AGES 35-50

1. F35
2. F36
3. F39
4. M40
5. F45(A)
6. F45(B)
7. M45

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APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP 1: AGES 50 AND OLDER

1. F51
2. M53
3. F58(A)
4. F58(B)
5. F58(C)
6. F65
7. F66
8. F68
9. F75
10. F85

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Facilitator: So, we’ll start off easy: How long have you made the grocery buying decisions in your home? We can go around the table.

M22: Six years.

F24: Two. Three years? I’m not sure how long, but at least about that time.

F18: Just about a year.

M19: Probably two or three years.

F22: Probably two or three years.

F19: I guess on my own, two to three years, but I feel like I’ve always influenced my household grocery shopping.

F20: Only like eight to ten months.

F21: About five years.

Facilitator: Okay, cool so a little bit of variety here. How many of you frequently purchase milk?

[All participants raise hands]

Facilitator: What is your definition of “frequently”?

M22: Every other week.

F18: Every other week.

F24: Once a week.

F22: Two to three weeks.

F19: Bi-weekly.

F21: Bi-weekly.

Facilitator: Is there a particular brand of milk that you buy each time?
M22: Whatever’s cheapest.

[Group agreement]

F22: I usually buy the Kroger box milk of either almond or coconut milk normally.

F18: Just like the Great Value.

F21: I buy skim milk every once in a while, just for … but I would have to say the cheapest one or whatever the almond milk is. The one that’s kind of blue on the top.

Facilitator: So, you each have a set thing that you’re buying each time. If it wasn’t price, is there anything that makes you buy that particular brand of milk?

F24: I think it really depends on the ingredients. Like with milk there’s like one per cent, two per cent. So, it depends on those extra things.

Facilitator: So, the type of milk?

F21: I bake a lot, so it doesn’t really affect me as long as I get milk.

M22: I’m the only one in my family not lactose intolerant so we typically had to buy the lactose free ones. So, a lot of times it’s based on benefits, additional ingredients, anything extra like minerals or vitamins.

Facilitator: Anyone else have a specific reason?

M19: I mean, when I’m home it depends on what my family wants. Typically, whatever’s cheapest.

Facilitator: Try to think back to the last time that you bought milk. What was that packaging like? Could you describe it?
F19: I’m pretty much blind to actually reading a label. I just kind of pick if it’s a pink top or blue top. Like I always get pink – I think that’s skim. So, I just go for the pink bottle. I don’t necessarily ever read the label or anything.

F21: Two percent – the one with the blue lid.

F24: Yeah, the dark blue one. The one I usually get is one percent, but it’s like a lighter blue.

F22: For the box ones, it’s usually just standard blue and white. I mostly just have to check to see whether it’s the coconut milk or the almond milk which they’re specific about.

F24: For certain stores, the way they package their milk, the colors are similar, but the way they label some things is weird. So, they either put a bottle or a box. It’s kind of weird. Depends on the store too.

Facilitator: We’ll come back to a little bit of that later, but do you typically buy a plastic jug, a carton, a bottle?

F19: Plastic jug.

F21: Plastic jug for regular milk. Almond milk is typically in a carton.

F19: I don’t think I’d ever buy almond milk out of a plastic jug.

Facilitator: So, marketers try to connect people and their different lifestyles to a brand. You guys are probably pretty aware of that. So, this might sound a little bit silly, but how do you think your lifestyle affects the brand that you buy? Take for example, my advisor always buys large plastic jugs because she has two young boys who through milk like crazy and if they drop it there’s not a mess to take care of. Or my friend is environmentally friendly so she typically goes towards
like the glass bottles because they can be recycled or they can be reused. How do you think your lifestyle affects those buying decisions?

F21: I always recycle. Well, for the most part I recycle.

F22: For me, the box carton of coconut and almond milk works best for me and my boyfriend because it’s just the two of us that use it. We don’t go through it as quickly. Also, since it has a longer shelf life, it makes it a little more economically friendly for us.

M22: I typically buy a half gallon at a time. We don’t use it as much.

F18: It’s usually just me buying for me. I usually don’t get a full gallon. I will get a small one.

F19: I just like the handle on the plastic one.

F24: Sometimes I budget groceries, so I get the cheapest one. Typically, the half gallon because …. It’s just for myself. I’m the only one drinking it.

F20: I also get the half gallon. My boyfriend uses a lot more milk than I do because he eats cereal every morning, so I’ll get him a plastic jug in a half gallon. I usually go for soy or oat milk and it’s in a carton.

F19: My family definitely buys in bulk. My dad loves Sam’s club. He always looks at price per unit because it’s usually cheaper that way.

F21: It’s me and my sisters in my apartment. We always get the gallon, but it never gets finished. We’re kind of wasteful that way.

Facilitator: Any other lifestyle thoughts when it comes to purchases? Then we’re going to shift a little bit. I’m going to show you blank packaging and we’ll chat about that. So, we have our three most common styles of packaging here. You’ve already kind of mentioned that you typically go
towards the plastic jug. Is there a specific reason that you go for the plastic jug over the carton or the glass bottle?

F21: It has a handle.

F24: Isn’t the glass usually more expensive? So, the plastic is cheapest.

F18: I grew up with the plastic jug so that’s what I’m used to and what I’ve always bought.

M19: I buy the same thing that my family has always bought. It’s what you’re used to.

F19: My boyfriend and I go to the store and he’ll pick the more expensive one and I’m like, “you’re insane,” and put his box back. I pick the plastic one. I think it’s just because he grew up with the box and I grew up with the plastic. The handle and being durable. We’re pretty active and always on the go so it’s nice to just throw it in and go.

F22: When I think about the glass bottles, my dad used to buy them but the problem with them is they say it’s hard to hold onto. And if you drop it, it’s going to make a bigger mess because I feel like if I drop the carton it’s plastic and it’s not going to break as easily as glass shattering and having to clean up that mess.

F21: I’m accident prone so the handle is best for me.

Facilitator: Moving to the carton. What are your likes or dislikes about it?

F19: It reminds me of orange juice.

F24: I associate it more to soy milk and almond milk.

F21: Going back to the handle thing, when you hold the carton and trying to pour with one hand because it can easily slip out unless you use both hands like a little kid.

M22: I think one reason I pass on it is it reminds me of the school milk. It looks like the little milk cartons. I have that association.
F22: My only problem I have with cartons, which I have with almond and coconut milk, is I can never see how much I have left so I’m always guessing.

F19: I also like the handle, because your hand isn’t freezing while pouring your milk. With the carton your hand gets cold, but it’s also like cardboard. It wouldn’t be as cold as if it were in glass.

Facilitator: What are your thoughts on the glass bottles?

F21: It’s heavy.

F19: Straight from the udder.

M22: It’s going to be expensive.

F24: Yeah, expensive.

M19: It is recyclable though. Some of them you can take back and they’ll buy the bottles back.

F22: That is the other reason why my dad buys bottled milk.

F21: I like the clean look of it.

F19: I don’t know why but I automatically think that the ones in the glass are fattier for some reason because it reminds me of straight from the farm. I’m a skim milk person. I actually hate milk.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts about the structure of the packaging?

F18: Usually when I think of the glass bottles, I think of the dessert milks. I can’t remember what they’re called, but they’re really fancy and have different flavors.

M22: Like Hildebrand.

M19: Shatto.

[Multiple participants talking at once]
APPENDIX E (continued)

F19: And the Got Milk campaign. The glass reminds me of that.
F21: I think of a cow.
F24: That makes sense because they use to use glass in the old days. So that makes sense.
F21: I think of the milk man carrying his little crate.
Facilitator: Now I’m going to show you something a little bit different. So, what I’ve done is create my own brand of milk. I have two different designs and I want to talk about your likes and dislikes. Here is the first design for Moo Creamery. Here’s the second design for Moo Creamery.
F19: Oh, that’s cute.
Facilitator: Take a minute and check these out and then we’ll chat about it. Now imagine you walk into your grocery store and they don’t have any of the usually brands of milk. Your only options are these two designs. Which brand design would you be more likely to pick up? How many would pick this design [simple]?
[Five participants raise hands]
Facilitator: And how many of you would pick this design [colorful]?
[Three participants raise hands]
F19: I like one. Like I like the jug on this one [simple] but the box on that [colorful] side.
Facilitator: Think of it as the design at as a whole. Let’s do one more vote. This [simple] side?
[Six participants raise hands]
Facilitator: And then this side [colorful]?
[Two participants raise hand]
Facilitator: For those of you that picked this design [simple], why?
F18: It’s simple.
F24. And straight to the point.

F19: I feel like the simpler makes it look more organic and maybe healthier for you.

F24: You don’t have to deal with the flashy design that other products have. As long as there’s a name and what it is then it’s good enough for me.

Facilitator: For the two of you that didn’t pick this [simple] design, is there something about it that you didn’t like?

F21: Not really, I think it just looks plain. It does look organic and it might be because of the clear sticker, but it has a rustic type background which I really like. St the same time I like the other [colorful] design because it’s more playful and they added the little cows and the hills on it. It kind of shows. It looks like a more upscale organic. Like Horizon maybe? But this one [simple] is more like… I get it’s straight to the point and is meant to be straight to the point. I’m more of… or if I had kids which one would I choose.

M22: To me, this one [colorful] just feels more familiar. I know what I’m getting versus that one [simple] looks more artisanal. Kind of like if you were to go get ice cream, this [colorful] feels like Ben & Jerry’s. That [simple] feels like a local place, like Reverie or MilkFloat or something like that. If that makes sense.

Facilitator: Is there a certain element about it that makes it feel familiar?

M22: General design. Association to what I’ve used before. Kind of the all over design versus something that looks a little bit more custom, a little bit more organic like everybody said.

F21: I think the one I chose [colorful] if it were to be put on the shelf, it’s main competitor would be Horizon. It looks nice and you can easily place a bigger price tag on it compared to this [simple] one.
Facilitator: For those of you that didn’t pick this [colorful] one, what was it about it that you didn’t like?

F24: It feels too childish for me.

F19: Yeah, maybe if I had children.

F24: Because it’s just me, it feels childish. Like those other brands that have cartoons. This doesn’t feel like me.

F18: The more eccentric design probably means it’s going to be more expensive. So, keeping it simple with the other one [simple].

F22: That’s where I disagree. Because that [simple] one everyone is relating it to organic, which I also liked it because it was a simple design. That’s the one that I felt would be more expensive if I was to buy it because I’m associating it to a more organic, simper, refined brand versus this [colorful] one I feel like it would be the more cheap brand because its more childish, playful, kind of similar to generic packaging where they try to convince you a little more by making the packaging catch your eye.

F19: This is a weird observation, but when I saw the carton of moo creamery on that [colorful] side, it made me think of going to the health-conscious type outlook and made me think of cream instead of milk, like lighter skim milk. And I think the heavier design plays with that as well. So, when I saw the Moo Creamery over here [simple] and it was a lot more simple. It reminded me of a lighter, fresher milk. Which is something I’m personally used to.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts on either of the designs?

F24: This design [colorful] fits better with the carton, but not on the glass. It doesn’t look as nice as the glass on that side [simple]. [unable to understand]
F21: I agree, I think both cartons look okay, and then the clear sticker on here [simple] looks best.

M19: I don’t know if it plays into it any, but I noticed that on a lot of labels for anything. Like the one on the left is all uppercase letters and the one on the right are all lowercase letters. I don’t know if that matters, but just something I noticed.

F21: I think this one [simple] looks more refined because of the cursive on the bottom.

Facilitator: Going to this group [simple], is there one you would choose over the others? [Multiple participants talking at once; unanimous agreement of the bottle]

Facilitator: Everyone says the bottle? Why is that?

F20: It just looks clean.

F24: The label blends in with the glass.

F21: Clean is a good word for it.

Facilitator: And how about this design [colorful]?

[Multiple participants talking at once; unanimous agreement of the carton]

Facilitator: Why?

F21: If you’re going to have a design, you should just have it everywhere. If it’s like a scenery type design. Because to just have it focus on one area, like with the plastic jug, it just looks out of place.

F22: Like you said, it reminds me of orange juice. I’m used to seeing that kind of scene on an orange juice box.
APPENDIX E (continued)

Facilitator: Other thoughts? F20 do you have anything?

F20: I really do like the carton on that [colorful] one. I thought the same thing about Ben & Jerry’s.

F19: Yeah, because they have green hills and clouds.

Facilitator: Going back to our grocery store scenario, you notice other people are walking up to the refrigerators. What do the people who pull this [simple] design look like? How would you describe them?

F19: They’re definitely in Lululemon.

F21: Anywhere from 19, where they’re just started thinking they’re adults and moving into their own apartments, to like 29. But once you hit 30 you realize you don’t need all of that. People who are active and health conscious. Not counting calories, health conscious, but they watch what they eat.

F18: Probably not families. I feel like this [colorful] design is more for families so this [simple] would be a college student range. We’re associating as if it would be cheap, so they’d probably lean towards that.

F22: I’m going with more like fresh out of college and in their first actual job to like marriage. Probably not after having children since you’re more conscious about prices, but roughly around that ages. Like 24, 25 to maybe 35 roughly.

F21: I’m thinking more of who watches HGTV and more, those who watch Chip and Joanna Gaines.

F19: I was just going to say that!
F21: I can see Chip grabbing the carton, but then Joanna grabbing the glass. That’s exactly what I see for those. I think of Magnolia Farms. That [colorful] is more like Food Network and this [simple] is more HGTV.

Facilitator: Same scene. How would describe the people choosing this [colorful] design?

[Multiple participants talking at once]


F21: A mom with kids.

F24: … mostly families …. [cannot understand]

F19: A soccer mom.

Facilitator: So you said the common consumer. Can you expand on that a bit more?

M22: Somebody that’s not as caught up in what the brand looks like and grabs based on dollar value or what looks more familiar. That one [simple] seems more high scale, lululemon versus someone who goes to target for leggings. It seems a little more affordable and comfortable.

F20: I feel like a kid would point it out and ask their parent for it.

F21: I can see this [colorful] being like a Walmart or Dillons type grocery store and this [simple] one being Whole Foods.

F19: There’s no way my kid is drinking $6 milk.

Facilitator: Based on those descriptions, do you see yourself fitting into that category? And does that match up with your original selection?

[Multiple participants talking at once]

Facilitator: How many say yes?

[Seven participants raise hands]
Facilitator: How many say no?

[One participant raises hand]

Facilitator: What’s that difference for you, because you picked this [simple] design?

F22: Based on the design and style I do prefer that [simple] one, but at the same time because I associate with more expensive milk, I don’t see myself buying it mostly because I’m the type of person who would use it in like coffee or just to have a small glass. I don’t drink enough to warrant spending and exorbitant amount on milk. I’d be more likely to buy the cheaper brand.

F19: If there were no prices associated though and we didn’t know, do you still think you would go for it even if they were equal price?

F22: If they were equal price, I would probably go ahead and buy that [simple] one. For me, it really just depends on the price.

Facilitator: Do you have anything else to add to that part of our conversation? Now let’s move into some different categories. This can be applied to milk or packaging as a whole for any kind of product. Do you notice any difference in the packaging of something that’s local versus a regional or national brand? What are those differences?

F21: I come from a small town, so I notice a lot of local people use different packaging. It’s mostly cardboard or something other than plastic. If they use plastic, there’s a little whole or window to see the product. I think I also notice that their labels are a lot more simple.

F18: Local brands are more personalized in their logo unlike Coca-Cola where when you see it you know what it is. Local brands have more personal touch.

Facilitator: Is there anything else you can think of that would differentiate the two?
APPENDIX E (continued)

F24: National brands try to be flashy and stand out from their competition. Like with chips. They’re trying to be different from each other. With local brands, they can be simple or try to copy national brands. It depends on the brand.

M22: Specifically with milk, I think national brand [colorful] versus local brand [simple] mainly because it [colorful] is louder the other is a little more refined and simplistic. With a local brand it focused more on the product rather than the packaging and what they’re putting out.

F24: Maybe with the local ones they’re trying to influence the local population and the national brand is trying to be generalized and appeal to everyone. The local is trying to appeal to whoever they’re trying to target in town.

F21: Sometimes I notice with local brands they try to incorporate something local like with ICT they incorporate the brand to show its local. I guess technically they brand themselves as well as their area.

F19: Local I feel like they’re going to say, “made in Wichita, KS” or they’re going to put the location it’s made right underneath the brand.

F24: Sometimes with fruits in stores they appeal by saying picked from local farms … [cannot understand] … it depends on which products. Depends on the store.

Facilitator: Are you drawn to products that are local? Does that influence your buying?

F21: Especially with food, like bakery, but if its’ like a festival going on and they have a booth, and someone made their own cosmetic or anything along those lines. I usually go for the people who made it themselves because it seems like they know how to brand themselves, but they also have the advantage of being hometown.

F20: I like buying locally made because it’s supporting smaller business.
F19: I should, because I would feel better supporting locally because you should do that. I also feel like local businesses don’t have the best margins, so their products are more expensive. Trying to be frugal, I usually buy the cheaper one.

F22: For me it depends on how much extra spending money I have. If I can, I try to support local, but if it’s a tighter paycheck period, then I end up having to buy the cheaper brand.

M22: Same with buying a half gallon of milk, typically I like a longer shelf life. I know most organic foods don’t have any sort of preservatives that keep them longer. I typically buy more store brands because they’ll last longer.

