

# How the Designs and Messages of Granola Bar and Cereal Packaging Have Changed Over 10 Years

Maddie Chili

*Communication Design and Computer Science  
Elon University*

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements in  
an undergraduate senior capstone course in communications

## Abstract

*Food companies strategically use packaging design to capture the attention of consumers and communicate their brand's messages. This study analyzed two brands' packaging design within the breakfast food categories of granola bars and cereal over a 10-year time period. The fronts of the packaging were analyzed based on four design elements—layout, colors, typography, and graphics—to describe any similarities and differences among the brand's messages and visuals. The findings indicated that brands used the packaging design to communicate specific messages and that those messages shift over time.*

## I. Introduction

This paper analyzed the food packaging of two popular breakfast food categories: granola bars and cereal. Within each of those categories, the researcher looked at two brands for a total of four products. For granola bars, the researcher examined Nature's Path Organic Sunny Hemp granola bar and Fiber One Oats & Chocolate chewy bar. For cereal, she focused on Kashi GOLEAN Crunch cereal and Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats cereal.

This paper described and analyzed the food packaging of the products in the breakfast food categories across three time periods: 10 years ago, 5 years ago and present day. To describe food-packaging trends through qualitative content analysis, this study examined granola bar and cereal packaging. This research chose these two particular food categories because granola bars and cereals are starting to separate in the market share for breakfast. For instance, granola bars are a part of a growing category of to-go foods. In 2015, "the North America on-the-go breakfast products market was valued at nearly \$270 million, which is expected to reach nearly \$330 million by 2021 end" (Future Market Insights, 2017). In contrast, the sale of cereal has "tumbled by almost 30% over the past 15 years, and their future remains uncertain" (Spence, 2017, p. 3).

As people move into adulthood, they are told breakfast is the most important meal of the day. Studies show that eating breakfast helps individuals keep their weight down, protects their hearts, and gives them a mental edge to start the day (Consumer Reports, 2015). In a world where breakfast matters, food companies

---

**Keywords:** breakfast foods packaging, granola bar packaging, cereal packaging, design, visual communication, brand messaging  
Email: mchili@elon.edu

---

have to fight fiercely to reach consumers and tap into the breakfast market. A significant way in which companies can differentiate themselves from the competition is through food packaging. This includes the colors, typefaces, copy, and many other design elements to capture the consumer's attention, persuade them to place the food in their cart, and finally head to the checkout line.

The purpose of this research paper was to analyze the food packaging of two granola bar brands and two cereal brands over three different time periods. This paper used this analysis to note patterns apparent in the packaging design. These trends differed over past time periods in aspects such as layout and use of colors, typography, and graphics on the food package. While analyzing the packaging, the researcher also identified what those design patterns convey to the consumers. Therefore, this content analysis of packaging design gives an insight into the food-packaging world and how it has evolved over a period of 10 years for granola bars and cereals.

## **II. Literature Review**

### ***Background***

Food packaging is formally defined as “the container that holds, protects, preserves and identifies the product, also facilitating its handling, storage and commercialization” (Eldesouky, Pulido, & Mesias, 2015, p. 361). It was created with a functional purpose—preservation and protection of the food—yet “subsequent evolutions have determined the transformation of food packaging into a communication media” (Brunazzi, Parisi, & Pereno, 2014, p. 18). Therefore, communication has become a major function of packaging design. Within this communication function lies brand design and, in this sense, “packaging has become part of the strategies that communicate to the consumer the essence of a brand” (Velasco, Salgado-Montejo, Marmolejo-Ramos, & Spence, 2014, p. 94). This brand design attribute also helps drive “consumer decision-making, because it allows consumers to draw inferences about the product, its attributes, or (in the case of foods and beverages) its taste” (Becker, Rompay, Schifferstein, & Galetzka, 2011, p. 17).

It is key for food companies to create persuasive and visually aesthetic packaging designs because “more than 70% of consumers make their choice of daily commodities in-store, 85% purchase without having picked up any alternative item and 90% make a purchase after only examining the front of the packaging and without having the product in the hand” (Clement, 2007, p. 917-918). Therefore, food companies need to “employ packaging to inform, persuade, and remind consumers that their respective products are better than those of other brands” to benefit their company's profitability, customer loyalty, and brand identity (Wang, 2013, p. 807).

### ***Food Packaging Trends***

Food-packaging design is ever evolving as the food industry and customers' preferences for food change. One of the most significant trends that has taken over for the food-packaging industry in the United States favors ready-to-eat foods since “77% of consumers prefer this type of product instead of traditional foods” (Brunazzi et al., 2014, p. 90). Millennials are partially responsible for this trend. They, for example, are more sensitive to over-packaging and “have no great loyalty to brands, so if a product disappoints they move on” (Robert, 2016, p. 9). This generation of consumers “expect, and demand, good functionality, such as effective “reclosability” of drinks and food packaging” (Robert, 2016, p. 9).

Millennials are also a big portion of single-person households for the U.S., which has “soared from 13% in 1960 to 28% in 2014, and the number of family households with children has declined by 21% in that same period” (Robert, 2016, p. 10). Therefore, this trend in downsizing “is driving demand for smaller-portion packets and more on-the-go, convenience-style packaging for food and drinks” (Robert, 2016, p. 10). Additionally, along with the trend of resealable packaging and easy-to-open/close features, food packaging also has explored complete transparency or minimally colored designs “to show the inner content to interested consumers” (Brunazzi et al., 2014, p. 19). However, “designers may propose completely coloured and/or printed FP [food packaging] with the aim of projecting most known and inviting attributes of packaged foods” (Brunazzi et al., 2014, p. 20).

