

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TYPOGRAPHY IN PACKAGING DESIGN FOR SMES FOOD INDUSTRIES

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## ABSTRACT

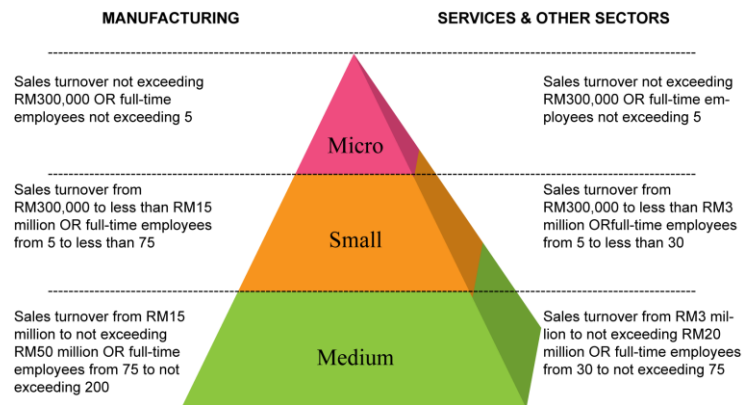
The purpose of this paper is to provide a review on the effectiveness of typography in packaging design for SMEs food industries. This paper presents an exposition of content analysis and visual audits methods conducted on 27 products of SMEs. Samples were taken from SMEs who participated in Karnival Usahawan Desa (KUD) 2014 in Johor Bahru. This research examined the use of typographical aspects in conveying information about the product such as type, style and shape on the packaging, as well as communication aspects such as legibility, consistency and hierarchy. Findings suggested that typography used in SMEs packaging design need to limit the number of typefaces. Too many typefaces can produce a distorted message defeating the purpose of communicating about the product. The typeface should provide a clear, consistent and unified message. It is hoped that the findings, as presented in this paper, will highlight the important of using typography effectively in order to increase consumer comprehension of the product to a much greater degree, thus increasing consumer loyalty and product sales.

**Keywords:** SMEs, Packaging, Typography, Food Industry

## INTRODUCTION

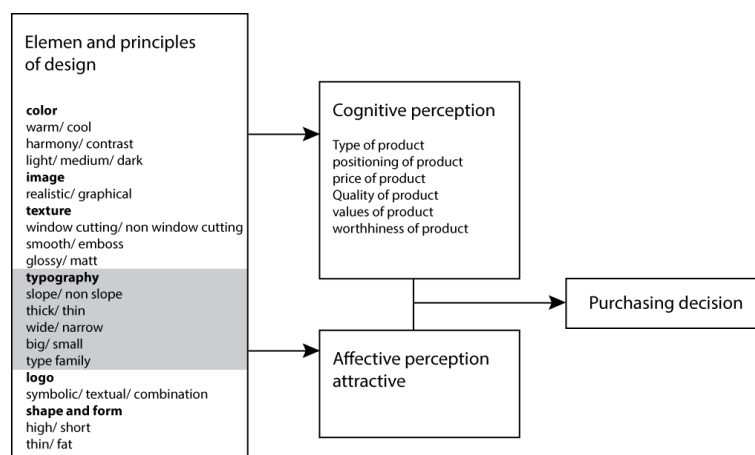
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are one of the key contributors to the global economic development. In Malaysia, the SMEs have played an important role because of its trade activities that helped to increase competitiveness and served as a backbone of economic growth in Malaysia. There are various definitions given to the SMEs based on different approach of criteria and distinct standards. In general, SMEs in Malaysia are identified according to the quantitative criteria such as the number of employees, amount of assets the enterprises possess, amount of paid-up capital, and the sales turnover per annum (Abu Bakar Sedek Abdul Jamak, Razol Mahari Mohd Ali, & Zulkipli Ghazali, 2014; Mohd Khairuddin, 2009, 2010, 2011; Siaw & Nazatul Shima Abdul Rani, 2012). In 2014, the National SME Development Council (NSDC) stated that SME in Malaysia is to be measured based on the number of employees and annual sales turnover, which being accepted by the Malaysian Government as criteria in providing assistance.