Facilitator: Going back to some of the packaging design. What are your thoughts on the text that is included on packaging?

F19: Can you define text?

Facilitator: Whether it’s the way their logo is designed. If it says this low calorie or low fat. Do you pay attention to those kinds of things?

[Multiple participants talking at once; overall agreement among participants]

F19: If it has 35 percent less fat and I don’t know the difference, I’ll pick the lower fat one.

F21: Sometimes I pass on it and just get the two percent.

F24: I always buy one percent because I tried skim milk and I didn’t like it.

F19: It’s gross, but I hate milk.

F24: Even two percent doesn’t taste right to me. Even with ground beef I try to get the healthiest. Most cheaper ones are too fatty for me so it’s little more expensive to get the lean meats. It’s good for health wise.
APPENDIX E (continued)

F21: If it’s chocolate milk I get the whole. Any type, like one percent added to there, that’s nasty. I think that’s the only time I ever get the red. I used to get the whole milk because red used to be my favorite color. Chocolate milk is the only time I’ll go for whole milk. Any other time I go for two percent or I go for soy or almond.

Facilitator: Going back to your comment, F19, about how if it says 35 percent less fat. Do you pick it up because that stood out on the packaging?

F19: I definitely look for it.

F22: Personally, I just prefer it have less text. I just want it to be short and sweet and to the point. The only thing packaging-wise that stands out to me is if I’m at Dillons and I see that it has a giant clearance sticker. I will be drawn in.

M19: I agree that anything that is important should be big. If I see anything that is important is big, I will probably just pick it up and think, “cool,” and not read the tiny text on the back.

M22: I know a lot of times I associate a differentiated text with color. So, Oreo is one of the ones where anytime there’s a different flavor you can see the frosting is a different color. The packaging is a little bit different color, so you want something with a little bit of differentiation based on what’s new or what stands out versus the original.

F21: I like what you said about putting the important stuff out front. Like, I get ground turkey a lot. I always want to make sure I get like an 80/20 lean or even a 15/85, but anything more than that I’ll pass.

Facilitator: Shifting with colors, aside from red being whole milk, pink being skim. Are there any colors you associate to different products?
APPENDIX E (continued)

F19: A red bag is probably Lays potato chips. Like if is saw a red bag and wasn’t reading it and it had pretzels in it, then I’m probably going home with pretzels. I thought it was potato chips and I didn’t look closely.

F22: I usually think of red and associate it to cups of ramen or Asian cuisines from the grocery store.

M22: Mine’s like red solo cups.

Facilitator: Can’t buy the green ones, only the red ones?

M22: Only the red ones.

F21: If we’re talking about milk, red is obviously Horizon for me. For red, I honestly think of meat. I don’t think of other foods except Coke.

Facilitator: Think about other colors too. We don’t have to stick with red.

F19: Can you repeat the question?

Facilitator: Do you have any color associations to different foods or brands?

F21: When I was a health freak I always looked or green because it was organic. I still kind of do that now, but not as much as I used to

F22: When I think of green, there’s the So Delicious boxes of coconut and almond milk. I never buy them. I always buy the blue ones. I don’t know why. I’m assuming it has something to do with the price. I see the blue cartons that are below the So Delicious and know those are the ones I grab.

M22: I always look for brand name first or look at what the brand is. Almost always dark blue is either Kroger or Great Value. So almost always when I see dark blue and think it’s a store brand.
APPENDIX E (continued)

F18: I almost always associate brown with Fairlife chocolate milk because that stuff is really good. I always look for it when I’m at the store. That’s what I think of.

F21: When I think of brown, I think of the chocolate milk from Braum’s.

M19: it reminds me of the school chocolate milk, from elementary school.

F21: And pink for strawberry milk. I don’t know if you had it at your school, but the light blue was, like, vanilla.

M22: I think furthering on hers, when you go to Dillons and go to the whole food or natural or organic sections it’s almost always green or light brown, maybe some orange. It’s associated to a little bit fresher, lighter.

F21: I’m a big buyer of Simply Organics from Dillons.

[Group agreement]

F20: Yeah, I was thinking about that too. It’s like green and white.

F21: If I see the green circle, I know what it is. But if it’s milk, I usually go for the dark blue.

F24: I think with Target, most of their regular brands are red and more organic brands are blue-ish. I think with certain stores they try to differentiate the better brands depending on the store colors. But more organic ones are green with something else. Always green.

F21: When I think about purple I think of Yoplait. I guess it’s because most of the Yoplait yogurts I get are the purple ones. Cause I usually get the mousse or dessert ones. If it’s the fruit ones, then I think of red.

Facilitator: Now flipping it, are there any colors that if you saw associated to a product you’d think, “absolutely not, I’m not buying that.”
F21: If it’s not lemonade, I’m not getting it.

F22: If I see yellow, I immediately associate it to chips or something lemon or citrus. Otherwise if it’s on anything else I’m kind of cautious.

F19: Probably purple, because nothing natural is purple.

F21: I don’t think I see an orange label.

M19: There’s Chex mix.

F18: Cheez-its.

F24: Cheetos.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

Facilitator: What were you going to say, M22?

M22: If I see that my grocery cart is mainly green or at least green labels, I know it’s going to be way more expensive, so I’ll get the colorful cart if it’s going to be a lot cheaper.

F21: Almost nothing has a black label, right?

F19: Smartfood popcorn with white cheddar.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F24: Is there gray?

F21: I think of barbeque Lays.

Facilitator: So, if you see more neutral colors — blacks, white, grays — what do you associate to that brand?

F21: Non-food products. For gray especially.

F22: If you’re including browns in the neutral tones I mostly include towards organic foods. But if it’s strictly black white and gray, I usually don’t have to go towards foods normally.
F21: I think of local beer. I don’t know their names, but one of them has gray.

M22: Most times anything that has black labeling or black packaging is like a special edition, like black edition or some variant of that.

F24: I think a couple of years ago, it seemed like with black labels or masculine colors. Because I know that some of the yogurt now, Oikos, tried to target to men even though it’s just yogurt.

F19: Oh, my dad gets that. It probably makes him feel manlier.

F24: There’s a gray one, I think it’s Dr. Pepper 10?

M22: I think of Coke Zero.

F24: Whatever it is, they tried to target towards men.

F21: Another one for gray is Gatorade. And it has an orange top.

Facilitator: Let’s talk about graphics. Are there certain graphics on packaging that you’re drawn to over others? Whether that be photos or illustrations.

F21: Like with Gatorade, I like being able to see the color of the drink. That’s what made me figure out what flavors I wanted to try. It was the color. So, it was like the G, I think, that was clear and you could see the color.

F18: I usually don’t like a lot of graphics. Like when certain things get sponsored by sports. They usually have the athletes face really big on the product and I find that really unsettling. So, I won’t buy those products.

M22: If you see a big circle that says 25 percent less fat that stands out to me more because it grabs your attention and focuses on that.
F24: It reminds me of certain season, like during certain sports seasons sometimes they make their designs like footballs or basketballs. Depends on who they’re trying to target. They try to put some associations to get people to buy their products.

F18: Like with March Madness or Super Bowl, a lot of products will change their graphics to match.

F20: I don’t like it. I’d rather they stay the same.

Facilitator: Using that as an example, how many of you would be more likely to buy Dr. Pepper if it had a football design and it was football season?

F19: Yeah, probably.

M22: If I’m being honest, probably me.

F22: If I let my boyfriend decided, he buys all of the crazy packaging. Recently for the movie Alita, they had AriZona green tea with the Alita image on it and he was obsessed with that package and he’s always drawn to those limited edition ones. I try to stop him from buying them because he buys too many. He’s like, ‘but it’s limited edition,’ and I’m like, ‘I don’t care. You’re spending too much money on something you don’t drink that much.’

F21: Speaking of AriZona, I think they do a good job with designing graphics for their cans and bottles. Even though it’s not the best drink you can have, they do a good job with putting different artwork on there. Especially the one with the green background and the cherry blossoms.

F22: I like the AriZona teas a lot just because of the fact that they’re usually a little bit cheaper but also because I immediately can relate the image on the can to which flavor I’m getting. I always get the one with the golfer because I know it’s the zero sugar zero calories. My
APPENDIX E (continued)

boyfriend usually gets the green can with cherry blossoms because he likes green tea with honey. It’s very clear which one we’re going to grab.

M22: That’s a more specific association. The golfer is Arnold Palmer. It’s half tea, half lemonade. They call it an Arnold Palmer. I like the association. I’m that person that if it’s somebody I’ve watched play football or something growing up I like the association and like to see them. It makes it more familiar, a little more friendly and open.

F19: And it’s a very well-known drink. Like it’s an Arnold Palmer.

F21: You have no idea how mad I get when people who are younger than us that don’t know what they are.

Facilitator: So, what about images of actual ingredients being on the packaging? What are your thoughts on that? Like if it shows a grain.

F19: Like if it’s Lays potato chips and it has a potato, like I know there’s five pounds of salt.

You’re not kidding me. But if it’s like natural popped popcorn and has little popcorn on the front then I’m more inclined to buy that because I feel like they’re not trying to trick me.

M19: Sometimes it means nothing to me because I don’t care. I like what I’m buying. I know what the product is. It really doesn’t matter to me. But then sometimes they’ll advertise and…

That doesn’t sound very good. I think with regular household objects it doesn’t matter that much.

Facilitator: Do you have an example of what you’re describing?

M19: I would have to think. I don’t have a specific one right now.

F22: When I think of, like, the smoothie section in Dillons. I like when they show the images of which fruit are in it. Especially with the naked juices where they list out how many of each image that you see is actually in the drink.
F24: I think it’s called Cape Cod kettle chips. Even though they have potatoes in the front, when I look at the ingredients, they have little extra things that aren’t necessary to me. So sometimes the picture can be misleading. It is potatoes, but they don’t show the extra little things included. F21: Like this can right here. It says made with real lemons, but on the back it says 40 grams of sugar. I feel stupid for that.
F18: Like with V8 juice, I find it helpful to see what kinds of fruits and vegetables are in it. And if you’re getting chips or pretzels and it has a wheat design. I’ll be more inclined to get that rather than a plain bag that just says pretzels.
M22: I think if it variates from the original product, the pictures make it helpful.
Facilitator: Do you have an example?
M22: Natural Light came out with new strawberry lemonade beer. Their normal design is pretty loud — silver, red, blue— versus one that’s half yellow half pink. I didn’t know what it was until I turned it around and saw a lemon on the front and realized it was lemonade flavored.
[talking at the same time]
M19: That’s how I feel with orange juice. They have so many different variations of orange juice, like with other stuff in it. You could just like, walk buy and see what’s in the packaging.
M22: Like the ones with pineapple in it. The color isn’t that much different, but you wouldn’t know because you typically don’t read the text as much as you would pictures.
Facilitator: That’s part of my next question. Are you drawn more to the graphics that are on the packaging rather than the text?
[Multiple participants talking at once]
F20: Yeah, but I’d still read it.
APPENDIX E (continued)

[Group agreement]

F21: For me it depends on the product. If I see a bag of pretzels and it’s just clear in a plastic bag or there’s a sticker saying what’s in the bag. I like that they’re not giving me so much graphic because it’s a pretzel.

F19: Snyder’s does a bit much.

F21: It looks like barrel with a punched in hole.

Facilitator: Now that we’re back on the structure of packaging, is there a point in time where a brand uses too much packaging and you decided that you don’t want to buy from them anymore?

F24: I think with some candies they put too much packaging. I think it’s Starburst. They used to do individual packaging but now they’re trying to do more no packaging.

M19: When you say too much packaging it makes me think of like Lays chips and their bags being 50 percent full. Or I think like what you were trying to say is that with Starburst you can buy them like already not singly wrapped, just in one bag. I guess people might be more likely to buy that because there’s less packaging and less hassle in taking them out.

F22: That’s one of the things I look at. With candy, a lot of times they have inside the bag individual wrapped pieces and honestly, it’s tedious and it’s more mess to clean up. I don’t like it. So I try to avoid those if I can.

F21: A lot of Asian foods… I do most of my primary shopping at Asian markets just because the price is usually cheaper but also because almost every Asian market, you’re looking at fresh produce. You notice there are no labels or it’s clear and straight to the point. But when it comes to the kids’ stuff, or like snacks for kids, I was always that one that I could easily describe my
whole basket when I was little because of the graphics on there. There’s like these shrimp chips that are white, but they have these pink polka dots on them.

[Other participants agree]

F21: When I go to the store now, they still have the same ones so it’s like an at heart kind of thing for me, but they also have seaweed on the packages now that show a little bit of fresh seaweed underwater, but you know tis seaweed because it’s right there. It’s kind of a win lose situation because you want to be clear and to the point with what you’re getting, but also you think about what did you grow up with.

Facilitator: How much of your buying decisions are based on what your parents bought or what you grew up?

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F24: The way my dad shops, he just grabs it and doesn’t read it or anything. For me, I’m different. I try to read it and actually try to see. I try to do it differently than what my dad does.

Facilitator: So, you take the time to actually look through and make your own buying decisions?

F24: Yes, I try to do more healthier decisions instead of just grabbing whatever.

F21: I’m probably the only one who goes to Dillons or Walmart for groceries. My parents never really did that unless they were going for like, toilet paper or other household products. Because they did almost 99 percent of their shopping at the Asian stores. We would come all the way up to Wichita from Winfield just to get their shopping done. I never really understood why we never went to Dillons or Walmart for things like meat or produce, but I kind of stepped out of that. Mostly because I couldn’t drive when I was little, and the store was just down the street so I could walk.
F22: My parents are very brand loyal. Once they have found a product that they thoroughly like and know that they want to keep eating they stick to that. Sometimes I stick with those products, but as I have gotten older and I’m looking at cheaper or healthier items, I tend to sway. But Jif I grew up eating with my dad so to this day I don’t buy any other brand of peanut butter other than Jif. But say with potato chips, my dad is very specific and will only buy the original Lays and that’s the only brand he’ll ever buy. For me, I like trying their newer flavors to see if there’s anything I like form those.

F19: I get bored really easily. I don’t really care. I like to switch up products. Like peanut butter is peanut butter. I don’t necessarily care which brand it is, so I just grab whatever is cheapest or most convenient. Like Oreos, I love Oreos, but I’ll also buy some other brands or try other cookies because I like different things. I’m not very brand loyal.

Facilitator: F20 what were you going to say?

F20: My parents go with the cheaper stuff, but I like the healthier stuff. But sometimes I’ll be cheap like them. But I’ll try to get the cheaper organic stuff like simply organic.

Facilitator: Are any of you hardcore, “I’m only going to buy this brand because that’s what my parents bought, that’s what I grew up on?”

F21: Only at the Asian store with snacks.

Facilitator: We have 10-ish minutes left. I want to leave it open for other thoughts whether that be about buying habits, packaging, things you didn’t get to say earlier, or I didn’t ask a question for it.

F21: Have you ever thought about selling that logo? Because it looks really nice.

Facilitator: No, I hadn’t thought about it.
F24: We didn’t talk about price much. A lot of it depends on each person’s [cannot understand]. Some people would like to go to more expensive stores like Whole Foods. It’s expensive to me at least.

F19: I went in there one time because they had fancy cheeses and I didn’t buy anything, but I sampled.

F24: That’s why I go to Aldi’s because it’s cheaper.

F19: And you don’t care about brands at Aldi’s.

F24: And they even have organic brands. It depends on the stores you go to or your lifestyle. I think Walmart is probably the next cheapest.

F21: I never go to Target. Every time I go in there, I just feel like there’s so much red that it consumes me.

F18: I always go to Target. It’s my favorite store.

F19: It’s definitely nicer. Target is never in a sketchy area. It automatically draws a higher income and they’re probably smarter to do those natural products because people are more inclined to buy them. Walmart and Dillons will literally go on any corner that’s open which could be in areas that aren’t so well-off. There’s not a Target close to me, so I grew up in Dillons or Walmart and they’re cheaper, so I think people automatically go there if they’re looking to save money.

F22: I’ve never actually shopped in Walmart for groceries. That was not my parent’s standards. Since then, it’s become not my standards, but what I’ve noticed I’ve done is I don’t go to Dillons until after 5 o’clock at night because that’s when they start putting the clearance stickers on their produce so it’s cheaper.
F21: Lucky for you. They do it at 7 a.m. in Winfield. I’m always the first on there.

F19: Do I need to go to Target after 5 to get clearance?

F20: No, Target does that in the morning.

F22: All of the Chinese section, some of the produce that are scheduled to expire that’s when they start putting their stickers on. And that’s when I decide to go. Because then you get first pick at dropped prices. My boyfriend and I tend to shop for every two or three days. We try not to do giant shopping trips unless we absolutely have to. Living off of that clearance is just a little easier for us.

F21: For Dillons in Winfield, they do it on Fridays. So, I’m in Wichita for most of the week but I still work in Winfield, so by Friday morning, they usually have everything pushed out and I’m there by 8 o’clock.

Facilitator: At the beginning I asked you how often you buy milk, but this opened a new question for me. How often do you go grocery shopping in general?

F19: Once a week.

F24: Once a week.

F22: Two or three times, depending.

F21: Well for Winfield I go on Fridays, but then in Wichita I go on Mondays.

F18: I usually try when buying groceries on Sunday for that whole week to plan out meals. So, the next week I can just go from there.