Another trend is the increased desire to “diminish the environmental impacts of packaging by focusing

---

on issues such as lightweight materials, reusability and material selection” (Azzi, Battini, & Persona, 2012, p. 442). This is important since “packaging materials constitute as much as 65% of the global solid waste” (Azzi et al., 2012, p. 443). Moreover, there is a focus today on health “in relation to food choice and consumption, a particularly interesting question related to how packaging appearance can instill perceptions related to healthiness, and whether these transfer to taste” (Rompay, Deterink, & Fenko, 2016, p. 84-85). This change in eating habits has revealed a “search for products that are healthier” (Eldesouky et al., 2015, p. 360).

To promote this trend of health awareness, companies have developed a form of nutrition marketing. This idea is “front-of-package (FOP) labeling, which displays nutrients and/or objective health claims on the front of the package” (Bui, Kaltcheva, Patino, & Leventhal, 2013, p. 352). This labeling has become important for marketers since they can communicate the healthiness of the food product and help “consumers as they seek to gain information regarding products when making choices” (Bui et al., 2013, p. 352).

Lastly, with advancements in technology, the QR code emerged. This interactive tracking tool is best used when it is linked to “additional food facts, nutritional values, recipes, reviews, comparisons with competitors’ products, discounts, deals and social media sites” (Drewe, 2014). It gives consumers more tools to learn about the healthiness of the food product.

### ***Parts of Food Packaging Design***

There are specific aspects to successful food-packaging design. For example, there is the visual communication that includes colors, images, and graphics as well as the actual “words in the package that explain the package brand, trademark, essential nutrients and other supporting contents” (Wu, 2015, p. 7). The format design, such as the layout, can help combine the visual and written cues to “follow consumer psychology and visual process” (p. 8). There also are different visual patterns to consider in food packaging, such as representational patterning, which includes a “representational graphic [that] can associate [a] figurative picture on the package with the real goods, which contributes to stimulate people’s appetite in vision” (p. 9).

Moreover, different visuals influence consumer psychology. For example, food packaging with warm colors is “perceived as fruity, acidic and sweet, whereas packaging in cool and grey colours [is] seen as more closely related to menthol and spicy tastes” as well as “having more intense and long-lasting taste” (Rebollar, Lidón, Serrano, Martín, & Fernández, 2012, p. 168). Additionally, colors have an influence on consumers’ willingness to buy since “consumers prefer packaging in warm colours, followed by cool colours and then by grey colours” (p. 168).

Consumer expectations are also influenced by the shape of the package, such as that “‘sweet’ tastes are better expressed by means of rounded shapes, typefaces, and names, and low-pitched sounds, whereas ‘sour tastes’ are better conveyed by means of angular shapes, typefaces, and names, and high-pitched sounds” (Velasco et al., 2014, p. 88). The shape of the packaging can also be broken down into “angular shapes [that] tend to induce associations with traits that express energy, toughness, and strength, whereas rounded shapes tend to induce perceptions of approachability, friendliness, and harmony” (Becker et al., 2011, p. 18). These results reveal that “various attributes of a product’s packaging (e.g., its typeface and shape) can be used to help communicate specific product attributes and prepare the consumer for a particular consumption experience” (Velasco et al., 2014, p. 94).

All in all, scholarly work in the food-packaging industry has revealed how the industry has shifted from focusing on the functional requirements to the communication function of the packaging design. These scholarly works also touch on several trends, such as the increase of ready-to-eat foods and transparent packaging. Another noteworthy trend is the consumer’s focus on healthier food options and searching for products that promote health awareness. A recent study acknowledged that a “natural reaction to ready-to-eat products can be easily observed and analyzed: the defense and promotion of natural (unpackaged, unprocessed) foods and the attention to ‘fair trade’ products can persuade a significant portion of people to abandon ‘one-stop’ shopping practices” (Brunazzi et al., 2014, p. 95). These trends help define what makes a successful food-packaging design. Recent studies have confirmed that “packaging shape and colour influence the consumer’s sensory expectations” along with the typical visual cues such as graphics, colors, and layout (Rebollar et al., 2012, p. 162).

However, the existing literature on the packaging-design realm rarely looked at a specific food product, such as granola bars and how their packaging design has changed over time. This case analysis attempts to fill this gap by analyzing the design of two specific breakfast foods and their trends. This paper

---

contributes to the understanding of how food-packaging design has changed within the last 10-year period and what those design patterns may be conveying to the consumers. Lastly, the selection of two different brands within each of food category gives a variety of viewpoints for food-packaging design because the product's design can differ depending on the brand. The study raised the following two research questions:

*RQ1: How are packages of granola bars and cereals communicating specific messages to potential buyers through visual and textual choices?*

*RQ2: How have those messages changed or not over time?*

### III. Methods

This study analyzed qualitatively two brands' food packaging in two breakfast food categories: granola bars and cereals. The three time points for analysis—10 years ago, 5 years ago and present day—were chosen because they are long enough to yield key differences and similarities in the visual elements and the messaging of the packaging. The examination of a brand's packaging throughout several years also helped explain why the brand's messages and visual appeals have changed or stayed the same based on consumer and food-industry trends. To simplify, the researcher refers to the 10-years-ago design as the 2007 design, the 5-years-ago design as the 2012 design, and the current design as the 2017 design.

The data analyzed the images of packages of two brands of granola bars and two brands of cereal. For granola bars, the research concentrated on Nature's Path Organic Sunny Hemp granola bar and Fiber One Oats & Chocolate chewy bar, while the cereal category looked at Kashi GOLEAN Crunch cereal and Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats. The food products were chosen based on a scale of healthy to unhealthy to have a broader viewpoint on the packaging design. For instance, Kashi GOLEAN Crunch is filled with high fiber and protein with Non-GMO whole ingredients, including "Kashi Seven Whole Grains And Sesame Blend (Whole: Hard Red Wheat, Brown Rice, Barley, Triticale, Oats, Rye, Buckwheat, Sesame Seeds)" (Kashi, 2017a). Whereas the Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats brand lists refined sugar as its second ingredient, along with harmful preservatives such as BHT (Kellogg Company, 2017).