Packaging as an integral part of marketing is one of the various areas of assistance that being provided by the Malaysian Government for SMEs. Thus, the Malaysian Government through SME Corporation has initiated the Brand Innovation Centre (BIC) and National Mark of Malaysian Brand, as well as running a programme called Groom Big, which organized by MITI.



**Figure 1:** New Definition of SMEs (Corp, SME, & Council, 2013)  
**Source:** Illustration by the Author

The packaging typography is one of the most important visual elements because words directly explain a message to the consumer, unlike images and other decorative elements that must be interpreted by the consumer. According to Wang & Chou (2011), packaging designs that use typography with other graphic forms successful and effectively in communicating information about the product can increasing consumer loyalty and product sales. Utilizing words to impart a message is often the most succinct method due to the fact that language is the clearest form of communication. To persuading the consumer to purchase the product, typography acts as the voice of the package to explain the important aspects of the product (refer Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** A model relating elements of design, perception, and purchase  
**Source:** Chind & Sahachaisaeree, 2012.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENTS**

The choice of typography is an essential part of creating package communication and assist in marketing. As far as marketing is concerned, manufacturers are focusing on how well their brand names are known and the communication of their product names. Typography encompasses several different variables such as the font type and amount of font types, font size, colour contrasts, empty space around the text and positioning of the text (Rusko et al., 2011). Even a simple change of the font type of the package text can change the packaging communication substantially and affect product positioning. Words and text on packaging create the written messages on packages. The content of the text, languages used and ease of comprehension are vital part of communication in packaging and affect how the written messages are interpreted. As an information provider, packaging is very practical, as it brings the information so close to the real end-user. However, the information will not reach the user if the text is impossible to read or understand. The readability of the text is a remarkable factor possibly causing everyday challenges to the end users, especially among elderly people. Therefore, it is very important to pay attention to typographic variables in package design when the product was display.

## **LITERATURE REVIEWS**

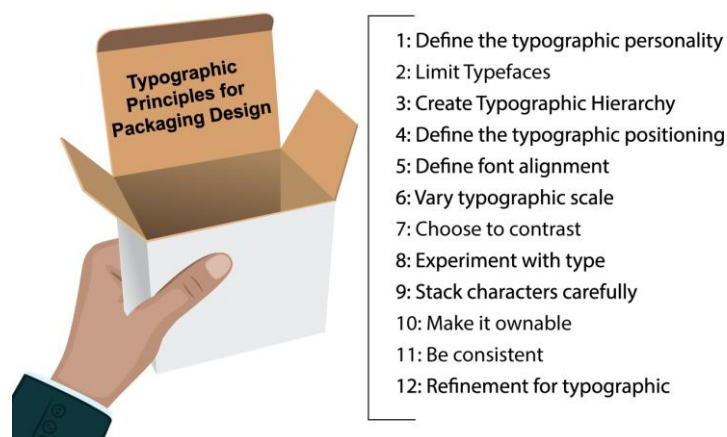
Typography is applying type in an expressive way to reveal the content clearly and memorably with the least resistance from the reader (White, 2011). It is very important to communicate information to an audience especially for food packaging design, since typography often conveys vital information. Typographic decisions must be legible, otherwise the reader will not be able to understand the message (Hayes, 2009).

The appropriate use of typography is to add value on the nature of the product and can offer something that is attractive to the users through the forms of packaging design. This can be seen with the use of typeface, font size, font style that is distinct and composed according to the hierarchy. Legibility and readability allows users to receive and appreciate the content of the information. The readability reflects what is seen by the user and process the information. Legibility does help the user in the process of distinguishing and recognizing something products prior to the decision to purchase is made. This indirectly demonstrates the effectiveness of the use of typography in packaging design which is appropriate and memorable (Saka, 2011). Readability and legibility are typographic terms that often incorrectly used. While legibility is the aptitude for distinguishing different letterforms, readability is the ease with which text can be read and comprehended. The legibility of type can be affected by its size, typeface, contrast, text block, and spacing. Readability is determined through background and text contrast, spacing, typeface, and line length, among other factors. Good readability will hold the reader's interest longer (White, 2011).