F20: I usually go once a week, but I break it up so I get most of my stuff from Dillons and then a little bit at Whole Foods because they’re a bit more expensive.
APPENDIX E (continued)

F24: Sometimes some things are perishable like milk or vegetables. Like the fresh stuff. So, you have to go once a week. I’d love to go more, but [cannot understand].

F19: Very randomly. Just whenever I’m craving something or want to cook a certain meal. I’ll just go. I don’t necessarily go grocery shopping in bulk. I just go whenever I run out or want a certain can of soup.

F21: If there’s something going on, I’ll go more than two times a week, but I think the most I’ve gone is four times. But that’s like two runs in the same day because I’m forgetful.

Facilitator: Any other last thoughts? That’s all I have for tonight.
Facilitator: My first question is, how long have you been making the grocery buying decision in your household? We can go around the table.

F27: Five years.

F25(A): About the same.

F29: For as long as I can remember.

F28: Probably three years.

M25: Only about four years.

F31: I’d say five.

F25(B): About three years.

Facilitator: So since college or roughly around there? Is it different for anyone? Specifically, how often do you purchase milk?

F27: Well I buy almond milk.

Facilitator: Or any kind of milk — dairy or substitutes

F27: A couple times a month.

F25(A): Probably the same.

F29: Yeah.

M25: Weekly.

F31: Probably every two weeks.

F25(B): I just buy it in half gallons because I don’t know how often I drink milk. When I need to get milk, I get it, but it’s better than it going bad.

Facilitator: Is there a particular brand of milk you buy each time?
F25(A): I’m lactose-intolerant so I get almond milk, but we have a seven-year-old who loves milk, so we get… If I saw the packaging, I could tell you which one he gets but I don’t know what it’s called.

F29: Just the store brand usually.

F31: I buy organic.

M25: The store brand.

F28: I’m lactose-intolerant also so I buy the Dillons brand of milk, but if I’m buying milk for my dad or brother, they really like Braum’s milk, so I have to go all the way to Braum’s to get milk sometimes.

F25(B): I like Kroger.

Facilitator: I know for some of you, you said it’s a dietary thing, but what is it about that brand of milk that makes you select it. Is it the price, habit that you buy it, a nostalgia to that’s what your parents bought?

F25(A): I pick soy milk because I do protein shakes and that has the most protein in it. It’s the closest to a dairy milk that doesn’t have dairy in it.

F29: The price for sure for me.

M25: The cheapest one.

Facilitator: Doesn’t matter what brand, just cheapest?

F25(B): It’s the cheapest brand with the best flavor for me. If it didn’t taste good, I’d pay more for it, but since I like the taste of it, that’s what I’ll continue to buy.

Facilitator: So, a trial and error process. If you don’t like it, you move on but if you like it you keep buying it?
F25(B): Yeah.
Facilitator: Now I’m going to make you think a little bit. Think back to the last time you bought milk. Do you think you had any other judgements about that brand of milk other than it’s the cheapest?
F27: Well now since I buy the same thing, I just open the door and grab what I always get. That’s where I’m at now.
F25(A): There’s not a lot of thought processes. You eventually like what you like and that’s what you get.
F29: I pay attention to the date and that’s about it.
F28: I look at the brand. If it’s a brand I’ve tried products from before then I’m going to think, “Okay, I’ll probably like this one too.”
F31: If the name brand is cheaper than the generic then I’ll buy the name brand.
F25(B): I do the same thing. I check to see if the name brand is on sale for cheaper, even if it’s a little bit more in price than Kroger. If it’s cheaper than what it normally is, then I’ll go for it. If not, I’ll get the Kroger brand.
Facilitator: So price is a big driving point for your buying decisions or it’s something that you’ve continuously bought so you don’t think twice. So marketers try to connect people and their lifestyles to different brands. I’m sure you know that. This is going to sound like a silly question, but how do you think your lifestyle affects the specific brand you buy? You’ve talked about how you buy almond milk or soy milk, but you always go for a certain brand. Do you think your lifestyle affected why you pick that particular brand over other soy milks or other cheap milks?
F25(B): Lifestyle as in like socioeconomic status?
Facilitator: Yeah.

F25(B): I like looking at packaging to make sure that… I’m sorry what was the question? I had an answer but forget where I was going.

Facilitator: How do you think your lifestyle affects which brand you buy, in milk particularly?

F25(B): Absolutely. If it’s on sale then I’ll buy it, but if not then I’ll go with Kroger. Mostly because I like the taste of it and not so much because it’s the cheapest.

F25(A): I do remember not that long ago the soy milk brand I usually buy was changing their packaging. When I went to check out I got a coupon, but you had to buy that specific new packaging for it to apply.

F27: I would say there was a shift between college and adolescence to when I graduated. I cared less about cost and name brands, like ‘oh I’m going to avoid that,’ because I can afford it now.

Facilitator: That’s a good point. A little bit of background — the reason I broke my focus groups up the way I did is because 25 to 34, you’ve roughly just graduated, you’ve been in life a little bit, you might have a family started. You’re on a different track than those who are 18 to 24. You guys are very different from other age groups. Anyone else think that their particular lifestyle shifts them towards buying a specific brand.

M25: I don’t really like spending money all that much, so whatever is cheapest is usually what I buy. It doesn’t really matter what the brand is.

Facilitator: Now, I’m going to show you some actual packaging. So we have glass bottles, a cardboard carton and the classic plastic jug. Which one are you most drawn to buying?

F29: The one on the far left?

Facilitator: The plastic jug? Why is that?
APPENDIX F (continued)

F29: It's usually the one I've always bought, for one. Two, it's easier to pour from. Three, I wouldn't break it if I dropped it.

F27: I'd go for the middle one [carton] because the milk that I buy is typically in that kind of packaging, so I just naturally tend to go for that.

F25(A): Specifically with mine, the lactose-free one, I'd go for the glass because it's more eco-friendly, but we have a seven-year-old so I'd go for the [carton] because if he drops it, it's just spilled milk. It's not a big disaster.

F28: I'd probably go for the middle one because that's what I'm more used to when I buy my milk. It's in a carton. Plus, for me it's easier to recycle.

M25: I'd get the plastic one because it's what I usually buy.

F31: I'd go for the middle one [carton].

F25(B): I'd get the plastic one because the middle one [carton] has the tab you have to pull out and it irritates me. I don't like doing it. I'd stay away from it. And the glass one I'd probably break so I've got to stay away from glass as much as possible.

Facilitator: You've hit the point I was getting ready to go into. My advisor has two young boys who drink milk like they'll never be able to drink milk again. She buys the large plastic ones because if they drop it, it doesn't make a mess. My friend is super eco-friendly and a tree hugger so she goes towards the glass bottles because they can be reused or recycled. Those kinds of lifestyles. We started to touch on it. Are there any driving factors in your lifestyle that would be why you'd pick a certain type of packaging?

F31: I recycle so I could recycle the middle one [carton].

F25(B): I recycle too, and I recycle plastic.
APPENDIX F (continued)

F28: I don’t have kids, so I don’t have to worry about dropping it. That’s something I never thought of.

Facilitator: And you said the carton, right? For the three of you, do you think your lifestyle affects which type you buy?

F27: I’ve never bought milk in glass bottle before. My family never did growing up. I don’t think I’d ever even think to consider to grab a glass bottle.

F29: Do you mean lifestyle as in what we were talking about earlier with price or our daily routines?

Facilitator: Daily routines. So, my example of my advisor buys the plastic one because she has kids and doesn’t want to clean up a mess or my friend is into recycling and buys the glass bottle.

F29: I help take care of my grandmother. I moved here from Texas to help take care of her. She is kind of shaky when she moves. So she needs something she can grip onto pretty well. And if it does drop, then of course, it’s not a huge mess. We’ve bought that pretty much our whole lives, plus it’s more doable for her.

F25(A): I don’t know how easy it would be to get the seven-year-old to drink out of the glass or the carton because he’s at the age where he loves cheese pizza. He won’t eat any other kind but cheese pizza, yet he says he hates cheese. So I don’t know if he’d transition from the plastic to the other two. He’d be like, “this isn’t milk!”

Facilitator: Now that we’ve talked about the actual structure, I’m going to show you a couple new brands of milk that I’ve designed. This brand is called Moo Creamery. Each version has its own style. What I want you to imagine is you walk into the store and your typical milk is not
available. You only have these two options. Which one would you pick and why? With a show
of hands, how many of you would say this design [simple]?

[Four participants raise hands]

Facilitator: And this design [colorful]?

[Three participants raise hands]

Facilitator: We’re split pretty 50/50. Since I asked about this [simple] design first, what is it
about this design that you’re drawn to?

F29: The simplicity.

F25(A): It makes you feel like there’s not a whole lot of extra stuff in it. It’s just milk.

F25(B): Exactly.

F25(A): It’s simple.

F29: It doesn’t look expensive either. It doesn’t feel like you’re paying for packaging.

M25: I think the contrast is kind of cool. Especially on the glass bottle.

Facilitator: Is there a specific one between the jug, carton and bottle that you’re drawn to most?

F25(A): I like the glass bottle best out of this set, but I like the carton on this side [colorful].

M25: Yeah, me too.

Facilitator: Going one at a time. What do you like best about the glass bottle that you like with
this design, like as a whole package?

F31: It looks like it flows well together.

Facilitator: What about the carton?

F29: It looks fake.

F25(A): I like the design, but on the carton, it looks a bit thrown together.
F25(B): It looks a little too generic.

Facilitator: What about the plastic jug?

M25: The whites don’t really match so it throws you off.

Facilitator: Contrasting colors, but not a good contrast in colors. Any other thoughts on this design?

F25(A): If you could take the glass design and how it has a clear background and put it on the plastic jug, that’d look really cool.

Facilitator: Okay. Now let go over this [colorful] design. What is it that you like or don’t like about this design?

F27: It was really hard for me because it doesn’t any nutritional facts about them that differentiate them, but I go for the carton, so I like the way the carton looks. It stood out to me.

F31: It’s more appealing and looks expensive. It looks like they put more care into their packaging so maybe they put more care into their milk.

M25: I like how the carton is covered on all sides. They didn’t skimp at all on the packaging.

F25(A): I feel like that [colorful] design on this carton gives the same simplistic feel as that [simple] design on the glass bottle. You’ve got cows. It’s just milk. It’s what you want to buy.

Facilitator: Any other general thoughts for this design? So you are clearly drawn to the carton with this [colorful] design, but what are your thoughts on the bottle with this design?

[agreement that it looks nice]

Facilitator: And what about the plastic jug?

F27: I think it’s better than the plastic jug on that [simple] side.

[Group agreement]
F25(B): If it were just the two plastic ones, I’d go with that [colorful] one even though I like this [simple] design better, just because it looks more appealing, I guess.

Facilitator: So you’d say your vote are these two [colorful carton and jug] and this [simple design] glass one?

[Group agreement]

Facilitator: Okay, just making sure I’m on the same page as you all. Going back to this one [simple] here, how would you describe the person who buys this brand?

F31: Simple. They don’t care about packaging.

F29: Not foo-foo.

F25(B): It kind of goes both ways. Both of these remind me of organic brands that I’ve seen or higher end brands of milk if there is such thing. I think about it that way.

F28: I think it looks like it’s for an older demographic.

F27: The more colorful one seems more family appealing, like with kids.

[Group agreement]

Facilitator: Another way to think of it — You’re at the store browsing and you look up and see someone pulling either of these brands out of the refrigerator. What would be your initial thoughts of these people? How would you describe them? What would their lifestyle look like?

F29: [The colorful one] looks like you have a lot of money and can afford expensive stuff or they’re family oriented and have kids. The other would be like a college student. Maybe their single. They don’t really care about the looks. It’s very simple.

F27: If I saw anyone grabbing one of the glass bottles, I would think environmentally friendly. Probably a little health conscious.
Facilitator: Any other thoughts on who would buy which style of milk?

F31: Maybe men would buy that [colorful] one.

Facilitator: Would you agree with that, M25?

M25: Yeah. It’s where milk comes from. From the cow.

Facilitator: One more time. How many of you picked this brand?

[Four participants raise hands]

Facilitator: And who picked this one?

[Three participants raise hands]

Facilitator: Based on that answer and how you described the people who pick each of these brands, do you think you fit into those characteristics or are they different than what you described?

F27: Not really. I wouldn’t say I fit into the typical for what I picked.

F25(A): I like the simple stuff. The stuff that doesn’t have a lot of extra ingredients in it. The simplistic design gives it that feel.

F29: I fit into mine for sure.

F28: I think I’d fit in the other one that I didn’t pick based on how we described it.

M25: Yeah, I fit in it.

F31: I have kids, so I like and fit that [colorful] one better.

F25(B): I’d say I fit.

Facilitator: Okay, interesting. The reason that I picked milk is because it isn’t a very branded product. Like you were saying, you just kind of grab it and go. There aren’t many preconceived notions about it. I wanted to strip it down to what does the structure look like and how does that
APPENDIX F (continued)

affect your buying and what does the label look like and your thoughts on that. Do you have any other thoughts about your buying habits, what kind of things affect what you buy, the packaging designs?

F25(B): If we’re just talking in a general sense, if it has on there that it’s no preservatives, no high fructose corn syrup, things along those lines and it’s very prominent, I’m more likely to go for those, I’m more likely to go for it even if I have to pay more for it because I don’t want that stuff in my food. If they make it easy for me to tell, like ‘oh, this brand doesn’t have those things in it,’ then I’m more likely to just grab it and go.

F27: To add to her point, the almond milk that I buy, they always put the calories on the front of it so since I just use it for cereal, I don’t care what it tastes like so I just go for the lowest calorie option that they have.

Facilitator: Does anyone else feel that way about text being on the front of packaging of any products? Or are you more drawn to key words like ‘low fat’?

F31: Yes.

F28: It catches my eye, but in the end, I’ll probably buy the cheaper one.

Facilitator: But you’re still drawn to it though?

F31: I honestly buy mostly name brands stuff. I could probably save a lot of money if I didn’t. There’s a few things that I don’t buy name brand of.

Facilitator: Did you say you do have kids?

F31: Yes, I do.

F25(B): More and more, the more generic brands aren’t putting the additives in their food so I’ll definitely go for those if I can, but if I can’t, then I’ll spend more money to buy the things that
APPENDIX F (continued)

are healthier. Especially when the more generic brands do put that text on there. Typically I think that the more generic brand might have more of those things in there, so I’ve taught myself to stay away from those.

F25(A): Like if we’re just talking the packaging, and not looking at the nutritional facts, I am drawn to stuff like that, but if they put too much of it on the front then I feel like they’re just trying to sell something and I’m not really about it because it’s more just advertising than anything else.

Facilitator: So having a good balance of “Tell me what’s in it, but not every little tiny thing.” If it wasn’t going to be text on nit, are there certain types of graphics you’re drawn to on packaging? Whether that’s a picture of ingredients or cartoons cows.

F25(A): When it comes to milk, I think of the colors. Like red is Vitamin D and blue is two percent. I don’t really think of the pictures. I can’t even think of what’s on the front of it. I just think of the lids.

F28: I look for the colors.

Facilitator: That’s the one thing that keeps coming up for milk. Think about if you are buying cereal or a bag of chips. Are you drawn to certain types of graphics on those packages?

F27: When I see whole ingredients on packaging that makes it more appealing than a sugar cereal that has a cartoon character doing something weird on it. But if I see whole grain or a nut or something like that, it’s more appealing.

F25(A): It’s more realistic.
F31: For my kids, I’ve bought organic cereal before and it has an animal on it. So they know it from the animal, not the name of the cereal. Like the name brands stuff they know those are Trix or Cocoa Puffs.

Facilitator: That’s a big selling tactic with products geared towards kids. They put something that they’ll be able to easily recognize. I was curious to see how adults felt about those graphics.

Going back to F27’s comment, when you say it has whole grains, it just says whole grain, or you can see a picture of the whole grains.

F27: Yeah, an actual picture of the ingredients.

F25(A): If I’m going to buy a bag of potato chips and there’s a picture of a potato on it, I’m more likely to go towards that because it’s food, like a real thing that grows in the ground. It also makes me crave stuff I see in pictures.

Facilitator: It’s interesting that you brought up that example. When I was doing my research, I found that Lays did a study and found that consumers are drawn more towards a bag of potato chips that have a potato on it or used a non-shiny bag because it didn’t trigger the part of the brain that made them feel guilty for eating it. So Lays completely discontinued producing their shiny bags in place of a matte bag.

[participants talking at the same time]

F25(A): You can buy a bag of chips and call it a vegetable.

Facilitator: Yeah, they were going for we don’t want people to feel guilty for eating our foods. You can be healthy, but still eat chips ever now and then. Do any of you run into that kind of situation with the products that you buy? The brand might be trying to say “Hey, we’re this,” but are you convinced or not?
F31: I think when I’m buying junk food, I guess I get it because I want it. I don’t really feel guilty about it.

F25(A): If I’m going to buy junk food, I don’t look at the facts. I’m sad, I just want all of this ice cream.

F27: I often questioned if some of the more expensive or organic brands were hyping up certain things about them that other cheaper brands also have, and they just didn’t do the same thing.

F28: Like with a lot of corn products, it will say gluten-free in big letters, but it’s always been gluten-free. They just now put that on there because it’s trendy.

Facilitator: But you guys are drawn to those flashy phrases?