Due to the lack of images of the entirety of the packaging for the older designs of 2007 and 2012, the research focused on the front of the packaging design. The researcher chose to follow the same format for the 2017 designs to be consistent with the analysis. As a result, only the front of the packaging was analyzed for each time point. The food packaging images over the years were collected from the internet. For the older images, the study relied on Google Images, the brand's website, and any articles noting the product designs at the time. To find the current product designs, the author went to grocery stores, looked at the food-packaging designs, and took pictures to analyze later.

The author created a code sheet to write notes on the key visual elements of the food packing, such as colors, typography, graphics or images, and the layout arrangement. After completing the notes, the author described what messages those visuals were communicating to the consumer through packaging designs throughout the years and compared the messages.

### IV. Findings and Analysis

For the findings, the researcher chose to highlight the most prominent and biggest differences for each design element category: layout, colors, typography, and graphics. The researcher then explored differences among products across three time periods. The images used for analysis can be found in appendices: A) Granola Bars: Nature's Path Organic Sunny Hemp Granola Bar; B) Granola Bars: Fiber One Oats & Chocolate Chewy Bar; C) Cereal: Kashi GOLEAN Crunch Cereal; and D) Cereal: Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats Cereal.

---

### ***Granola Bars: Nature's Path Organic Sunny Hemp Granola Bar***

**Layout:** The layout stayed consistent, especially for the 2012 and 2017 design (Refer to Appendix A). Both designs centered the logo and the “organic” text at the top, while the middle featured all the graphics. There was a picture of the granola bar to the left and, to the right, there were photos of the granola bar ingredients, such as hemp seeds and rolled oats. The bottom featured the main text content, such as the product flavor, product description, and nutrition benefits. The 2012 and 2017 designs focused more on graphics rather than the written text, since the latter is pushed to the bottom. This layout could be trying to draw consumers in by focusing more on the food ingredients to capture the consumer’s attention. For instance, the consumers’ eyes will first see the granola bar and its ingredients; then they will follow the design down to the written content to learn more about the granola bar and consider if they want to purchase it. In contrast, the 2007 design has the written content front and center as the main attraction for consumers. The granola bar was pushed behind the text and to the bottom, prioritizing the text rather than the visuals in the 2007 packaging design.

**Colors:** The color scheme stayed similar for all three designs, but it was simplified throughout the years. The 2007 design used a green gradient background, in addition to light green, light brown, dark brown, yellow, black, and white colors for other areas. The 2012 design used dark green, light greens, white, yellow, and a dirt brown background. The current design changes to darker bright greens similar to grass, yellow, white, and a sand brown background. The current design also uses a new logo full of bright and earthy colors, while the 2007 and 2012 logos used dark shades of green, yellow, orange, white, and black. The current design features more earthy tones to create a healthy vibe. For instance, green is the color of nature, thus it is “used to promote ‘green’ or natural products,” while yellow is associated with the sun, so it is connected with “cheer and springtime,” which is a perfect way to create an earthy vibe for the Nature’s Path packaging (Rodin, 2015). The 2017 design reflects the trend of earthy tones since the Pantone Color Institute announced its 2017 color of the year is greenery, which was “crafted based on the theme of nature” along with associated words of “refresh, revive, restore, renew, replenish, regenerate and reinvigorate” (Hua, 2016). Nature’s Path is capitalizing on this trend to make consumers believe that the granola bars are healthy.

**Typography:** The typography made a substantial shift over the years, particularly the 2007 design versus the 2012 and 2017 designs. The 2007 design used a retro and chunky sans serif typeface with a traditional serif typeface. However, the 2012 and 2017 designs shifted to a modern sans serif typeface that varied in contrast to create visual hierarchy. This sans serif typeface also gives a friendly and healthy vibe since it is a progressive sans serif with monospacing. The logo typography also changed over the years. The 2007 and 2012 designs used a thin traditional serif typeface, whereas the 2017 design uses the same progressive sans serif it used for the written content. The 2017 design draws consumers in because it incorporates a simple design of one typeface that varies in weight to create a welcoming and modern feel. Nature’s Path’s embrace of “simplicity makes it stand out in a crowded marketplace” (Ahmad & Ahmad, 2015, p. 95).

**Graphics:** All designs used minimal graphics. The main graphics were the granola bar, USDA Organic seal, logo, and a background of multiple plants. However, some of these elements changed over the years. For instance, the logo has been simplified. The 2007 and 2012 logos included three wheat stalks inside each side of the green oval logo, while the current logo uses only one wheat stalk without the stem on each side. The 2017 design also cleans up the logo by including the text “organic” at its bottom— so the word doesn’t need to appear again. The 2017 logo follows the design trend of minimalism. Additionally, the background graphics of plants turned more elegant and artsy throughout the packaging to also emulate a clean vibe.

Lastly, the biggest change over the years was the addition of the granola bar ingredients on the 2012 and 2017 designs. These up-close images of the ingredients labeled the granola bar as a healthy choice because it showed real foods with no preservatives or additives. The addition of the ingredients also showed consumers that the company is transparent with nutrition. Therefore, the 2012 and 2017 designs capitalized on the “new good consumer [who] is moving towards fresher, cleaner labels and transparency is king” (Kell, 2016). In contrast, the 2007 design’s granola bar graphic appealed to the consumer’s taste buds since it focused on the gooiness of the granola bar rather than its ingredients.



### ***Granola Bars: Fiber One Oats and Chocolate Chewy Bar***

**Layout:** The layout stayed fairly consistent each year, particularly for the 2007 and 2012 designs (Refer to Appendix B). The designs kept a blue bar on the top that contained the product flavor in the right corner and the General Mills logo in the left corner. The 2017 design replaces this information with the Facts Up Front graphic in the right corner with more nutrition information, such as no artificial preservatives in the left corner. The layout shift could be attributed to the food industry's push to increase healthy options and eliminate preservatives. Today's informed consumers are demanding more from the foods they eat, and "foods with a short list of recognizable ingredients resonate strongly, so savvy manufacturers are responding to this trend by modifying product portfolios by simplifying food ingredient lists and creating natural and organic alternatives" (Nielsen, 2016). The 2017 layout responds to this trend by giving consumers what they want: more transparency with nutrition information.

The center shared similarities for each design. The Fiber One logo was toward the left with a granola bar to the right, and a fiber statement with nutrition benefits toward the center bottom; however, the written content decreased each year. For instance, the 2007 design featured three nutrition statements, but the 2012 and 2017 designs used only one. This decrease may be because Fiber One decided these statements were not as important as the new nutrition information and the Fact Up Front graphic for the 2017 design. Fiber One matches the trend of being transparent with ingredients and labels itself as a healthy alternative for consumers. Lastly, similar to 2012 and 2017 Nature's Path layouts, the 2017 layout also pushed the main written content to the bottom. The 2017 design also focuses more on graphics rather than written content to first capture the consumer's attention with the food visuals.

**Typography:** The typography stayed similar for the 2007 and 2012 designs; however, it shifted to a more friendly and flexible typography in 2017. For instance, the older logos used a transitional serif typeface with a plain and traditional vibe. In contrast, the 2017 logo changed to a flowing and casual brush script that creates a friendly feeling that fits a healthier style, thus sending a message to the consumers that Fiber One is a healthy choice. Each of the designs used a sans serif typeface for the main written content; however, the 2017 design uses a more dynamic sans serif that capitalizes on simplicity. The older designs mainly changed the typography color and size to create contrast; however, the 2017 design changes the typeface weight and size to create visual hierarchy and uses only one color. This follows the minimalism trend by streamlining the typography contrast to "create focus on a simple framework and emphasis on the "right" content within the design to shift consumer's attention to the packaging's most important content" (Cousins, 2015).

**Colors:** The 2007 and 2012 color schemes were similar but the colors were simplified each year. For instance, the 2007 design used light pink, dark blue, white, bright green, dark yellow, and a light yellow gradient background. The 2012 design incorporated dark blue, white, dark yellow, and a pale yellow background, while the 2017 design uses only white, a light sand background, and a light ocean blue. Fiber One follows Nature's Path 2017 design by utilizing more earthy colors and fewer colors.

The logo colors are also simplified for the current design. The 2007 and 2012 logos used dark chocolate brown for the word "fiber" and "chewy bars," and a dark reddish-orange for the word "one." The dark color palette mimicked fall colors, while the 2017 logo shifts to a single bright red that brings more energy to the packaging. This shift to simplicity and to bright red could motivate consumers to take action since red "brings text and images to the foreground and it is used to stimulate people to make quick decisions" (Rodin, 2015). Fiber One uses bright blue for the written content to create balance since "the color blue is more cerebral and evokes a sense of responsibility, tending to encourage people to be on their best behavior, thereby unconsciously influencing consumers to believe the blue-packaged product is healthier (e.g., low fat) than products packaged in other colors (e.g., red)" (Huang & Lu, 2016, p. 212). Therefore, Fiber One seems to strategically incorporate blue to make sure consumers see the granola bar as healthy.

**Graphics:** The main graphic was the granola bar for each design; however, older designs include a broken bar, revealing its gooiness. The 2017 design keeps the bar in one piece. Next to the granola bar, the 2007 and 2012 designs included chocolate shavings, but the 2017 design adds the main ingredients like oats and chunks of dark chocolate. Like Nature's Path 2012 and 2017 designs, Fiber One 2017 design marks the granola bar as healthy since the main ingredients are shown to the consumers.

Smaller graphics that help with this transparency are the white diamonds around the "no" for all the artificial flavors, and colors which is "in response to consumers' changing preferences since in 2015 General Mills committed to removing artificial flavors and colors from artificial sources" (General Mills, 2016). These

---

graphics highlight the clean ingredients to attract consumers who are seeking a healthier option. Lastly, the graphic that holds the fiber statement has changed in shape and size. In the 2007 and 2012 designs, the fiber statement is in a large blue rectangle, but the 2017 design reduces its size and places it in a tiny blue diamond. As a result, the 2017 design focuses more on the graphics of the granola bar and its ingredients rather than the written content to attract consumers to look at the package.

### **Cereal: Kashi GOLEAN Crunch Cereal**

**Layout:** The layout was similar for the 2007 and 2012 designs, but the 2017 design breaks this mold, as shown in Appendix C. The 2007 and 2012 logos were centered at the top while the main written content was in the middle, and the picture of the cereal was on the bottom. The older designs focused more on the text rather than the image of the actual cereal since the text is centered and is the biggest element. However, the 2017 design moves the cereal to the top with the logo and pulls the main text to the bottom. The nutrition values are still in the middle, thus consumers' eyes follow the picture of the cereal down to the hearty and healthy nutritional values. The 2017 design shows that "good clean food deserves good clean design" by keeping the layout simple with a "clean white canvas and accented with a design that is unmistakably contemporary – with clean lines, vivid colors and straightforward typography" (PRNewsWire, 2016). Thus, consumers focus on the vibrant ingredients and the clean nutrition values, and perhaps see the cereal as a healthy choice.