F25(B): Just the big things that I’m looking for, like no preservatives or high fructose corn syrup. Those are really the big things. If it says gluten-free, it doesn’t really make a difference to me. Even though I understand eating less gluten, if I want it, I’m going to get it.

Facilitator: That wraps up my main questions. I want to leave some time for your thoughts about what goes through your head when shopping.

F25(A): Mostly my budget.

F27: I shop at Walmart a lot, so Great Value stands out to me as the cheaper brand.

M25: I always look at the price. The packaging is what it is, but at the end of the day, if it’s cheaper that’s what I’ll go with. There are a couple of things that I like the taste of. Like I don’t like the Dillons Raisin Bran, I always get the Post. Usually it just comes down to price.

F27: We have our list of things you can’t go cheap on, like toilet paper.

F29: Oh, I’ve found out the hard way.
APPENDIX F (continued)

F28: I think price is the number one thing I look for, but I look at if it has a lot of waste or a lot of plastic or wrapping because I don’t want to buy individual wrapped. It’s a lot of trash.

Facilitator: That’s a really good point. If a brand that you liked changed their packaging to include excess packaging, would you stop using that brand because of that?

[Group agreement]

F25(B): Yeah, because then they tend to put less of the actual product in it and you’re paying more for the packaging. I can put this food in my own baggie. I can do that myself. Then I’d go with whatever other brand is out there.

F25(A): It’s not just tedious, but it’s wasteful.

Facilitator: What are some brands that you grew up with as a kid? Is there any nostalgia there?

F25(B): Around middle school we went on a healthy kick, so all of the stuff we bought when I was little, we don’t buy anymore. I would say I don’t based on that fact. Instead we’re buying things that are better for you.

F27: Absolutely, especially when I first got out of college and living on my own. You don’t know that much. It’s like, “well that looks familiar” It look like the thing I’ve always bought. If they change the packaging, it throws me off and I’m not sure what to get sometimes. Things like butter or milk. I always went for milk because my dad always bought whole milk.

F25(A): I guess the only thing I’m nostalgic for is Mexican candies.

F29: Macaroni and cheese was ours. You can tell what’s the good macaroni and cheese versus the bad macaroni and cheese.

Facilitator: I’m a mac n’ cheese person. That’s definitely true.

F31: Bread. I grew up with the same bread.
[Group agreement]

F25(B): Going back to the cereal, that’s one thing we still buy. Like Captain Crunch. Whenever I look at it, it just brings back all of these memories from when I was a child and I remember eating it as a kid. That one is a big one for me, but just the peanut butter crunch. I don’t like the others. That’s just what me and my dad ate together.

Facilitator: Depending on the product, sometimes nostalgia plays a role in why you continue to buy that particular brand.

F31: Or sometimes when you were kid and you couldn’t get it, but now you’re an adult and you can buy it for yourself.

[Group agreement]

F25(B): I never thought about that before, but yeah.

Facilitator: One example that my advisor was always uses is Johnson’s baby products, like their shampoos and lotions. Her mom used that with her and that what she went on to use with her boys. I was curious to see if that was the case with everyone. Besides wasteful packaging, are there any other red flags for you guys?

F25(A): The ones that almost look like the brand name, but they’re just a little off. You know it’s from China or something.

F25(B): They look a little cheesier. The packaging isn’t as refined, I guess. It looks like the colors are all crazy and the characters don’t look like what you’re used to. I tend to stay away from that. I don’t want any part of that.

F29: I wonder about the ones that look like the regular thing, but then they change the name to make it different. Like the bags of cereal.
APPENDIX F (continued)

F27: Yeah, they look almost exactly alike, and you get a big bag of it too.
F29: It makes you feel like you’re cheating on them.
Facilitator: I know exactly what you’re talking about because I do this sometimes too when I’m really having a cereal hankering. Do you go for the classic name brand cereal or the knock off cereal?
F29: I go for the name brand.
F27: I go for the name brand cereal because that’s like a five-pound bag of cereal and there’s no way I can eat all of that.
F25(B): I think it also depends on the taste and the price. I’ll try generic brands if the ingredients are okay just to see if I like the taste, but if I don’t then I won’t buy it anymore. I’ll go back to the other.
Facilitator: Are you able to tell if a brand is local and national brands based on packaging?
[Multiple participants talking at once]
F27: Usually international you can tell.
F28: Or it has a lot of languages on it. Like if there’s French, it’s probably sold in Canada took.
With local, I think the packaging is usually simpler.
F25(A): If it’s local it’s usually advertised a little bit more. That’s the big thing now, to buy local.
Facilitator: We can use these [Moo Creamery] as an example. Do you think either of these looks like they’d be more of a local brand versus a national brand or like a big regional brand?
M25: I think the one on this [simple] side would be more local. It’s just black and white.
Facilitator: Why is that?
M25: It’s simpler.

F31: It looks simple, small town, homegrown type brand.

Facilitator: Do you think one way or another about this [colorful] one?

F25(A): Maybe a bigger company that can spend more on their packaging.

F29: I don’t know, I’m kind of the opposite. I think that one [colorful] looks more like home since I’m in Kansas now. It feels more farm-like and they want to make it look like that. They’d want to put that effort into it. It looks more expensive to me because I get this crazy notion that local, homegrown foods are more expensive than the other one. That all ties into my thoughts.

Facilitator: Do you feel the same way about local being more expensive?

[Multiple participants talking at once; group agreement]

Facilitator: With a show of hands, how many of you think local is more expensive?

[Six participants raise hands]

Facilitator: And then just F25(A) who thinks less expensive?

F25(A): Well when I think local… I work at the Applebee’s in Andover and in the summer, they have a little farmer’s booth in the parking lot of Atwood’s. I go over there and get a big ole juicy peach for breakfast and it’s like a quarter.

F25(B): But that’s not like a supermarket.

F25(A): Well yeah, that’s probably where it’s different. When I think local, I think of going to a farmer’s market. But if it’s in a grocery store, it tends to be more expensive because they’re advertising that it’s locally grown. They try to profit off of that.

F27: It’s all about mass production. Who can make more for less.

F29: I think it also depends where you’re shopping.
Facilitator: That’s true too. I wasn’t considering grocery store versus farmer’s market type setting.

F25(A): You also can’t buy milk at a farmer’s market because there’s no refrigeration.

F28: I also think it depends on if it’s a packaged product versus produce. I do some shopping at the Mexican stores because they’re more local, but I usually just buy produce because it is a lot cheaper than the grocery store. The package items they have tend to be more expensive though.

F25(B): I think it also depends on the size of the store that it’s being sold in. Like Dillons and Walmart are huge. Sprouts isn’t a big. There aren’t as many people shopping there necessarily, so their prices are higher. I think that’s because Dillons and Walmart have just a sheer number of people who are able to buy there so they make more money. They give people a bit of discount because they make their money back based on people and it being readily available to them.

Facilitator: That’s interesting. I did a mock focus group with the IMC Strategy here in Elliott and they were for local because it’s cheaper. It’s interesting that you were reversed on that topic and think it’s higher priced. Any other thoughts?

F29: Where do our responses sit as far as everything else that you’ve got from this process?

Facilitator: Somethings have lined up. Other things not as much. Like, with graphics I thought there would be stronger opinions about graphics and if they make you think of things. Or I thought there would be a bigger difference with local versus national, but you didn’t think so. Those are two things that I wasn’t quite expecting those answers on.

F25(A): It could just be that because we’ve shopped for ourselves for a while and we’ve learned that packaging isn’t always honest, so we look deeper.

Facilitator: What are your thoughts when a brand that you usually buy rebrands? Does it matter?
APPENDIX F (continued)

F29: It depends on how you feel about change in general.
Facilitator: That’s basically what I’m getting at. How do you feel about change in your brands?
F29: It throws me off at first, but if it’s the same thing, same price, then I’m good.
F28: I think as long as the price and the taste are the same, it doesn’t really bother me because they’re going to change it eventually. They’re not going to keep the same design for 20 years.
F27: It, maybe, made me spend an extra half second for what I wanted.
F25(B): Exactly, it’s like I can’t find the packaging that I know what it looks like.
F25(A): It almost opens up the door to try a different one thought. Because if you can’t find what you usually go for you might try something else and find a new favorite. When my [brand] did the rebranding they gave me a coupon, so I just went back.
Facilitator: In a situation like that, say your brand of milk is sold out, what do you do?
F25(A): Find the closest thing to it.
F29: Find the next cheapest.
Facilitator: When you say find the closest thing to it, what do you mean by that?
F25(A): Like the same ingredients, same type of quality, similar price.
Facilitator: So looking at the actual product and not just similar packaging?
F25(A): I start with the ones that look similar. Like, ‘this looks like it, let’s see if it’s actually like it.” If not, then it’s on to the next one.
Facilitator: Do you ever go out of your way to try a different brand?
[Group agreement that they do not]
APPENDIX F (continued)

F25(B): Unless it’s like Dillons’ free Friday download thing, I might try something I don’t usually try. Or if there’s a really good coupon on it, I’ve seen it and I’m interested in it. Then I might try it, but not just “oh, I feel like trying this new thing today.”

F27: If it were a different product maybe, but it’s like my milk, I’m never going to be like, “let’s give this a try.”

F25(A): I guess my mindset is always I’m always looking for something better, there’s room for improvement.

F31: I recently did that with my bottled water, which I do recycle my bottles. The Simple Truth water at Dillons was on sale and I don’t know what it is about it, but it had a better taste than the Ozarka that I was buying. So I’ve switched my water to this one even though it’s more expensive, but I actually will finish the bottle of water. Before I wasn’t, so I made that switch.

F25(A): A lot of times my buying habits are reputation based. Like I hate Nestle, like hate them.

F29: I’m with you on that.

F25(A): Being from Michigan, they have a factory that takes all of our water and they hardly pay any taxes for it. It makes me so mad. So if it’s Nestle, I’m not about it.

Facilitator: So, it’s not even product related at all, it’s strictly you don’t like the brand.

F29: I don’t even have a reason. I see the name and don’t like it. I walk right by.

Facilitator: What if a brand has a PR crisis? Like with your example, does that change your view of that brand and make you consider buying something different?

M25: Yes.

F31: If it has a lot of recalls then yeah.

F25(A): Like Dole has so many recalls. I just avoid them now.
APPENDIX F (continued)

F28: With the Nestle thing, I saw a lot of negative news about them, so I stopped buying from them.

F25(A): That makes me so happy.

F25(B): I must be living under a rock because I have not heard about that. I will say if the company makes the decision, like if what they support doesn’t align with my values, then I’m less likely to buy it. That’s just big brands in general.

Facilitator: Groceries are a whole different world of products which is why they’re interesting. You don’t see milk advertised or eggs or meats. It’s a try and see if you like it or a nostalgia type thing. That’s why I picked this category. What is that reason. Everyone’s is just a little bit different.

F27: You brought up meat. Meat is definitely different. I didn’t think about meat. I will go out of my way to go to [unable to understand] or Yoder if I’m feeling like trying something or looking for the next best thing. I’d definitely be more likely to do that for meats.

Facilitator: Are there any other types of products where it’d be worth it to go out of your way to look elsewhere or find a different brand?

F28: With milk, my parents really like the Braum’s milk, so I go there because of them. It’s also something I grew up with too.

F31: I’d say produce. Some stores have better produce than others. I know I can’t go this Dillons for produce because it’s usually rotten or something like that. I go to certain ones.

F25(B): I will say, going back to what we were saying before, if a brand stops selling one of the things I really like… I think of the example of Pepsi and Sierra Mist. Pepsi owns Sierra Mist. They stopped selling Sierra Mist, yet they have Pepsi with real sugar. I was drinking both of
those, but I went back to Sierra Mist and they stopped selling it, so I stopped buying Pepsi. Then I stopped buying pop period. I was so mad. They brought it back now so it’s fine, but I felt personally victimized because they stopped selling it. Then they did like a lemon twist thing that had high fructose corn syrup and Sierra Mist doesn’t.

Facilitator: Do you actively read nutrition labels?

F25(B): Oh yes, religiously.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

Facilitator: So most of you say yes? Is that something where you stand in the aisle and look at stuff or do you do research ahead of time?

[most participants agree they stand in the aisle]

F25(A): I remember this specific moment. I was reading a nutrition label and my boyfriend’s ex-wife and her new husband were coming down the aisle, he’s like, “Can we just go,” and I’m like “No, I’m reading this.”

Facilitator: I think that’s interesting because if I’m looking for a product, like I was looking for new vitamins to buy so I was pulling a bunch of them off of the shelf to compare ingredients and I noticed that I was looking at the packaging first before I pulled them off the shelf. Do you have any similar experiences when comparing products? Do you look at the packaging or just start looking down the shelf?

F25(B): I look at the one that looks most appealing to me first, then I’ll go the other ones just because I’m curious and I want to have as much information as possible. If it has more appealing graphics then yeah, I’ll go for that first.
Facilitator: So in that case, when looking at a variety of brands of the same product, some of the actual visual packaging does come into play.

F27: That’s interesting to think about too because I couldn’t tell you what it is about the packaging that draws me into one over another, but I’m certain that it’s something like color or the picture. Something made me pull this one first before moving on.

F28: I usually compare the store brands. Like if I’m buying canned vegetables, I don’t really care for the brand name on that. So I’ll look at the store brands and compare that.

M25: You brought up medicine. When I buy medicine, I usually look at the labels for the brand name stuff and then look at the Kroger brand to make sure it matches up. Then I’ll get the cheaper one.

F29: You usually get more for your money with the other one. I always check that yellow line that says how much you get for your whatever.

F25(A): Like per ounce or per pound.

F29: I’m sure not getting that one. It’s twice as much.

Facilitator: Color. That’s something we haven’t talked about much. When it comes to milk, we’ve talked about the cap colors to know what type it is. Are there any other colors, like on a label, that you’d be more drawn to or less drawn to?

F28: If it’s milk I’d go with black and white because of cows.

F29: I usually pick yellow for butter.

F27: It’s like item specific because you learn that certain products are good or bad. Those colors that are associated with those products are what would be the drawing factor.

F25(A): Like you would never buy a blue Pepto-Bismol.
F25(B): It’s interesting that you brought up butter because my family typically buys Land-o-Lakes when it’s on sale. But there’s this one kind that they came out with that’s black. It’s like a European butter. My mother grabbed it and started looking at it and I was very skeptical. I was like, “Hmm, I don’t think so.” Just because it was black, and it needs to be along with the rest of their packaging. We tried it and I didn’t like the taste. She did so we still buy it.

Facilitator: So you don’t associate black with butter, but you did say yellow. For me, when I think of yellow and dairy, I think of a milk that’s more fatty or it’s spoiled, not the freshest.

F28: I can see that. I think that the buttermilk is usually yellow at Dillons.

F25(B): Plus when you look at yellow on the carton it kind of makes the milk’s color look distorted.

Facilitator: So yellow could turn you off from buying a certain brand of milk.

F27: And maybe turn you on to buying some butter.

Facilitator: Are there any other products you have a color attraction or aversion to?

F27: I buy Charmin toilet paper so red with toilet paper would be a first drawing factor for me.

M25: If you’re buying chips, you’d never buy black Doritos or blue sour cream and onion. They have these colors that you’re drawn to and that’s the kind of chips you want.

F28: I noticed that a lot of snack foods have red packaging, so we’re probably drawn to that.

F25(A): I think a lot of the color associations are what we’ve grown up and what we’re comfortable with. The reds and yellows, I’ve learned from being a server, make you hungrier from a psychological standpoint, so you buy more stuff. Chick-fil-a is red and Chilis and Applebee’s.
Facilitator: You’re already ahead of the game because we’ll talk about that more in class when we get to color theory. I teach a Visual Technologies class. It’s an intro to photography, layout and design and when we get to color theory, I always use McDonald’s as an example because it’s red and yellow. Those colors, like F25(A) was saying, stimulates part of the brain that makes you hungry. That’s why a bunch of food brands and restaurants use red in their branding.

F29: Then how do you justify chocolate then? Let me tell you, when you see that chocolate, you have to go for it. It’s not red, orange or yellow.

F27: The packaging may be though.

F25(A): Like Lindt. They also have blues and yellows.

F29: I’m talking about those chocolate chip cookies with the see-through packaging.

F25(A): I think that’s just like, I’ve had that, I need more.

F29: Or brownies.

Facilitator: So packaging that is see-through where you can actually see the product you might be drawn to depending on what it is.

F25(B): It might catch my eye at first because it’s different. I’m not used to seeing the actual product.

F28: I usually buy salad in a bag and if the bag was completed covered, I probably wouldn’t buy it.

F25(A): That has E. coli for sure.

F28: But like chips, you don’t really care.

F25(B): Plus when it’s covered, you can’t really tell how much air is in the bag.
Facilitator: Tying that back into milk, if you couldn’t see the milk like you can with these two [jug and bottle], does that sway you from wanting to buy it? Would you want to see what the milk you’re buying looks like?

F31: I don’t care because I buy the carton all the time.

F25(A): With the carton, it has the pull tab so I feel a little bit better about it versus the plastic that you can see through. I guess the glass ones have the little pop top too.

F29: It’s hard to ruin milk, so I just trust that it looks the same color on the inside. But it would be different if it was produce.

M25: Like with orange juice, you have the cartons and the plastic. I think I’d probably get the plastic over the carton because you can see how much is in there and what it looks like.

F25(A): And how much pulp is in there.

F27: It’s interesting you say that because I was just thinking, I don’t know what it is about carton, but it draws me in. Like with orange juice, I would buy the carton over... I never really thought about that until now.

Facilitator: I buy my orange juice in cartons. These are actually orange juice cartons, so I’ve bought lots of orange juice recently. I always buy my orange juice in cartons, but my milk in plastic jugs.

F31: I’m opposite. I buy milk in cartons and orange juice in jugs.

Facilitator: Really? That’s interesting. We’re getting a little off topic, but that’s totally fine. With the orange juice that you buy in the plastic jugs, are they name brand or store brand?

F31: I buy Kroger orange juice.
Facilitator: I go for Hiland in these [plastic jugs] and buy Great Value in these [cartons].

F29: I think my family always bought those cartons anyways. I think I’d buy the orange juice in the carton because my family bought those growing up. I think that’s a good point. It just so happens that it works with my current living situation too.

Facilitator: We a couple more minutes left. Any other last thoughts before we wrap up?

F25(A): If a company goes from plastic to something more eco-friendly, I’ll probably will buy from them to support them and that movement. But I don’t think I would notice they went from plastic to something else, like they’d have to say it.

F31: I remember when Sun Chips went to a biodegradable bag and they were super loud. It was weird. I don’t know if you ever bought those, but they switched back I think because of that.

They were really loud.

Facilitator: Probably a lot of consumer feedback.

F31: I bet people stopped buying it because of that.

Facilitator: You couldn’t go into the kitchen and sneak a chip. The whole house would know.

F31: Yeah, they were so loud.

Facilitator: Well if there aren’t any more thoughts, that will conclude our focus group.
Facilitator: To start with easy, how long have you made the grocery buying decisions for your home. We can go around the table.

M40: Like, 12 years.
F39: 21. Since I’ve been in college.
M45: I’m going to say eight.
F45(B): I don’t even know, 25 years probably. A long time.
F36: A year since I’ve been in Wichita.
F45(A): 25.
F35: Since college.

Facilitator: How many of you frequently purchase milk?
F36: Does soy milk count?
Facilitator: Yes, any kind of milk or substitute.
[All participants raise hands]
Facilitator: How often is frequently?
F36: Once a week.
F45(B): Twice a week.
M45: Probably like twice a week.
M40: Twice a week.
F39: Once a month.
F35: Once a week.
Facilitator: Is there a particular brand of milk you buy each time?

M40: Simple Truth.
M45: Hiland.
F35: Hiland.
F45(A): Silk.
F36: Silk.
F45(B): Whole milk. Whatever is on sale. Store brand usually.
F39: Whatever the one is that lasts long. Fairlife. That’s why I don’t buy it very often. We don’t
drink it very much.
Facilitator: So thinking about your particular brand, is there something that makes you always
choose that brand?
M40: I shop mostly at Dillons and that’s their organic brand.
M45: Hiland used to be Stephans and I grew up on Stephans. I love Hiland.
F45(B): I just buy for the price.
F36: Mine is cost and Silk offers a non-refrigerated carton which is my only go to. So I like that.
F45(A): Cost and it’s recommended by nutritionists and doctors.
F35: Taste.
F39: For me, it’s the fact that it lasts long. It has whatever… It lasts like a month and a half.
F35: Where do you get it?
F39: Target. It’s called Fairlife. It’s not cheap, but we don’t drink a ton of milk so it’s nice to
have. I mean, I’ve drank it when it’s close to the expiration date. It’s been there for a month and
it tastes fine.
Facilitator: Now think back to the last time you bought your brand of milk, can you think of what the packaging looks like?

F36: A little smaller, blue, square and white.

M45: It’s simple red.

F45(B): Yeah, regular gallon.

M45: Red and white lettering.

F39: Blue square, kind of a rounded square packaging. It’s a little different than most packaging.

M40: It’s just a normal rectangle.

F45(A): The regular rectangle shape.

Facilitator: What do you think that the packaging says about your brand of milk?

M45: If it’s Hiland, 100 percent homogenized, it’s great. Because that two percent, they’re always trying to sneak that two percent in. I make sure it says 100 percent whole milk.

F45(B): What was the question again?

Facilitator: What does the packaging say about your brand of milk?

F45(B): Like what does it say as far as does it stand out to you?

Facilitator: Either how does it stand out to you or what kind of image the brand is trying to portray.

F39: I think mine probably because it seems like snotty milk, if that makes sense. It’s not cheap because it lasts longer. It’s kind of fancy looking. It’s blue with white lettering and talks about all the things it’s good for.
F36: Mine is a little more preserved because it’s not refrigerated prior to me refrigerating it. The taste is very consistent, the vanilla soy. It is the only thing I will drink, and I will not have coffee without. I actually went to get some before I came here, and I couldn’t find it. I was freaking out.
F45(A): I buy the refrigerated almond or coconut milk. What I try to see more is if it’s eco-friendly, environmentally friendly. I am not a fan of plastic so that’s mainly my reasons.
M40: I don’t have any reason to look into it more because I have been buying it quite often. They haven’t changed much on the packaging side.
F35: It’s from my childhood.
Facilitator: So you’re probably aware that marketers try to connect people and their lifestyles to their different brands. This is going to sound kind of like a silly question and you’ve already started to answer it, but how do you think your lifestyle affects the brand of milk that you buy? For example, my advisor always buys the gallon plastic jugs because she has two boys who go through milk like crazy and if they drop the plastic jug, it doesn’t make quite as much of a mess as a glass bottle. A friend of mine is really environmentally friendly so she goes towards glass bottles because they can be reused or recycled. So, how do you think your lifestyle affects the brand choices you make.
F35: We buy the half gallon just because my daughter can’t drink it all in a week. She’s the only one that generally drinks it. I can trust her to pour her own cup if it’s in plastic. Unless the lid is off, it’s not going to make a mess.
M40: I usually get the [cannot understand]. Most of the time I get the one percent and it gets bad really fast.
F39: You should try my kind. Fairlife.
M40: Yeah, I’m going to try that. I never knew about it. Even after opening it?

F39: Yeah, even after opening. We’ve had a chocolate milk in our refrigerator for a month and a half.

M40: Oh, geez.

F39: I think for us, we’re somewhat carb conscious and obviously milk has a lot of carbs. So, I think from a lifestyle perspective that’s why we buy something that lasts a little bit longer because we cook with it or do things like that. We don’t drink milk. Nobody puts it in coffee. It’s more for cooking purpose than anything.

M45: I have four girls and right now they’re on spring break. If it’s a gallon, and I like the new shape. It fits in the side door now better. You can put two. It’s easy for me to carry two at one time. They’re on spring break and eating cereal all day long.

F45(B): So how does my lifestyle affect… What’s the question?

Facilitator: How does your lifestyle affect the brand you purchase?

F45(B): Well it’s going to keep them in business, correct? Because if my lifestyle is drinking that sort of milk, it helps them.

Facilitator: Well yes, that’s true. But what is it about your lifestyle that makes you pick that particular brand?

F45(B): Oh, okay. I think it’s just been easy. It’s what I’ve always bought my kids. Even though my kids are all grown up, it’s still what I buy. Nothing about the environment. I’ve never thought about that. I just buy it.

F36: I live in a loft with a tiny kitchen and a tiny old school fridge. Nothing will fit in the fridge unless it’s small and square so the container of milk for me is very appealing. If it will fit
next to the little Brita, the mini Brita. I like that. Plus it’s lighter weight for me to lift up. I’m very out of shape. Lifting a smaller thing of milk is easier for me than a big standard one. It’s less messy.

F45(A): Mine fits well in the refrigerator too, but I always look for packaging that can be recycled.

Facilitator: Now I’m going to show you three different styles of packaging and we’ll talk about the structure itself. So we have a glass bottle, a cardboard carton and a plastic jug. What is it about each of these types that you either like or don’t like? Starting with the plastic jug.

M45: I like it because it’s handy. You can put it anywhere you want.

F39: It has a handle that you can grab.

M45: My kids can grab it easily.

F36: It fits in the door of the refrigerator well and smaller spaces.

F35: It’s more malleable. If you have to squish it in between the uses or something.

F45(A): It’s easy to carry.

M45: With the new shape you put it in the door really nice. It’s a little boxier.

Facilitator: Is there anything you don’t like about the plastic jugs?

F45(A): I don’t like plastic because I know how harmful they can be when in contact with foods. That’s my concern about plastic.

M45: I don’t have anything negative to say about the jug.

Facilitator: How about the carton?

F45(B): It looks heavy to me.
APPENDIX G (continued)

M45: My kids have small hands and those cartons right there, they’ll make a mess if they don’t hold it right. Kids are lazy. They won’t hold it. They’ll try to pour it with one hand. They always make a mess with it.

F45(B): And that spout. If you don’t pour it out just right, it will start to spit, and I don’t like those cartons. There’s a lot of juice that comes in those boxes.

M45: You can put those just about anywhere.

F45(B): Well yeah, you can fit them but they’re messy.

F36: My soy milk comes has that spout and I always make a little mess.

F39: It’s hard to get air to stay with it. It kind of blocks the little thing instead of sits at the top.

M40: I never had any problem with it. I like it.

F45(A): I don’t think they’re practical, but they recycle better than plastics.

M45: You can’t tell how much milk is in there either.

[Group agreement]

M45: When I do grocery inventory — open up the refrigerator, see I’m out of milk. I need to see it. I’m too lazy to shake it. We have orange juice that comes in that and I always forget to buy orange juice because I can’t tell how much is in there.

F39: That’s a good point.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts about the carton?

F36: He made a really good point because I do the same thing with my soy. I always run out.

F39: I’d be curious if those break easier than the plastic. Not because they’ll break, but the denting or leaks.
M45: They do leak.

F45(A): I’ll pass.

Facilitator: How about the bottle?

F36: It’s pretty.

[Group agreement]

F39: If you set it out and it gets moisture on it, kids pick it up and it slides around in their hands.

M45: I do buy milk out of the bottle because to me, when I was growing up you could sometimes get milk out of the bottle and it was so much fresher.

F39: Does it last longer? I have no idea.

M45: Something about the glass.

F36: It tastes better.

F45(B): It looks nice. You’d want to drink it.

M40: Hildebrand at Dillons.

M45: It just tastes a lot better from the glass.

F45(A): I think everything tastes better from glass. I’m from Brazil and my grandma used to use the bottles as a flower vase.

F45(B): That’s true. It’s reusable. You can put other drinks in there.

M45: But you’ve got problems with that. Kids are going to break that. I guarantee it. How do you dispose of it?

F45(B): Well it’s reusable. That’s environmentally friendly. You keep using it.

F39: And it’s small. There’s no way it’s 64 ounces compared to this one. So, you’re going to have to buy more milk.
F45(B): It seems like way less.

F36: But it is kind of pain because my boyfriend drinks a heavy cream from a glass like that. To get rid of it and take it out. It all adds up quickly. It’s kind of a nuisance.

M45: You’ll have a ton of those things.

F45(A): But it is prettier.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts on these three?

F35: If they do break, they’re more difficult to clean up than the plastic.

Facilitator: So now I’m going to show you a brand that I created. It’s called Moo Creamery. I have two designs that I want you to take a look at. Look at the labels, the different styles of packaging. Now imagine you go to the store to buy milk, but your brand of milk is nowhere to be found. These are the only brands of milk that are available. Which one are you picking?

F39: Color.

Facilitator: With a show of hands, how many of you would pick this [colorful] design?

[Two participants raise hands]

Facilitator: And who would pick this one [simple]?

[Five participants raise hands]

Facilitator: Okay, so we’ll start with this one on the right [simple]. Why did you choose this design?

M40: I like the design and the logo.

F45(A): I like the logo too. I like that you can see the product better.

F36: I love the modern packaging with the glass and the clear sticker on it. It makes it look kind of fancy. I like it.
F45(B): If I had to choose between those three, I would choose the glass one.

[Group agreement]

F39: I agree. But if I chose the other one, I’d pick the boxed one.

[Group agreement]

F45(B): Yeah, I think so too. If I had to pick between those [colorful], I’d pick the box too. But with those [simple], I’d pick the glass.

M45: Well you’re already shopping for milk. To me, that [colorful] is a little fancy. I just want milk. I don’t want to sing and dance. I just want milk in my cereal. It doesn’t have to be pretty. Because I look at the jug, not the milk carton.

Facilitator: So for those of you that didn’t pick this one [simple], why not?

F39: I guess I get sold on fancy. I mean, I buy the Fairlife.

F45(B): I mean, that glass bottle looks fancy.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F39: I agree with you. But I don’t like the glass bottle on this [colorful] one. But I think for me, I like the carton the best. And the [simple] glass one. They look the nicest. So I guess I gravitated towards the color more than anything.

Facilitator: So for these ones, you’ve said you like [the carton] best. What are your overall thoughts on this design?

M40: What are you trying to say from this design? Over here [simple] I like this design a lot. It’s simplistic. Over here [colorful], I don’t understand what you’re trying to say.

F39: It’s a grassy knoll with cows on it. It’s sunshiny day. It’s inviting.
F45(A): I like the [simple] design because it’s different. This [colorful] side looks like other designs you see.

F45(B): You need more men in here where they can just say, “I just want milk.”

F36: I don’t mind the blue sticker on that [colorful] glass. I have a very organized refrigerator. I’m very disgustingly OCD. Everything is in line with the beverages. I think if I find a container that fits the blend, I would buy it.

M45: There’s just too much going on. I just want milk. I’m not trying to picture the cow or where it’s eaten.

F39: You’re going to look for the red cap.

M45: That’s the milk I’m looking for.

F45(B): They do say people shop and eat with their eyes.

M45: And then it says creamery, so you’re going to throw me off completely. I’m going to be asking somebody where the milk is even though that’s supposed to be milk.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F45(B): It does say it in small print.

M45: Now I’ve got to look close.

F36: Don’t you like to look down and see a beautiful shopping cart.

F45(A): I can keep it to use later as a vase.

Facilitator: How would you describe the person who is picking this [simple] design out of the refrigerator? If you were standing around watching, how would you describe them?

M40: Simple.

F36: Maybe a modern person. Like if their house has a modern look.
F45(A): Yeah, I would say modern.

[Group agreement]

F35: Or a man.

M45: I’m thinking the guy who is buying that is being responsible and thinking that’s the best milk for me and my family. The other [colorful] one is something my kid would probably want.

It’s so uppidy.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F45(A): Definitely a family with kids. Kids would pick that [colorful].

F45(B): If I saw somebody buying this [simple] milk, I would think, “Wow, this person can afford that milk.”

F39: I think the glass one in the one on the left [simple]…

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F45(B): They’re the ones that can afford that.

F36: They’re boujee. They’re not using coupons at the register.

F45(B): It’s something you would buy at Whole Foods. Actually, I am imaging that with all of the cartons.

F36: They all could be Whole Foods. The one on the right [colorful] too.

F39: I agree. They’re both boujee.

Facilitator: How would you describe the people pulling this brand [colorful]?

F35: Maybe a family. People with kids.

[Multiple participants talking at once; group agreement]
F45(B): Probably going to sell country. That’s what I’m seeing here. I don’t know. Something more rural.

F45(A): I would say a family with kids.

F45(B): Yeah, and kids. Kids are going to see the cows.

F35: The one on the right [simple] could be more city then.

F36: Like downtown area.

F45(B): It’s artsy.

Facilitator: So you mentioned you thought this [simple glass bottle] might have a higher price. Do you any of these [colorful] give off a vibe of being a higher price or maybe a lower price?

F39: I think both glass bottles would be a higher price.

[Group agreement]

M45: To me, the carton that’s completely covered with clouds and stuff.

F45(B): Would be what?

M45: More expensive.

F39: I think the two plastics would be the cheapest, then the middle would be the cartons and the top would be the glass.

M45: Yeah, that glass one [simple] is way fancy. It looks like a bottle of wine or something.

F39: It looks like something you’d get at Home Goods just to sit out on your… You can buy that kind of stuff.

F36: It has bath salts in it or something like that.

Facilitator: Based on those conversations, do you think you fit into the descriptions for the design that you picked?
F45(A): I picked that [simple] one, so yes.

F45(B): I think so.

[Group agreement]

Facilitator: For these packages or anything we’ve discussed, do you have anything to add? Any questions I didn’t ask that you have a comment for?

F36: I think the stereotypes were pretty on point. I think about all of the stuff that my boyfriend gets and all of the stuff I get and we’re downtown, city people. I’m from southern California. That’s the kind of stuff I would gravitate towards at the grocery store. Even if… I’m pretty frugal unfortunately, so it’s like, do I spend an extra dollar for a pretty bottle of milk, or do I just want to go cheap and get what I need and use. It’s always a dilemma at the store.

F39: Didn’t Silk change their branding? Isn’t it red now? Like a solid red. There’s a commercial. It’s a solid red container and it didn’t used to be that way. It’s like, “still the same Silk,” or something like that. It’s just new packaging.

F45(A): I think about what can I do with the packaging afterwards if I’m going to spend more for the one that I like.

F36: To reuse it or something.

F39: I grew up in St. Louis. Oberweis is an ice cream and milk store that is still currently open. You can go and refill your milk there or trade it in. They’re very… I think that would fall into your category. You can go in and get a discount when you bring your container. They’re like rectangular and long.

M40: There’s a brand like that here. Hildebrand.