**Colors:** The color scheme stayed consistent, but it was simplified each year. For instance, the 2007 design used maroon, white, bright red, yellow, and orange. The 2012 design incorporated maroon, white, bright red, yellow, and adds green, while the 2017 design only uses maroon and white. Kashi follows the pattern of simplifying its color scheme to attract consumers with the minimalist design. Additionally, the logo was always green, yet the shade changes for the 2017 design. The 2007 and 2012 logos featured dark green and white, but the current logo only uses light green to simplify the logo and give it more energy. The green also gives an environmental feel, which is key because Kashi hopes consumers to associate the brand with nature and health since Kashi "values not just foods [they] make, but also how [they] make them by being progressive and mindful of sustainable and ethical farming practices" (Kashi, 2017b).

**Typography:** Kashi's typography incorporated a mix of sans serif and serif typefaces for the 2007 design while the newer designs simplified the typography. The 2012 design used one serif and sans serif typeface while the 2017 design uses a thin and modern sans serif typeface, except for the logo, which has always been a serif typeface. The simple and modern typography goes along with Kashi's vision of progressive food values since the brand is creating an "entire portfolio of Non-GMO Project Verified products and ever-increasing organic offering" (PRNewsWire, 2016). Kashi uses typography to highlight its roots and persuade consumers to choose Kashi for a nutritious and high quality cereal. The 2017 design also shakes up its layout, flipping the orientation of the product type text, "GoLean," to be on a vertical plane. This shift in orientation can capture the consumer's attention since it differs from the normal packaging designs of the cereals surrounding it.

**Graphics:** The 2017 logo follows the minimalistic trend incorporating a plain bright green for the main text and a lighter bright green for the wheat stalk, while the old logos used a dark green box with an uneven border that contained the white text and wheat stalk. The wobbly wheat stalk in the older designs was shaky and uneven, but the 2017 design smooths it out and makes it a different color from the text to improve the readability and crispness. This increase in smoothness could make Kashi feel more natural and innovative to consumers since the logo flows more naturally.

Moreover, the picture of the cereal changed over the years. The 2007 design featured a bowl of milk, blueberries, and cereal clusters jumping out of the bowl. The 2012 design removes the bowl but the cereal clusters were still jumping out with the milk and blueberries. The 2017 design does not have a bowl, milk, or blueberries, and it just includes the cereal clusters. Thus, the 2017 design focuses more on the cereal to showcase its high quality. Lastly, the 2017 design adds the GMO Free sticker, while the other designs lacked this certification to show consumers that Kashi is making strides to become more natural and healthy.

### **Cereal: Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats Cereal**

**Layout:** Frosted Mini-Wheats followed a similar layout for each time period, as shown in Appendix D. For instance, the Kellogg's logo was at the top while the Frosted Mini-Wheats logo was centered in the

---

middle along with the main written content, and the bottom featured the bowl of Frosted Mini-Wheats. The lack of layout change showed that the logo and product information were the most important information since they were centered in the middle and were the biggest elements. Frosted Mini-Wheats may be attracting consumers with its name because it is a popular cereal that is one of the top-10 best-selling cereals in the United States. Then it seals the deal when the consumers look down at the Frosted Mini-Wheats name (Ferdman, 2015).

**Colors:** The main colors were always orange, white, blue, green, and red. Like the other designs, its color scheme was simplified to follow the minimalism trend “by infusing bright colors with traditional neutral backgrounds” (McCready, 2017). The color scheme also used more vibrant colors for each design. The 2017 design’s bright colors create a playful and fun vibe that encourages the adult consumers to think of their childhood, given that children “gravitate towards bright neon-like colors and more complex color combinations” (Reiher & Acuff, 2008, p. 185). The color scheme matched Frosted Mini-Wheats marketing, since Frosted Mini-Wheats boasted that it feeds the consumer’s inner kid (Kellogg Company, 2016).

The logo design was also simplified for each time period. For example, the 2007 design used a dark blue gradient, beveled border, and a white shadow around the text. The 2012 design, in contrast, used a lighter solid blue, but it still had a beveled border and added a black shadow to it. The current design uses a brighter blue that has a subtler border with a contrasting orange outline to make it appear flatter and minimalistic.

**Typography:** The logo used a display font to capture the attention of the consumer: a decorative wheat stalk that completed the crossbar for the “t.” The logo was also strategic in the typography size: The size of “mini-wheats” was considerably larger than the word “frosted” to portray the cereal as healthy by downplaying the sugar content. The main content for each time period used a sans serif typeface that mixed font weights, colors, uppercase letters and capital letters to create more contrast. The 2007 design used a plain and modern sans serif to create a stable and straightforward design, while the 2012 and 2017 designs incorporated a more friendly and clean sans serif to reveal to consumers that the cereal is kid-friendly.

**Graphics:** There was always a small Frosted Mini-Wheats character, but the character differed for each design. The 2007 and 2017 designs included an animated Frosted Mini-Wheat character looking at the consumer, but the 2012 design used a non-animated mini-wheat. The animated character could draw in kids because “cereal box spokes-characters that make eye contact may indeed increase positive feelings towards the product, as well inducing choice over other products” (Musicus, Tal, & Wansink, 2015, p. 724). The non-animated Frosted Mini-Wheat catered to both children and adult consumers by showing off the two sides of the biscuit: whole grains for the adults and sweet frosting for the kids.

Like Kashi’s design, Frosted Mini-Wheats used a bowl of cereal that changed with each design. The 2007 design had a blue bowl of milk, Frosted Mini-Wheats, and raspberries. The 2012 and 2017 designs included a white bowl of Frosted Mini-Wheats and milk only. Similar to the Fiber One bars, Frosted Mini-Wheats used the Fact Up Front graphic in each of the designs to attract consumers by being transparent with its nutritional breakdown (Kellogg Company, 2015).

## V. Conclusion

Several conclusions for each of the categories can be reached based on the findings. For the category of granola bars, the Nature’s Path Organic Sunny Hemp bar and the Fiber One Oats and Chocolate Chewy bar shared several similarities in design and the messages they promoted because of the design strategies. For the layout, as the years progressed, the main written content was shifted down to the bottom while the focus was put more strongly on the graphics. For all the time periods, the logo usually stayed in the same place, either centered or at the top, since it is an easy area to spot, so consumers knew the brand of the product immediately.

For the typography, each of the designs moved to more sans serif typefaces and simplified them to create visual hierarchy with size and contrast rather than with color and different typefaces. This visual hierarchy allowed the product to highlight the most important written content, guiding the consumers’ eyes to the information the company wanted the consumer to read. Moreover, the colors shifted to more earthy tones as the designs progressed—such as greens for Nature’s Path and blues for Fiber One. The color schemes and background designs were also simplified to attract consumers with a calming and welcoming vibe, since

---



they conveyed the brand's message, such as nature and health for Nature's Path. Lastly, regarding graphics, there was always a picture of the granola bar; however, as the years went on, there was a trend of showing the ingredients of the granola bar. This trend allowed products to show themselves as healthy and whole nutritious foods, instead of fake or artificial ingredients. The logo for the newer designs also changed to look more friendly and minimal.

The findings also revealed some of the main similarities for each of the cereals (Kashi GOLEAN Crunch and Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats). For instance, there was a basic layout of the brand's logo at the top, the main written content centered in the middle, and the picture of the cereal at the bottom for each of the time periods. For the typography, each of the products shifted to more sans serif typefaces and used a mix of colors, sizes and weight to create visual hierarchy and to reflect the brand's message. However, both cereal designs never used multiple typefaces to create contrast, which the granola bars did. The number of colors and their styles were simplified, such as with no shadows or gradients. Also, the colors for each product matched the feel that the brand wanted the consumer to feel, such as health and nature's roots for Kashi and playfulness and kid-like feelings for Frosted Mini-Wheats. Finally, the graphics shared a picture of the cereal usually in a bowl with milk or fruit for older designs, but not the 2017 designs. Kashi only uses the cereal clusters while Frosted Mini-Wheats uses the mini-wheats in a bowl of milk. This simplification allowed the consumer to focus on the food and its clean and yummy ingredients. Similarly, the logos also reflected a simple and minimalist design: the number of colors decreased, the colors were brightened, and the typography was smoothed out to be more readable.

In summary, all these designs and their evolutions over time speak of the importance of packaging as a communication tactic. They were used as a way to convey certain brand images to the customer through the use of layouts, fonts, graphics and colors, as well as communicate support for a trend, for instance, a minimalistic approach to healthier food choices.

Key limitations of this content analysis include the difficulty of finding images for the early years, particularly the 2007 designs. When the researcher found an image in an article on various websites, she traced the time of the image based on the date stamp of the article. To ensure its validity, the researcher reached out to companies for pictures, but they neither respond nor pointed the researcher in helpful directions. They showed only annual reports or different parts of websites that did not contain pictures of the packaging design for those specific years. Therefore, future researchers may want to partner with these companies or allow for more time to work with these companies to find these old images.

Additionally, future research could focus more on specific parts of the packaging. The researcher looked at four different design elements, but future research could focus on one or two things for more in-depth analysis. Future researchers could also pick a different food category or look at different brands within granola bars and cereal products to find any similarities or differences in comparison with this research paper. Lastly, future research could still look at the packaging design for different time periods, but also look at the food industry trends for each packaging design time period to examine if the trends dictate the company's design elements and choices. This could present new insights into how packaging design matches food industry trends and messages.

## Acknowledgments

This author is incredibly grateful to Vanessa Bravo, assistant professor at Elon University, for her supervision and advice, without which the article could not be published. The author also appreciates numerous reviewers who have helped revise this article.

## References

- Ahmad, A. M. K., & Ahmad, Q. M. K. (2015). Factors Influence on Packaging Design in an Impulse Consumer Purchasing Behavior: A Case Study of Doritos Pack. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 7, 92-101. Retrieved from <http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/ijms/article/view/55350>
-