F45(A): I’ve heard of them.
M40: You can get them at Dillons. It’s the same concept.

[F45(B): It’s in glass and you go back in and exchange it for another one?]

[F45(B): I’m over here thinking about back in the day when you could return bottles.]

M40: Yeah, you have a deposit and then just exchange it.

[F45(B): I’m over here thinking about back in the day when you could return bottles.]

M40: It’s kind of like rectangle shape.

F36: Oh, that’s neat.

F45(B): I think that would sway more people to go for the glass if you could do that with more brands. That’s how it was before. You’d return your six pack bottles of soda or whatever. Some places, when we were little in Texas, you could still do that. You’d return your bottles and get you 15 cents back or pay another 15 cents and get another soda. The bottle just kept getting refilled.

F39: I still think more family friendly people are still going to buy the milk with handles.

[Group agreement]

F39: Think about the indentation where you can grab it. I think you’re going to see more.

M40: If you could put a handle on the carton, that would be great.

F39: I think that would make it awkward.

M40: No, just right here.
F39: Oh, just to carry it. I think you’re going to find more single people that have money drinking out of the glass ones. You’re going to see more families with younger kids drinking out of the handled ones.

F36: Yeah, because some of us are just putting it in coffee or cereal. Unless it’s going in to baking or something.

[Group agreement]

Facilitator: Going off where you were starting to go, F39. Can you tell if a brand is more local or regional or national?

M45: I can because of Hiland.

F39: I think Target’s milk, their Market Fresh, is terrible. To me that’s not necessarily local obviously. It’s coming in. I also do not like Costco’s milk. They taste different. I agree that I like the local dairy a little bit more.

M45: It’s like when you drink tap water at someone’s house or you go somewhere else. The water tastes gross.

F39: That’s one thing about the Fairlife. It tastes like really good milk.

M45: I’ve never heard of that. You don’t need that because we drink a lot of milk.

F39: There’s red and blue, and then brown for chocolate.

F45(A): I haven’t lived in the U.S. for long enough to know the difference. I’m still trying different brands.

F35: A lot of times it’s written on the package. Like Hildebrand or Braum’s, I think.

M45: Braum’s milk is good.

M40: It does a salty taste though.
M45: I don’t know about that.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F36: Braum’s you can’t find at a regular grocery store. So Hiland is the only one that I’ve seen that’s local, but I’m also not native so I wouldn’t recognize it.

F45(B): I’m a native and I can’t tell. Unless I know, like Hiland, I can’t tell.

Facilitator: Now I’m going to move into a couple different design elements that I’d like your feedback on. Starting with text on packaging. It doesn’t have to be just milk. It can be any kind of product. How important is text on packaging to you?

M45: It’s crucial.

F35: You don’t want like murder font or something like that on it.

F36: Are you talking about lettering and size?

Facilitator: Yeah, we can start there. So the actual size of the text and how much text is on there.

F36: I don’t like containers where they blast things. I think it overwhelms me. I won’t even go near it if it’s too huge. But it has to be legible. Like if it’s tiny and I’m squinting to read what kind of milk it is, then that’s not good either.

M45: Like this is in cursive [simple Moo Creamery]. It’s barely legible.

M40: If it was little bit bigger that would be better.

M45: Hiland marks theirs perfectly. It’s just the red label and says Hiland. Then it tells you 100 percent. Of course they have the two percent, trying to be sneaky. Hiland is perfect. I don’t even look at the price. I just grab what I know I want.

F39: I would say in these descriptions, fresh milk doesn’t tell you much. I always go off of color because red is always whole milk, blue is always two percent, light blue is always one percent.
F45(B): But it should still say.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F45(B): For me, it has to say. I don’t want to be sitting there trying to figure it out. I want to make sure it has what I can understand so I don’t have to turn it around or flip it around. With milk, it’s all on the front label. You have the ingredients, nutrition all right there.

M45: Unless somebody told me that’s milk. I know that there’s a cow on there. But now they have almond milk. They’re milking almonds now. What are we doing here?

F36: The other ones aren’t going to have cows on there.

F45(A): I read the labels, so as long as their legible, it’s okay.

Facilitator: Do you pay attention to packaging that say “low fat” or “low calorie?”

F36: If it says “low calorie” or “low fat,” I’m going to look at the sodium and sugar because that’s always going to be what takes the place of the fat or sugar. Which it’s usually the extra sodium or sugar that makes it taste terrible. So you have to be really careful on brands because it’s not necessarily any better tasting or better for you.

F45(A): I don’t buy those for the same reasons.

F45(B): Yeah, I think for me… I don’t diet often anyways, but when I do, even if it says something diet will still be loaded with carbohydrates. I have son that’s diabetic so that’s one thing we always had to pay attention to. They would always tell us don’t buy diet food. Endocrinologist would tell you don’t buy it because it’s loaded with hidden things. They’ll show you and highlight those names of ingredients. The ones with crazy names that you can’t pronounce. This is a hidden. I know one time I did Nutrisystem diet and they packaged the food
to send to you. Yeah, it has low sugar, but when reading it, the carbohydrate content was through the roof. This isn’t a healthy diet. And it’s expensive.

F36: Salt and carbs. Like with Lean Cuisines. It’s pretty awful.

F45(B): It’s important to read labels. I don’t go off of “low fat” or “low calorie.” Even sugar free. There’s still something in there that makes it sweet. You have to wonder.

Facilitator: Would you say that those types of things that are printed on the front of a bag of chips or something like that, you’d be drawn away from it instead of drawn to it?

F39: I think you’d be drawn to it, but you’re still going to read.

F45(B): You’re still going to read.

F39: You’re skeptical. I think you are drawn to look at it. Like you brought up chips. Ten or 15 years ago they came out with the Doritos that digested different.

F36: It had a different oil.

F39: It was fried in a different oil

F36: It caused gastro-issues.

F39: And it said on the back, “May cause diarrhea.”

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F39: I think it catches your eye because everyone is looking for something different that tastes good, but then you read into a little bit more and maybe you don’t end up getting it.

F36: You regret it. I’m just going to go back to counting my calories.

[Multiple participants talking at once]
Facilitator: So since you are a group that does look at nutrition labels, if you are looking to try a new brand of a product, say vitamins for example because I just had to do this. What made you pick up a certain bottle over others to look at the nutrition?

F45(A): When I read the label, I don’t buy anything that has over ten ingredients. That’s the first thing.

Facilitator: Take one step back. So you’re looking at the shelf with all of the vitamins on it. Which one are you picking up first? Are you looking at the packaging or going off a name?

F36: I like petite vitamins, so I get the women’s One A Day—petites. That says it on the front of the package. The bottle is not tiny, per say, but the vitamins are very small compared to the other ones. That’s my initial reaction, then I’ll look on the back for the actual vitamins.

M45: I have a lot of friends, and not one of us ever reads what’s inside of what we eat. Someone says you should try this because it’s good. I don’t know how he tried it, but that’s how I choose it. I don’t look at any label.

F45(B): I’m going to say with vitamins, especially with vitamins, I’m going to research before I buy because there are vitamins out there that aren’t even vitamins. I’ve known people who have taken green tea vitamins and have gotten sick. You don’t know what’s in there. If I don’t know the background or history of that company, I’m not going to buy that vitamin. I don’t care how good the display is at the store.

F39: I think I’m more of a brand recognition person. I’m going to buy a specific brand and stick with it. It’s hard to change.

M45: I’m more of a “Hey, that’s good. I’m going to buy that.”

F45(B): You’re in the wrong group.
F39: You’re a word-of-mouth guy.

F45(B): But that’s also a good way to buy stuff.

M45: That’s something I told my friends. If you’re going to buy chips you need to buy the hot Funyuns. I don’t go looking at what’s inside Funyuns because then I’ll never eat them again. They’re good.

F45(A): I do research before I buy so I don’t care what packaging it comes in.

Facilitator: Let’s talk a little bit about the graphics that are on packaging. Are there certain types of graphics that you’re drawn to?

M45: Are you saying like in general? With everything?

Facilitator: Yeah, for anything.

M45: I like when they put the product right in front of you. Like it’s right there. Like, they’re dipping the chips in the salsa. I’m like, “yeah.”

F36: I like a lot of black, white, clear, and neutral toned packaging. It’s easy on the eyes and I enjoy that kind of stuff.

F39: I don’t care at all.

F35: I usually look at price point.

F45(A): I don’t think I have a thing that attracts me more when I look at it. In this case [simple design], I prefer the black and white.

M45: I don’t like when they change. Like when Doritos changes their packaging. It used to be like, a burgundy and said Doritos Nachos. Then they change it to a really dark red. I know it says the same thing, but is it actually the same thing? I don’t like change. Just keep it the same. If it wasn’t broke before, just keep going with what you’re doing.
[Multiple participants talking at once]

M45: I’m not drinking Silk.

F36: My Silk is still blue.

Facilitator: Going back to graphics really quick. Do you feel like you’re drawn to more realistic photos, illustrations?

M45: Realistic photos.

[Group agreement]

F45(B): I like when it’s simple. Just really simple. I buy a lot of… I don’t know if anyone remembers back in the day when they used to sell the generic it was in an ugly yellow box. I probably wouldn’t have wanted to buy it. I don’t care how cheap it was. Now, Walmart’s brand, the Great Value, the boxes of pasta are blue, but some are also white. It’s just really simple and I know when I open my pantry, I know everything is that price. It’s what I’ve bought. I know this is the pasta. That’s kind of how I do it.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts on graphics or images? Let’s jump back into color. Are there certain colors when it comes to shopping for groceries that you’re automatically drawn to?

F39: I feel like there’s a lot of blues. It just depends on what you’re buying too, but Vlasics label is blue, all of the pastas are mostly blue, like Barillo. A lot of times for me, I’m an actual two percent milk drinker.

F45(B): And that’s a blue.

F39: Kraft, shredded cheese. There’s a lot of blue accents to it. I can think of lots of blue things. There’s lots of yellow too.
F36: I still like a lot of black. My laundry detergent is a black bottle. It’s for black clothing. The downy is a black and purple bottle. The fabric softener container is black with purple flowers on it. I tend to like those colors. It’s kind of theme I go for.

F39: I don’t think you see a lot of green. I mean, Gain.

F36: Toilet paper and stuff like that, paper towels you see some green.

F39: When it comes to food, I can’t think of a lot of green.

M40: There is one milk. It’s called Nature’s Own or something like that. They have a grass-fed milk. It tastes great. You’ve never tasted a milk like that, but it’s very expensive. One package is like $6.50.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

M40: But it tastes really good.

F36: Is it worth it?

M40: I think it’s non-homogenized.

F45(A): I feel like there’s a lot of blue, but I don’t think I’d buy something that is red. I cook a lot, but I actually use fresh ingredients. I see a lot of greens in the produce area.

F39: Now that I’m thinking about it, Green Giant is green obviously. I feel like the vegetable products might have more green labels because they want you to think fresh.

F36: But now if you buy the vegetables in the bags, they’re blue and green.

F39: The frozen ones?

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F36: Steamed fresh. They’ve also changed all of the Lean Cuisine line to black.

M40: I don’t care about the colors.
F39: I don’t think about the colors either. I’m just thinking about what I buy.
Facilitator: Well I’ll ask anyways, are there any colors that if you saw it on packaging you
wouldn’t buy it?
F45(B): Yeah, the yellow generic kind they used to sell. What was it called?

[Multiple participants talking at once]
F35: Save-a-lot?
F45(B): Save-a-Lot? Was it? Save something. There was another one that was Scotch…
F36: I don’t like yellow.
M45: I think it depends a lot. I remember we’d go buy cereal and they’d change it. Make the box
white. There used to a cheaper cereal that came in a white box.

[Multiple participants talking at once]
M45: Maybe if it was… I want Froot Loops with all of the colors coming at you. I want to feel
like a Froot Loop eating a Froot Loop. I want the colors.
F36: He’s not buying the white Kashi boxes.

[Multiple participants talking at once]
F36: You see the Kashi and it’s like you’re eating little sticks.
M45: My mom used to buy us Corn Flakes and that was a white box. Sometimes I want Corn
Flakes, but you go to look at the box…
F39: There’s a rooster on it.

[Multiple participants talking at once]
M45: I think it depends on what you’re buying. If you’re buying chips you want the chips to
almost come out of the bag. You want to see what you’re buying inside of it. It’s all enclosed
because it’s full of air. You want to see what you’re buying. There’s a lot of good chips out there. The cereal you want to be colorful because you want your kids to eat it. If it’s not colorful they’re not going to touch it.

F36: I like my stuff discrete, so I don’t feel guilty if I see a big ole bag of shiny bag of chips in my cupboard or a bag of Cheetos in my purse. How am I going to discretely eat it?

F45(B): Everyone’s going to know you’re eating Cheetos.

F36: Yes, versus my little bag of popcorn. My Smart Food popcorn is black and white. Stick it in the backpack for an easy snack. It’s not screaming at me that I’m eating junk food.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts on color, text?

M40: Text should be legible.

Facilitator: Let’s talk about the amount of packaging used for products. What are your thoughts on that?

F36: I have to agree with him. I hate opening something and half of the bag is air. Even like trail mix or bags of pistachios, they’re a little bit better, but if you buy a canister, I think like 40 percent of it is packaging and not actual product. Some shampoos you have to be careful of. If you look at it in the light, the whole top part is empty. It’s very deceiving.

F45(B): Same with laundry stuff. Sometimes I’ll open it and look. I’ve done that before.

F39: Filling it up in the aisle.

F45(B): Now I’m getting my money’s worth. Absolutely.

M45: I like it when it’s simple. You open the box and then there’s another bag. This happens to me all the time. My kids, they’re teenagers, and they still don’t know how to open the cereal box. Then they’ll just destroy the bag that’s inside. There’s cereal all over the inside of the box. Even
those bags of cereal have a little ziplock on one half of it. They’ll open the whole thing. Now I have to roll it up and put a clip on it. To me, if they could figure out a way to make things easy for a kid. If a kid can open it and close it, you’ve done your job. Parents all over the world are going to love you. Milk is probably the easiest thing to put back. Somehow the cap doesn’t find its way back on top. If you could put a slide over thing and then pour. It’s just a little lid though. Easy to access. Easy to pour.

Facilitator: So, what about having too much packaging? You mentioned cereal has bag, but then there’s a bag inside the box. Does that drive you crazy?

[Group agreement]

F45(B): The bagged cereal I bought for my kids for years. I always liked it better because I didn’t have to go through two packages. You didn’t have to open it all. It has the little slot that rips and you can’t put the slot back. Same with macaroni and cheese. It says, “push to open,” but that’s not true. You have to cut it and saw it open to pour the macaroni into the water. I hated doing that. I’d saw and pull. “Push to open” is not true on all packaging.

F36: So, I am very environmentally not friendly because, unfortunately, when I count my calories so if I go and buy chips and cookies, it has to be in individually one serving. I won’t go near anything regular because I will consume the whole thing. It costs way more, and it has a lot more packaging. You’re opening this big bag that has all of these little bags. I go through a lot of trash. Like, how am I consuming all of this trash? I don’t eat enough. But it’s because of all of the little baggies. I ziplock this and ziplock that. I food prep. It’s not very environmentally friendly.

M40: I don’t like to use extra packaging.
APPENDIX G (continued)

F39: I think your cereal concept is interesting. I think I’d be more willing to buy the bagged cereal because you can see how much is in it versus the boxed cereal. Talk about air.

F45(B): Some people will say the bag cereal is the off brand when in all reality it’s actually the same cereal, just packaged different for costs. I think there was a time when there was a generic brand of the bags, but that’s totally gone. The cereal you’re buying in the bags are the exact same thing.

F36: I think they recently did a study about that. We’re just paying for the brand.

Facilitator: Would you be less likely to buy a brand that uses excessive packaging for their products.

[Group agreement]

F45(B): If it’s something you’re going to struggle with or if you’re in a hurry to cook. You have to hurry up and you’re struggling to open it. I’ll buy something that’s easier.

F35: Like, if you’re trying to give your kid a snack or they get their own snack, but if it’s multiple packages…

F45(B): It’s like the Capri Sun. You send your kid to school with the Capri Sun and they can’t open, it they’re not going to have anything to drink. You want something easy.

Facilitator: What if it’s a brand that you’ve always bought, something that you’re brand loyal to? If they switch their packaging to where it has an excessive amount, how would that change your thoughts of the brand?

M45: If it’s one more step to get to the actual product…

F45(B): Even if you’ve bought it for years. Like if your Hiland changed.

F39: And they put it inside of a carton.
F45(B): Yeah, a carton. Are you still going to buy Hiland?

M45: I don’t know, I’d have to think about that. It has to be simple. If it’s simple for me, it’s simple for my kids. Kids already make a mess and don’t want to pick it up. You have to make it as simple as possible for a child so that child can…

F45(B): So would you consider changing?

M45: No.

F36: He’d be standing in that window a little longer.

F39: I think I’d probably continue to buy it if it was something I really liked and loyal to. It just depends on the situation.

M45: It depends on a lot.

F39: If it was something that would help keep it the product fresher, longer, it doesn’t sound bad to me.

F45(A): I would probably try a different brand before going back.

F45(B): Make that sacrifice.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F36: I’ve wasted so many off-brand items that I didn’t like.

Facilitator: What about rebranding? Can you think of any brands that you consistently buy that have gone through rebranding?

F45(B): Like soda. Remember when Pepsi went clear? Then there was new Coke and they went back to Coca-Cola classic.

F39: Pepsi has changed their branding quite a few times.

F45(B): You’re talking about branding? The way it looks?
Facilitator: Yeah, like the packaging, the way it looks.

M40: Great Value has gone through a lot of changes in their packaging.

F35: A lot went retro it seems, to be on that bandwagon. Going back to the old school.

F45(A): I like rebranding because it shows that the company is thinking about the future and it’s modern. It’s alive. I like rebranding.

F45(B): I think the rebranding is okay if the product is still the same.

[Group agreement]

M45: They improved the milk carton by making it a little boxier.

F45(B): But the milk is still the same. You’re good.

Facilitator: Walking down the grocery aisle, if your package changed, what would your thoughts be?

M45: If it’s for the better, like the ketchup. The new ones you leave upside down. That’s a great idea because you get the most ketchup out of your bottle. Your mom or dad used to show you how to shake it like that to get all of the ketchup.

F45(B): If I saw something I was always loyal to, I’d be like, “Oh my god, they changed it.” Then I’d think, “Oh, it’s the same thing,”

Facilitator: So there’d be an initial shock, but you’d still probably buy it because it’s the same thing.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F39: Sometimes they change how much they put in it. Let’s say they rebrand and go from 16 ounces to 14. Then I’m more willing to maybe change.

M45: They do that with cereal.
F45(B): You want to get more for your money.

M45: The box gets bigger, but it gets narrower. You still buy it.

F45(B): And the largest one is 50 cents more than the smallest one.

F39: You probably like to buy the smaller box living in a loft, but for the amount you get per ounce and how much you pay for it, it’s better to get the big one.

F36: I am at the store way too often, I’ll tell you that much.

F39: I go to Costco or Sam’s almost every week to buy random stuff and keep it for a long time.

F36: My freezer is even smaller so there’s no bulk shopping in my house.

Facilitator: So, for brands that you are brand loyal to, how did you form those loyalties?

F39: My mom probably used it so then I did too.

F35: As well as price and taste.

M45: I grew up eating the same cereal.

F45(B): I’m going to say price and having a family.

M40: I’d say price and lifestyle.

F45(B): I’d say whatever is easiest to cook when you have four kids and you’re running home from work to cook and clean and homework. I think that price and convenience is what has kept me with brands.

F36: For me, it’s taste and nutrition, like caloric intake. As long as that stays the same, we’re good.

F45(A): I don’t know many brands, but when I go to Brazil and go to the grocery store, I get the brands that my family used to buy.
Facilitator: Well that’s all I have for questions. Do you have any other thoughts about packaging as a whole that we haven’t discussed yet?

F36: Do they say that red makes a person kind of anxious? Like, the whole reason target is red is because you’re nervous?

Facilitator: I don’t know about anxious, but red makes you hungrier. It affects your appetite.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F36: My appetite is moody, not color-wise.

F45(B): Target does off that little food court and Starbucks. It kind of makes sense.

M45: They’re always pumping that popcorn.

F45(B): K-Mart did that too. You’d walk in and smell popcorn.

M40: A lot of fried chickens look the same way.

F45(B): Where were we the other day, we got out of the car and it smelled great. You could smell all of the food. Or like the Rainbow bakeries. You could smell it for blocks and blocks.

Can you imagine the people who lived around there?

F39: Emporia, Kansas has the smell of the Dolly Madison plant every day. After a while you’re kind of…

[Multiple participants talking at once]

M40: Is there Tyson in Emporia?

F39: They don’t do that now. They’re just a packaging plant. They used to be a slaughter where they had cows and made different meals and ground beef. They closed that.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

Facilitator: Any other thoughts? Well then that’s all I have for you guys.
Facilitator: We’ll start with an easy one. How long have you made the grocery buying decisions for your home?

F85: 50 years.
F58(C): More than 40 years.
F75: Somewhere between 45 and 50 years.
F58(B): I’ll say 38.
F51: I’ll say 30.
M53: 30.
F68: About 35-50.
F58(A): About 40.
F65: Probably 45.
F66: About 40 years.

Facilitator: How many of you frequently purchase milk? Just with a show of hands.

[Eight participants raise hands]

Facilitator: For those of you that do, how frequently is that?

F58(A): Every week.

[Multiple participants agree]

F66: I do it sometimes twice a week. I have granddaughters in my household.

Facilitator: Who all are you buying for when you buy milk?

F85: Myself.
F68: Myself.
APPENDIX H (continued)

M53: Myself.
F75: My husband and I.
F65: My husband. I don’t drink it.
F58(B): There’s three of us.
F51: Two of us.
F66: My granddaughters and me as I was saying.
Facilitator: Is there a particular brand of milk that you buy each time?
F85: Dillons.
F75: Just two percent.
F85: Oh, I didn’t know if you needed more.
Facilitator: Just the brand is fine. You can add the type if you’d like.
F58(B): Hiland.
F51: I buy Dillons.
F68: We buy Dillons.
F65: I usually buy Hiland I think, just because it’s there.
F58(B): It’s local.
F58(A): I buy Kroger, except for my son has to have almond milk. I always have some in the fridge just for them. For us I just buy regular.
Facilitator: Now I’m going to make you think a little bit. Think of the last time you went to the store to buy milk. Do you remember what the packaging looked like?
[Group agreement]
Facilitator: Can you give me some descriptors?
F68: Mine is two percent, Dillons brand.
F65. Mine is two percent.
F58(A): Kroger is pretty plain. It’s pretty plain packaging. Now, like the almond milk, that is a specialty, it’s a little fancier packaging.
Facilitator: How is it fancier?
F58(A): There’s more decoration and color to it. It’s a cardboard container. The others are all plastic containers.
F66: I’ve noticed with the Dillons it has just the blue and two percent. Seems like all of them go with blue, but with Hiland, I like Hiland. It’s more expensive. There’s more writing, more decoration on it.
F58(B): Isn’t there a picture on it or something? Like cows?
F66: Yeah, something like that. Dillons is just plain.
Facilitator: What do you think that that packaging says about that brand or its image?
F75: Not much.
F58(C): This is milk. Get it if you want it.
M53: At least for Dillons brand, that’s my opinion.
F85: I’m a Dillons milk buyer. I think it looks clean. It looks nice. It has a high appeal.
F58(C): There’s the cost. More paper maybe. More cost to advertise it to catch your attention to buy. Packaging, the material they use, whether that’s plastic or carton, I guess. The color, the cost, the ink. It all affects the cost of it.
F66: I was remembering when I was a little girl, it seemed like it was more colorful and decorative. Maybe that was just me as a little girl remembering. As time goes on, things get more expensive. Like you said, the packaging gets more expensive for them to make.

F85: When I was a little girl, it was all glass bottles.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F66: I remember some of that.

F58(A): I’d say that Kroger is simple. The packaging is simple and streamlined. It is what it is.

Facilitator: So marketers, as you probably know, try to connect people and their lifestyles to their brands. They try to make that connection. This might sound like a silly question, but how do you think your lifestyle affects what brand of milk you buy? For example, my advisor always buys the store brand plastic jugs because she has two boys who go through milk like crazy and if they drop it, there’s a mess to clean up. A friend of mine is really environmentally friendly, so she likes the glass bottles because she can recycle them or reuses them for other things. So, how do you think your lifestyle affects which brand of milk you buy?

F58(A): It definitely has to be recyclable. Regardless of it’s glass or carton or plastic. It has to be recyclable.

F58(B): Sometimes if it’s on sale.

M53: Convenience is the big thing I look for. I’m not going to go somewhere special just to buy milk.

F51: I like the handle. It’s harder to drop. You can carry a lot of packages while still grabbing your milk in the gallon from Dillons. Our lifestyle is going, going, going so I want to get everything in in one trip because I have somewhere else to be.
F66: The plastic is for me because with three granddaughters, they’re at that age where they can be clumsy. They go with me to get groceries and if they drop it… I look for that kind of thing too.

F58(C): I prefer the handle over the carton.

Facilitator: Is there a reason you like the plastic over the carton?

F85: I like to see the milk in the package.

Facilitator: What’s your reason for liking the plastic over the carton?

F58(C): Just for the handle.

F51: I like the see through because when you open your fridge you can see how much is left without having to pick it up and shaking it.

F58(A): It’s true.

F51: I don’t have that fancy fridge that tells me.

Facilitator: You guys have perfectly shifted into my next section about structure. I have a plastic jug, a cardboard carton and a glass bottle. Let’s keep chatting about these. You’ve said that you like the plastic a lot because of the handle. It’s easier to carry around. Let’s talk about the carton. What are your thoughts, whether good and bad?

F58(C): I’m going to use that one because of the little hole in the middle. It screws off.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F58(C): I’d go the jug first and the carton second.

F75: Environmentally, wouldn’t that be better because it would decompose better?

[Group agreement]

F58(B): I don’t even know if those cartons are recyclable, are they?
APPENDIX H (continued)

Facilitator: I’m not positive. They’re some kind of cardboard material.

F66: And again, they’re not see through.

F85: It’s more bulky to me. Easier if there’s a handle.

F65: Not only carrying it, but also serving it. It’s more awkward with the square containers without a handle.

F68: It’s almost chalky. Some kind of material on the carton. I didn’t like the plastic stuff.

F75: Can you even buy milk in bottles anymore?

Facilitator: Yeah, there are a few brands that are into buying the glass bottle and leave a deposit. Come back and either get a refill or your deposit back.

F75: Because that goes against some of what we’re saying because you can see through it, see how much you have, and it’s not as big around as the others are. But you do have to recycle.

F51: I just assume the glass is more. I don’t know if it is or not because we buy the plastic.

Facilitator: More?

F51: More in price. To me, when anything comes in a glass I see it as, “Oh, they’re not frugal.” Like if you’re buying tea at QuikTrip. We try not to buy glass.

F58(B): Plus I try to reuse the plastic ones. I put my plant water in them. You can use them for other things. You can make iced tea.

M53: I’d just be afraid of breaking the glass.

F85: Especially if you have kids, it can be hard for them to get their hands around.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts on these types of packaging structure?
APPENDIX H (continued)

F75: If you were to buy a larger quantity of milk, a gallon or example. In a glass jar that would be a hazard. I can’t image getting my hand around that and trying to use it. So the glass does limit the size you can get.

F58(C): They’re not decorated. There’s no color.

Facilitator: These are just for the structure. We’ll get to the design in a minute.

F51: Personally, when you buy juice or if you buy milk in the carton. I don’t like that you have to pull the little circle thing. You’ve now created waste. While yes, it goes into the recycling, but that’s one more thing to throw away. If you open that, there’s no cover for safety like that does, so someone could contaminate that. You feel it when it twists that it hasn’t been open, so I don’t see why you have to have the little pull thing. You could hear that as well that it’s been tempered with. So if you could check on that and get back with me, Facilitator, that’d be fine.

Facilitator: Just for you, F51.

F51: But do you see my point? Why do we have to have the ring on there?

F58(B): And sometimes it splashes on you.

F66: It’s hard to pull and if you breaks that little circle, you’ve got to figure out how to open it up. Do they have something on that glass, like a second cover?

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F58(A): They do on the plastic. There’s still a little peel tab. There’s on that goes around and comes off or it detaches. It’s much easier than the tab on the carton if we’re talking about ease.

F65: I think the other one is easier because you just pull the ring. You don’t have to go around the edge looking for the start.

F58(A): Unfortunately, we have to do that now because of tampering.
APPENDIX H (continued)

Facilitator: Next I’m going to show you two designs that I created for a brand called Moo Creamery. As I set these up, take a look at them and then we’ll chat.

M53: The blue is really nice on the ones on your left [colorful], my right.

Facilitator: Imagine you go to the store one day for milk and your brand is nowhere to be found. These are your only two options. Which design are you picking out of the refrigerator?

F51: Based on just looks or is price also involved?

Facilitator: Price is not involved.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

Facilitator: With a show of hands, how many would pick this [simple] design?

[Two participants raise hands]

Facilitator: And how many would pick this one [colorful]?

[Nine participants raise hands]

Facilitator: Okay. Starting with this [simple] one. Why did you pick this design?

F58(C): I chose that because it is pretty basic to me. It has the eye appeal. It’s pretty. I’m a pretty basic person so it’s the same product. Milk is milk. I don’t buy milk as groceries unless we have company, or it’s a holiday. I really don’t purchase milk. If I did, I’d go for the basic. That’d be fine with me.

Facilitator: F58(A), why would you pick this one?


Facilitator: For those of you that picked this one, why?

F75: It draws my eye to it.

F85: It doesn’t look generic.
F58(B): It look nature-y with the blue and the green.

F75: It’s happy.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F65: To me, the one over here on your right, my left [simple], it looks like they aren’t very proud of their milk. It looks like they had some kindergartener cut something out and go, “here you go.”

F66: Like F85 said, it’s appealing.

F58(B): It looks refreshing. Even if it’s not cold, it looks like it’s cold.

[Group agreement]

Facilitator: Any other likes or dislikes about it?

F58(B): Should have made the lid green instead of blue.

F58(A): That’s the sky.

F58(B): That’s true.

Facilitator: With this [simple] design, which one do you like best when looking at both the package and the label?

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F65: Of just the three?

Facilitator: Yes, just for this design.

F65: Are you talking aesthetically or overall?

Facilitator: Overall.

F58(B): I like the bottle because it’s clear.
APPENDIX H (continued)

F66: I can’t see the bottle. Oh, yes, I like the bottle better because they went through some 
trouble.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F65: That’s why I ask. Aesthetically I like the bottle. Practicality, I’d still go with the plastic jug.
M53: That’s where I’m at too.

F51: I like the fonts on that one [simple]. It looks better than that [colorful]. I like the mixture of 
print and cursive.
F58(C): It wouldn’t matter to me. Nothing to get hung upon. There’s no difference. It’s a small 
fish to me.

Facilitator: How about with this design? Which do you like best?
F66: I like the carton.
[Group agreement]
F75: The carton is pretty.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F65: Again, aesthetically I like the carton, but practically I like the jug.

F66: Can I see the bottle? I don’t know, maybe I keep saying it because I have children in my 
household. I think sometimes if they’re with me, they go to buy something it may not be what I 
want, but they always want something that looks pretty. It’s something they’re drawn into. I 
think sometimes when you have children in your household, you may not think too much of it, 
but they look for things that stand out to them.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F65: They look for something like what they’ve seen on TV.
Facilitator: Let’s go back to our grocery store scenario. You’ve chosen your milk, but now
you’re looking at other people who are walking up the refrigerators. What do the people who are
pulling this [simple] design out of the refrigerator look like? How would you describe them?
F58(C): They look good. They like basic things. They’re basic.
F58(B): We all seem to be basic here.
F85: Coming from a large family, I would think they weren’t affluent with money and have
several kids at home.
F65: I don’t know if I’ve ever paid any attention to anyone else buying milk. I wouldn’t have any
idea what they’d look like.
F75: Interesting question.
F58(C): I don’t look at anyone else.

[Facilitator: Think of some of the demographics that you checked. The adjectives that you used to
describe yourself. Could you apply any of those to the people buying this milk?]
F58(A): Frugal.

[Group agreement]
F58(A): I wouldn’t say age as much, as if you were watching your dollars.
F51: Young family or older. Single income, set income. I wouldn’t throw a millennial in that
group at all.
F65: I would picture this with someone who is very young with young children who would relate
to this artwork. Seriously, it looked like a kindergartener did that. They’d go, “Oh, it looks like
my kid did that.” That would be my impression. Very young with very young children. They’ve seen the same artwork on their living room table day after day.

Facilitator: What would the people buying this milk look like?

F66: I would think families with older children, like middle school. They look at things that look good. Want to buy it because it looks good.

F51: Trendy.

F66: Yeah, trendy.

M53: Yuppies is the old term.

Facilitator: Can you think of an age group for this one?

M53: I’m thinking 30s.

F51: Moderate income, no kids.

F65: Well now, most of us in this room picked this one and we are certainly not in our thirties.

F51: Because price wasn’t an issue. There’s lots of things I would have if price wasn’t an issue. I’d go trendy if price wasn’t an issue.

F66: If I was looking at two things of milk, and one was more colorful than the other… I look at what’s in there. I look at labels. If they have the same labels, I’ll still go with the one that’s more colorful. It looks good. I’m just like a little kid on somethings. If they have the same things, same price, I’d go for the one that looks better, like they put some time into it.

Facilitator: So this next question might be a little bit difficult since you didn’t really see certain types of people buying the milk, but would you place yourself in the categories that fits which design you chose?

F85: Do we see ourselves buying that?
Facilitator: Would you describe yourself the same way you describe the people buying this design?

[Group agreement]

F58(B): I like nature-y stuff. I like clouds and cows and hills and trees. That’s why I like it. I like the colors. Green is my favorite color.

F75: It looks pleasant. You go to pour the milk in a glass anyways, you might as well smile while doing it.

F58(A): Tomorrow when I pour my milk, I’ll have that in mind. Am I smiling? Am I happy pouring this milk? I never really thought about that, but tomorrow I will.

Facilitator: Do you have any last thoughts about these packaging or designs? Now we’re going to move into packaging in general for all kinds of products, not just milk. I want to cover a few different design elements. To start off with, let’s talk about color associations. How important is color when it comes to what the product is? The color of the packaging, I should rephrase that.