- Azzi, A., Battini, D., & Persona, A. (2012). Packaging Design: General Framework and Research Agenda. *Packaging Technology and Science*, 25, 435-456. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=a20ca7fd-c9de-489f-abfb-98613c8b355c%40sessionmgr4006&vid=0&hid=4113>
- Becker, L., Rompay, T. J. V., Schifferstein, H. N.J., & Galetzka, M. (2011). Tough package, strong taste: The influence of packaging design on taste impressions and product evaluations. *Tough package, strong taste: The influence of packaging design on taste impressions and product evaluations*, 22(1), 17-23. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0950329310001175>
- Brunazzi, G., Parisi, S., & Pereno, A. (2014). *SpringerBriefs in Molecular Science Chemistry of Foods: The Importance of Packaging Design for the Chemistry of Food Products*. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-08452-7>
- Bui, M., Kaltcheva, V. D., Patino, A., & Leventhal, R. C. (2013). Front-of-package product labels: influences of varying nutritional food labels on parental decisions. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 22(5), 352-361. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1462466570?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:wcdiscovery&accountid=10730>
- Clement, J. (2007). Visual influence on in-store buying decisions: an eye-track experiment on the visual influence of packaging design. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(9-10), 917-928. Retrieved from <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=57fe0d54-987b-4505-846a-fc776b4f22e8%40sessionmgr4009&vid=0&hid=4113>
- Consumer Reports. (2015, August 26). Why eating the right breakfast is so important. Retrieved February 18, 2017, from Consumer Reports website: <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine/2014/10/why-eating-the-right-breakfast-is-so-important/index.htm>
- Cousins, C. (2015, June 15). Minimalist design is taking over: Here's why. Retrieved April 10, 2017, from Design Shack website: <https://designshack.net/articles/layouts/minimalist-design-is-taking-over-heres-why/>
- Drewe, L. (2014). Packaging design: what does the future hold? *Food Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1541905722?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:wcdiscovery&accountid=10730>
- Eldesouky, A., Pulido, A. F., & Mesias, F. J. (2015). The Role of packaging and presentation format in consumers' preferences for food: An application of projective techniques. *Journal of Sensory Studies*, 30(5), 360-369. Retrieved from <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=b55e7ffd-6b89-4f24-85de-8db5e84030cb%40sessionmgr120&vid=0&hid=103>
- Ferdman, R. A. (2015, March 18). The most popular breakfast cereals in America today. *The Washington Post*, Wonkblog. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/18/the-most-popular-breakfast-cereals-in-america-today/?utm\\_term=.43341ac21d44](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/18/the-most-popular-breakfast-cereals-in-america-today/?utm_term=.43341ac21d44)
- Future Market Insights. (2016, January). *On-the-go Breakfast Products Market: Western Europe Anticipated to be the Most Attractive Market Followed by North America: Global Industry Analysis and Opportunity Assessment, 2016–2026*. Retrieved from <http://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/on-the-go-breakfast-products-market>
- General Mills. (2016, April 13). *General Mills reports progress on global responsibility commitments* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.generalmills.com/en/News/NewsReleases/Library/2016/April/GRR2016>
- Hua, K. (2016, December 9). Pantone's color of the year 2017 is inspired by nature and influences design. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/karenhua/2016/12/09/pantones-color-of-the-year-2017-greenery-symbolizes-a-fresh-start-fashion/#3d6aca2b7e98>
- Huang, L., & Lu, J. (2016). The Impact of package color and the nutrition content labels on the perception of food healthiness and purchase intention. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, 22, 191-218. Retrieved from <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10454446.2014.1000434?scroll=top&needAccess=true>
-

- Kashi. (2017a). Kashi® GOLEAN Crunch Cereal. Retrieved April 3, 2017, from Kashi website: <https://www.kashi.com/our-foods/cold-cereal/kashi-golean-crunch-cereal>
- Kashi. (2017b). What we believe. Retrieved April 10, 2017, from Kashi website: <https://www.kashi.com/what-we-believe>
- Kell, J. (2016, November 30). Fresh, healthy food is not a trend. It's a movement. *Fortune*. Retrieved from <http://fortune.com/2016/11/30/food-healthy-trend-mpw/>
- Kellogg Company. (2015). Nutrition labeling. Retrieved April 11, 2017, from Kellogg's website: [http://www.kelloggcompany.com/en\\_US/nutrition-labeling.html](http://www.kelloggcompany.com/en_US/nutrition-labeling.html)
- Kellogg Company. (2016). Feed your inner kid. Retrieved April 9, 2017, from Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats website: [https://www.frostedminiwheats.com/en\\_US/feed-your-inner-kidult.html](https://www.frostedminiwheats.com/en_US/feed-your-inner-kidult.html)
- Kellogg Company. (2017, March 30). Kellogg's® Frosted Mini-Wheats® Bite Size cereal. Retrieved April 3, 2017, from SmartLabel website: <http://smartlabel.kelloggs.com/Product/Index/038000318344#ingredients>
- McCready, R. (2017, January 17). 8 New graphic design trends that will take over 2017. Retrieved April 9, 2017, from Venngage website: <https://venngage.com/blog/graphic-design-trends/>
- Musicus, A., Tal, A., & Wansink, B. (2015). Eyes in the aisles: Why is cap'n crunch looking down at my child? *Environment and Behavior*, 47(7), 715-733. Retrieved from <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0013916514528793>
- Nielsen. (2016, September 14). Serving up simple: Global consumers want transparency in ingredients. Retrieved April 10, 2017, from Nielsen website: <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2016/serving-up-simple-global-consumers-want-transparency-in-ingredients.html>
- PRNewsWire. (2016, July 12). *Kashi unveils new look proving good food and good design #GOTOGETHER* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://newsroom.kelloggs.com/2016-07-12-Kashi-Unveils-New-Look-Proving-Good-Food-and-Good-Design-GOTOGETHER>
- Rebollar, R., Lidón, I., Serrano, A., Martín, J., & Fernández, M. J. (2012). Influence of chewing gum packaging design on consumer expectation and willingness to buy. An analysis of functional, sensory and experience attributes. *Food Quality and Preference*, 24(1), 162-170. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0950329311002333>
- Robert, G. (2016). The millennial impact on future packaging design: as a generation with broad life goals, Millennials are influencing the shape and style of packaging. *Plastics Engineering*, 72, 8-10. Retrieved from [http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/scic/AcademicJournalsDetailsPage/AcademicJournalsDetailsWindow?disableHighlighting=false&displayGroupName=Journals&currPage=&scanId=&query=&source=&prodId=SCIC&search\\_within\\_results=&p=SCIC&mode=view&catId=&u=elon\\_main&limiter=&display-query=&displayGroups=&contentModules=&action=e&sortBy=&documentId=GALE%7CA458871182&>windowstate=normal&activityType=&failOverType=&commentary=](http://ic.galegroup.com/ic/scic/AcademicJournalsDetailsPage/AcademicJournalsDetailsWindow?disableHighlighting=false&displayGroupName=Journals&currPage=&scanId=&query=&source=&prodId=SCIC&search_within_results=&p=SCIC&mode=view&catId=&u=elon_main&limiter=&display-query=&displayGroups=&contentModules=&action=e&sortBy=&documentId=GALE%7CA458871182&>windowstate=normal&activityType=&failOverType=&commentary=)
- Rodin, R. (2015, February 28). The Psychology of color: A designer's guide to color association & meaning. Retrieved April 7, 2017, from Zeven Design website: <http://www.zevendesign.com/color-association/>
- Rompay, T. J. V., Deterink, F., & Fenko, A. (2016). Healthy package, healthy product? Effects of packaging design as a function of purchase setting. *Food Quality and Preference*, 53, 84-89. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S095032931630115X>
- Spence, C. (2017). Breakfast: The most important meal of the day? *International Journal of Gastronomy and Food Science*, 8, 1-6. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1878450X17300045>
- Velasco, C., Salgado-Montejo, A., Marmolejo-Ramos, F., & Spence, C. (2014). Predictive packaging design: Tasting shapes, typefaces, names, and sounds. *Food Quality and Preference*, 34, 88-95. Retrieved from <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0950329313002310>
-