F51: I think it’s important. You find most stuff that that is healthy or environmentally friendly in a green package.

F68: Or like orange juice, it should have orange on the container.

F75: You learn what color your items are in and you look for that when there’s this whole wall full of the same thing.

[Group agreement]

F51: Packaging gets you in and out quicker. You associate it where your item is.

F75: You learn what to look for.
F58(B): Plus maybe taste. Like hot sauce is usually associated to red on the label. Butter has yellow.

[Group agreement]

F66: Are you also talking about it being fancy?
Facilitator: No, just color for right now.

F75: Are there colors that people don’t like?
Facilitator: Sometimes. As I’ve found with my focus groups, it depends on their personal style and age group. For example, last night I had 35 to 50 age group and I had a lady who liked neutral colors, blacks, whites, grays, that was the aesthetic she looked for. The rest of the group didn’t agree. So I feel like I can’t speak quite yet about it.

F51: Like those Kind bars. I’m surprised they use as much of the black lines as they do. I think black is great for fashion, but not for when I’m going to eat it.

F58(C): Colors don’t bother me. I don’t have any preferences.

F58(B): I think subconsciously you’re drawn to certain things. Like, I like hand soap. I like pretty bottles of hand soap because they look nice on my counter. I don’t always buy them because they’re more expensive, but sometimes I do.

F51: A little splurge.

F58(B): Yeah, simple things in life.

F58(C): I can think it’s pretty, but it’s not going to affect if I buy it or not.

F68: It kind of depends on what the item is. Like that little fridge over there. It’s a pretty little black fridge over there. You can get it in white or even silver. So it depends on the item.

F75: So it matches your house.
F58(B): And today the colors are gray, black and white. So if people like trendy stuff, that’s what they’re going to prefer. If you watch any of those home design shows, it’s white or gray or…

F51: Or shiplap.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

M53: Someone is watching Chip and Joanna.

Facilitator: Are there any colors that you would turn away from on packaging?

F75: I think everyone has a particular color they don’t care for, for some reason or another. I’d rather not see that. I shouldn’t say this, but purple is mine. I would not buy something, if I had a choice of several different colors with the only difference being the color, I would not buy the purple. I would buy it if it was any other color of soap. I think that varies with people.

Facilitator: And that’s what I’m really curious about. Seeing what each different person’s perspective on that is.

F65: I don’t think I would shy away from anything just because of the color on the packaging. I don’t think that would affect me one way or another. I really don’t

F85: I guess it hasn’t me.

F58(A): I think it would depend on if it was on display or in the cupboard. That would make more of difference. Like if the soap was out on the sink or if the soap is under the sink. Then I’d pay more attention to it, but it’s hidden in the cupboard, no one is going to see it. I don’t pay much attention. If I wanted it match my kitchen, then I’m not going to buy purple.

F75: Going through the grocery store though, if you have to pick something and you’re in a hurry. You have five different choices and it might make a difference there.
F58(A): I’d probably be more neutral. I’d pick something neutral like a white or almond. Something more neutral than a purple or orange. Not a loud color in that case. I’d stay neutral.

F51: When you’re buying granola bars or breakfast bars, the packaging is the color of what the flavor. The blueberry ones are in a blue packaging. The strawberry are in a red box. That just reinforces what your flavor choice is. Kroger’s regular granola bars are just a brown package, but Quaker’s are in green.

F65: What are in green?

F51: The Quaker ones. The name brand is in more vibrant packaging than the Kroger ones. I always think that’s why you’re paying more.

Facilitator: Any other thoughts on color?

M53: For food, I’m thinking about the comment about black. But if I’m buying sports stuff, I’d want either a bright color or I’d be more likely to buy a black. With food, I wouldn’t think I’d buy black.

F58(B): Probably if it was too colorful, it’d be a turn off. Too much. Those [designs] are nice and simple.

Facilitator: Let’s transition into graphics on packaging. Think about illustrations, actual photos of ingredients or the product. What are your thoughts?

F58(B): I would rather have lesser graphics and bigger words. It seems like anymore you need a magnifying glass to read.

F51: This is why we’re in the over 50 group.

F58(B): Or those packages where you have to peel it away to read it. I want to be able to read whatever it is. But I like graphics though.
F66: I do too, but I hate it when I can’t read what it says. Or they have really small print. You have to stand there and study it before you buy it.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F65: Of course, you can be like me. I’ve never read a package label in my life.

F51: I want to be able to immediately read what the product is. I don’t need to think I’m trying to solve a puzzle as to what’s in there. Show me a picture. Say what it is. Don’t tell me happiness. I’ll decided if this granola bar brings me happiness.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F75: People with food allergies have a problem. The writing needs to be large enough that they can read it and if there’s something in it that they can’t eat.

M53: We’re all about the size of the print.

F58(B): Finding that a lot lately.

F66: Dropping a name — Marie Callenders. I love her products. I was wanting to get a pot pie the other day. Just beautiful in the picture. But something said, “You better check this label.” It was about 1500, 1300 grams of salt so I had to put it back. But I had to look for it. But on the front, I wanted that pie. I put it back once I read it, but it was large enough, but I still had to study. Great packaging. Graphics are wonderful. But she did make it where I could read it without having to study it too much. I’m sure all of us are dealing with that. It’s salt.

F51: The disclaimer on the front is so small.

F58(B): That’s why they do it.

F51: They’re like, our group has money. They don’t know it’s going to kill them.

[Multiple participants talking at once]
APPENDIX H (continued)

F58(A): Or the serving sizes. You buy it think it’s for one, but it’s really for two.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F58(A): Little cinnamon rolls or cookies that come prepackaged. You think it’s no so bad, but then you look and it’s two. It’s a little tricky.

F58(B): I like graphics and pretty things.

Facilitator: Are there certain ones that you’re drawn to? Would you rather see a real photo of the product?

F58(B): I like the pot pie with the real photo. Foods like that.

F51: But like your clear packaging on your cookies, you know what you get. They’re already pretty so why would you want to cover them up.

[Group agreement]

Facilitator: Let’s jump into the text you’ve started talking about. You’ve mentioned you would like large text.

M53: Consensus.

Facilitator: What other things about text? Are you attracted to things that say “low fat” or “low sugar”?

[Most participants agree]

F65: No. I don’t read labels.

F58(C): I look for things. My mother was a dialysis patient, so we all got into the habit as a family when we went shopping for her to look for certain things she could not eat. Sodium content, things like that. My daughter looks for the ketchup with no fructose corn syrup. I’d like
APPENDIX H (continued)

to see that on the front of the package. When I read the labels, it’s nice to see that up front. Or turn it around see just how low it is. It has helped me.

F85: It’s important for diabetics too.

F58(A): When you’re looking at milk, I know several of us mentioned, because there’s two percent, one percent, skim, whole. I want to be able to go up to the display case and immediately be able to find the kind that I want. For that particular case, or if you’re looking for a sugar free item, it can be a little bit smaller, but it’s nice that it’s right there without having to pick it up.

Now I might have to for sodium, like you said, or sugar. Just to be able to pick up something that says “gluten-free” or “one percent.” I want it right there where I can see it and know when I grab it, I’ve grabbed the right thing.

Facilitator: Are there any other design type things that stand out to you on packaging?

F68: The size. Small, medium, large.

F66: The expiration date.

F58(A): Those are sometimes very difficult to find. It’s a pretty important thing. They have them hidden all different place. Sometimes it’s on a little tiny tab.

F58(B): And the weight. Like if you follow a recipe, it will say to use a 14 ounce can. It needs to be big enough to see.

[Group agreement]

F58(B): Or if you buy candy for kids. You have five kids, you can’t get a bag of candy with 11 in it. Oh wait, then I’d get the extra one.

Facilitator: Let’s talk about the amount of packaging used. For example, cereal boxes use the cardboard box and a bag inside. My group last night didn’t understand why it had to be that way.
For those who had kids, they talked about getting the bag rolled up and the flaps closed together. What are your thoughts on excessive packaging?

F58(A): It’s pretty wasteful.

F68: That’s for safety, isn’t it?

F58(B): It keeps it fresh. I always roll it back up with a clip because it doesn’t go quick enough. If it were just in that box it would get stale really quick.

F58(A): But you could roll it up with the clip without the box. And they sell it in bags too.

F65: Some brands. If you want a particular brand, then you’re stuck.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F68: And the graphics may not be on the plastic bag, so they’ve added the box for the picture.

F58(B): You have the box for the kids. They like to eat their cereal and read, and there’s games on there. They can learn a lot from cereal boxes.

F66: And the bags that are inside the box, it’s not near as much cereal as you think is in there because you can’t see it.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F58(C): … you open it up and get the back out. It saves paper. Not everything needs to be so big. It should be cut down to make it fit.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F58(C): Take the extra paper or box packaging away. You don’t need all of that.

F65: Most of them, however, have written on there that product may have settled during shipment or storage. So it filled the bag when they filled the bag. In moving and settling over the month it took to get to your grocery store, it’s now settled down and there’s empty bag.
APPENDIX H (continued)

F66: And that’s part of the writing that you have to study to find where they say that.

F58(C): The packaging should fit the product. Anything else is wasteful to me.

F58(A): Even if you open a cake mix. There’s a bag inside. It’s not as big as the box. Or you open mac n’ cheese and there’s a gap at the top before you get to the macaroni.

F58(C): You could save some cardboard. It’s wasteful to me.

F58(A): It’s excessive packaging.

F58(B): Do you want to stick a bunch of bags in your pantry? The boxes are nice because they stand up. I like boxes that have stuff on the side so I can see what it is right when I open the cupboard.

F58(A): That’s because you’re supposed to buy Tupperware or Pampered Chef.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F58(A): Put it in there and label it.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F58(A): Then your pantry is for Chip and Joanna Gaines.

F68: What was the logic behind the double packaging.

Facilitator: I have no idea. I would assume it’s freshness.

F51: Even though it’s just my husband and I at home, I do not buy single serve items. Yes, it might be easier if you’re making your lunch to throw it in there, but I see that as very wasteful environmental wise. So I am the person that has the plastic Tupperware to throw in a lunch. I will not buy a product knowing it will create a lot of waste.
F58(C): There are times where I have bought packaging that didn’t settle well with me. I get some freezer gallon bags and put it in the freezer. Get rid of the box. Pull the instructions and put it with the food in the freezer.

F58(A): My pizzas are not in the box in the freezer anymore. I took them out because the box taxes to much space. I just need the pizza. Or if I buy a Marie Callender’s pie for a holiday. It’s in a massive box. I take all of that out, cut the instructions out and tape it on.

F65: The only pizza I buy is shrink wrapped.

F58(A): I’m not taking the shrink wrap off, just the box.

F65: Mine doesn’t have a box.

F58(C): If you buy bulk like at Costco or Sam’s, it depends on what you buy. It could come in a bigger box or container and you can take them out.

F51: When you go and buy a big thing of toilet paper, and there’s four individual rolls that are wrapped. I’m not doing this. I’m going to unwrap it. I see that as such a waste to the environment that you’ve packaged all these fours into one big one.

F58(C): I think it’s very wasteful and could cut down on prices. Not waste so much materials. Some are changing slowly, but surely.

Facilitator: One thing you have mentioned throughout is some loyalties you have to certain brands. How did you form those loyalties?

F68: Trial and error. Because I love Rice Krispie Treats and I tried to get the cheap ones at a different places and it’s not like Kelloggs. It’s not the same.

F58(A): Some store brand cereals are just not the same as Special K. Part of it is, once you’ve tried it and tasted it, you make decision.
F58(C): It’s what your parents maybe bought or what you grew up with.
F51: If you grew up with Kroger mac n’ cheese would you switch to Kraft? Your taste buds get accustomed. We’re very product loyal. Nothing irritates me more than when I go in and they’ve changed the package and not told me. Or they go in and change the schematic of the grocery store. Aisle four was supposed to have this and now it’s on aisle nine.
F65: I ran into that recently. I live in Goddard and most of my grocery shopping is done at the Walmart in Goddard for convenience. As I walked in the store last week there was a big sign that said they were in the process of redesigning the grocery area for your shopping convenience. It took me an hour to find the products I needed and wanted to purchase. It would have taken me 15 minutes two days earlier. I complained about it. I don’t know whose shopping convenience you’re talking about. They said it will be better once I figure it out, but even the employees didn’t know. I was asking about the Maxwell’s coffee or the cheese whiz. They’re running up and down the aisle.
F51: The way the store is designed, it is designed to make sure you go into it because the milk is in the back, the meat is in the back. You have to go through everything to get to where you need to be.
F68: And they know you’re hungry, so you’ll buy more.
F51: It’s all set up that way. Where it’s at in the aisle tells you who has the most money because it’s at eye level. The cheap stuff you’re going to bend down to get.
Facilitator: I like the point you made, F51, about when they change packaging. So, brands that you are loyal to, what are your thoughts when the go through rebranding? Positive or negative?
F58(A): that doesn’t usually bother me. I said Special K, that they have changed their packaging a little bit, but as long as it’s the same thing, it doesn’t bother me.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F51: Years ago, when my daughter was little, I worked for a marketing company that did schematics. I had to go in and pull product for when they changed. Clairol was one of my products. If you’re someone who colors your hair, you focus on the girl on the package. “Oh look, I’m going auburn. Look how cute she is.” Then they change the packaging and she’s not the model anymore. You go, “What happened to my cute, little auburn-haired girl?” That’s what I mean by it irritates me. I buy into I’ll look for the three little humps and the dairy cow and then they change it, so it throws me off.

F58(B): It takes you longer to shop.

[Group agreement]

F58(B): You want to get in and get out.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F51: I don’t think anyone goes, “oh goody, I get to go to the grocery store.” Tell me, does anyone actually enjoy grocery shopping?

[Group agreement]

F58(A): This might not be part of your packaging or your question. My biggest thing is the price. If I’m going to get Special K with berries, I’m going to buy it when it’s on sale and I have a coupon. I buy like then packages of it. That will last me until the next time it’s on sale. If it’s a specialty product like that or coffee, when it’s on sale I’ll buy three of them. If I want that special item and it costs a little more, otherwise if I’m just buying the Kroger brand sandwich bags or
something I don’t pay attention to the price. But the price would affect me more than the packaging, or the color or the picture. I’m going to look at the price first. That’s me being a frugal shopper.

M53: I have patterned my old store down to where everything came on sale at some point. I did the same thing that you did. I would stock up until it was on sale again.

F58(A): They do. They cycle through right about the time you run out.

F58(B): Grocery bags. I can’t figure out what they thought they did when they made everything so thin. You have to use to.

[Group agreement]

Facilitator: Can you tell a difference between products that are locally packaged versus regionally or nationally packaged?

F65: I don’t know if I can or not because I don’t know what’s locally packaged or what’s nationally packaged. I have no idea.

F66: I’ve noticed that the locally is not as colorful. You can tell they’re a little more frugal than big business. But I’ve noticed, because I’ve stopped and looked. It says locally owned. It’s not as eye-catching. You have to stop and look at it.

Facilitator: Does anyone else notice a difference between local and bigger name brand packaging.

F66: I try to go local because you want to support local people.

F51: I notice it more with things that are not food items. Like if you were buying earrings. There are certain stores that sell things locally.

F58(B): Like fancy, homemade soaps.
F51: Or the Wichita flag. Those are all local and the packaging is different than if you were to buy a tea towel from Target.

F58(B): And “Made in the U.S.A” things. I’m more apt to buy that.

Facilitator: Any other general thoughts about packaging? We’ve wrapped up my questions.

F51: Why did you choose milk?

Facilitator: I chose milk because milk isn’t generally branded. If had picked chips, you would have said Lays. If I had done soap, you’d think Dove or Olay. Milk isn’t something that people think about with a particular brand. I wanted something that was neutral. You know you buy Dillons or Kroger. It isn’t really packaged, but it’s transitioning into soy milks and almond milks. They have really used packaging to draw new consumers in. That was my reason for picking milk.

M53: Did you look internationally?

Facilitator: Canada sells theirs in plastic bags.

[Facilitator: Multiple participants talking at once]

Facilitator: Yeah, it’s in a plastic bag.

F58(B): How do you store that? Is there a special holder?

F58(A): I’m going to have look that up.

Facilitator: I’m not sure if it’s like a wine bag that comes with a box or if it just sits in your fridge. I focused on the three types we would see here.

F51: I’d be interested in our responses if there was a bag sitting on the table.

[Facilitator: Multiple participants talking at once]
M53: Costco’s milk is a pain in the butt. It’s really round and the gallon is this big around and hard to pour.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F51: We at least have options. One thing that frustrates me are the food deserts we have in this city. Walking distance for some people is to the local QuikTrip and you have to buy something three times as expensive. There’s on choice of milk because the rest of the space is for cigarettes. It would be interesting to hear what kind of packaging concepts someone has who doesn’t have the option of making it to a Dillons.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F51: And if you have to get on a bus to get there that affects if you can buy frozen foods.

F66: The older citizens used to be able to walk up to Walmart. Now they have to go to QuikTrip and it’s a little more expensive.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

F51: You’re not going to be able to buy asparagus at QuikTrip.

F58(A): You can buy fruit, but it’s twice as much. Or a bag of chips.

[Multiple participants talking at once]

Facilitator: Well if you don’t have any other comments about milk or product packaging, then we are done with our focus group.