- Wang, E. S.T. (2013). The influence of visual packaging design on perceived food product quality, value, and brand preference. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 41(10), 805-816. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1432227501?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:wcdiscovery&accountid=10730>
- Wu, A. (2015). Food packaging design and its application in the brand marketing. *Carpathian Journal of Food Science & Technology*, 7(3), 5-15.

### **Image References**

- Brinkley, G. (2012, May 10). Eating organic with nature's path. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from Greta's Day website: <http://www.gretasday.com/2012/05/eating-organic-with-natures-path/>
- Brush, M. (2012, October 11). Kellogg's Mini-Wheat recall comes after cutbacks, company reinvesting in supply chain. Retrieved March 23, 2017, from Michigan Radio website: <http://michiganradio.org/post/kelloggs-mini-wheat-recall-comes-after-cutbacks-company-reinvesting-supply-chain>
- Common Sense With Money. (2009). Free sample of Fiber One Cereal and Bar plus Coupons. Retrieved March 22, 2017, from Common Sense With Money website: <http://www.commonsensewithmoney.com/free-sample-fiber-cereal-bar-coupons/>
- General Mills. (2017). Oats & Chocolate. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from Fiber One website: <http://www.fiberone.com/product/oats-chocolate-chewy-bars/>
- Kashi. (2017). Kashi® GOLEAN Crunch Cereal. Retrieved April 3, 2017, from Kashi website: <https://www.kashi.com/our-foods/cold-cereal/kashi-golean-crunch-cereal>
- Kellogg Company. (2007). *Annual Report: Kellogg Company 2007 Annual Report*. Retrieved from [http://www.annualreports.com/HostedData/AnnualReportArchive/k/NYSE\\_K\\_2007.pdf](http://www.annualreports.com/HostedData/AnnualReportArchive/k/NYSE_K_2007.pdf)
- Kellogg Company. (2016). Kellogg's® Frosted Mini-Wheats® Bite Size cereal. Retrieved March 23, 2017, from Kellogg's Company website: [https://www.frostedminiwheats.com/en\\_US/products/Kellogg-s-frosted-mini-wheats-bite-size-cereal-product.html](https://www.frostedminiwheats.com/en_US/products/Kellogg-s-frosted-mini-wheats-bite-size-cereal-product.html)
- Moran, A. (2012, January 23). Intact Versus Functional Fiber. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from OneResult website: <http://www.oneresult.com/articles/nutrition/intact-versus-functional-fiber>
- Moran, M. (2007, November 1). naturally speaking: wake up your senses. Retrieved March 20, 2017, from The Gourmet Retailer website: [http://www.gourmetretailer.com/Top-story-profiles\\_\\_\\_trends-naturally-speaking\\_\\_\\_wake\\_up\\_your\\_senses-7392.html](http://www.gourmetretailer.com/Top-story-profiles___trends-naturally-speaking___wake_up_your_senses-7392.html)
- Nature's Path Foods, Inc. (2017). Sunny Hemp™ Granola Bars. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from Nature's Path Foods website: <http://shop.naturespath.com/Sunny-Hemp-Granola-Bars/p/NPA-891000&c=NaturesPath@Bars#>
- Nestle, M. (2010, November 23). Kellogg settles class-action health-claims suit. Retrieved March 23, 2017, from Food Politics website: <http://www.foodpolitics.com/2010/11/Kellogg-settles-class-action-health-claims-suit>
- POPSUGAR Fitness. (2007, April 24). Free Kashi GoLean Crunch Cereal. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from POPSUGAR website: <https://www.popsugar.com/fitness/Free-Kashi-GoLean-Crunch-Cereal-224577>
- Sara. (2013, July 16). What's in your breakfast? + recipe: Chocolate Banana Overnight Oats. Retrieved March 21, 2017, from The Organic Dietitian website: <http://www.theorganicdietitian.com/whats-in-your-breakfast-recipe-chocolate-banana-overnight-oats>
- Walmart. (n.d.). Nature's Path Organic Sunny Hemp Granola Bars, 7.4 oz (Pack of 6). Retrieved March 19, 2017, from Walmart website: <https://www.walmart.com/ip/Nature-s-Path-Organic-Sunny-Hemp-Granola-Bars-7.4-oz-6ct/23810140#about-item>
-



## Appendix A: Nature's Path Sunny Hemp Granola Bar



Figure 1: Nature's Path 2007 Design



Figure 2: Nature's Path 2012 Design



Figure 3: Nature's Path 2017 Design

## Appendix B: Fiber One Oats & Chocolate Chewy Bar



Figure 4: Fiber One 2007 Design



Figure 5: Fiber One 2012 Design



Figure 6: Fiber One 2017 Design

## Appendix C: Kashi GOLEAN Crunch Cereal



Figure 7: Kashi 2007 Design



Figure 8: Kashi 2012 Design



Figure 9: Kashi 2017 Design



## Appendix D: Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats Cereal



Figure 10: Mini-Wheats 2007 Design



Figure 11: Mini-Wheats 2012 Design



Figure 12: Mini-Wheats 2017 Design