Typography is divided into two major categories: text type and display type. While for packaging, the brand name and product name are usually set in display type.

The product name is the general or common name of the product that is required by law to be on the front panel of the package (Fischer, Hurley, Leininger & Thomas, 2012) Other product descriptors that specify information about the contents of the package can also be written in display type. This can include (but not limited to) the flavour, variety, special benefits, or features of the product. The descriptor information is used to market the product to consumers by pointing out how the product is special and more superior to other competing products (Klimchuck & Krasovec, A., 2006). Text type is used for the longer portions of text on the package. Packaging often includes what is called romance copy, or copy that describes the product or brand in greater detail in order to persuade the consumer. This is set as text type on the back of the package. Recipes and product directions are other forms of text type also located on the back of the package. There is also a lot of mandatory information placed on the package that is required by the government, such as nutrition facts, ingredients, warnings, net weight, and manufacturer information. This information is required to be highly legible and is therefore always set as text type (Klimchuck & A.Krasovec, 2006).

Generally, there are twelve defining principles of typography (refer Figure 3) to assist in decision making for packaging design (Fischer et al., 2012). Establishes the basis in decision making which is defining the typographic personality. Typographic personality related to experiments, the selection of the right type, and the visual communication strategy. These factors should harmonize to help communicate how consumers look at the packaging designs. Then, limiting the typefaces are very important to streamlines the typography. The use of typefaces should be limited because of too many typefaces can cause information difficult to see and read. Typeface used to communicate information must be clearly, consistently and integrated. Other factor to be considered when designing packaging is typographic hierarchy. Typographic hierarchy refers to how information is read from the smaller interests to the most vital one. Elements of typography, which can be sorted by the levels of importance, are: the position, alignment, relationships, scale, weight, contrast, and colour.



**Figure 3:** Typographic Principles for Packaging Design (Fischer et al., 2012)  
**Source:** Illustration by the author

According to Fischer et. al (2012) when using typography in packaging design, stacking the characters carefully is very important in order to make the typography 'ownable'. Thus consumer normally uses to connect the brand name and product name to the mental and emotional state. For example the preference of letters being stacked vertical versus horizontal can bring clarity or distortion with the product design. Ownability can be realized by making changes to typeface and characters but cannot be to dramatically change because the product could lose its identity and integrity. Therefore personality, style, positioning, and hierarchy in typography must be consistent to integrated brand family line and product line as well as brand equity. Indeed, it is necessary to refinement for typographic excellence. Although the refinement process is at the end of the design process it is a continuous process of examining and evaluating. This step of the process is the quality assurance and is achieved when the type is clearly expressed so that it impacts that packaging design ultimately triggering transactions.

## METHODOLOGY

This study has adopted content analysis along with visual audit in order to investigate the effectiveness use of typography in 27 SMEs food product, which were selected from the State of Johor. The elements of typography on the primary display panels from the samples have been collected and sorted to be analysed using visual audit (Refer to figure 4) and were systematically evaluated as a part of content analysis. Klimchuck and A.Krasovec (2006) describe that elements of typography on primary packaging display panel should encompasses eight elements, such as brand/product name, secondary copy, product descriptor, romance copy, mandatory copy, nutrition facts, ingredients copy, weights, measures and net quantity statement. According to Patel, Vila-Lopez and Kuster-Boluda (2013), content analysis was reputable and widely used technique within international marketing research and communication. Content analysis was used in this study to categorize the details of typography variables such as tin, small, big, uppercases, lowercases, type family and serif (refer to Table I).



Figure 4: Visual audits of elements of typography on packaging display panel

**Table 1:** Table of Content Analysis for 27 SMEs packaging of food products

VISUAL AUDITS (Design Element: Typography)																				
Variable	Thick	Tin / light	Wide / bold	Narrow	Big	small	Type family	San-serif	Serif	Script typeface	Upright typeface	Ornamental typeface	Italic	Uppercase	lowercase	ALL the typography communicates the product's concept effectively ie clearly and its also readable legible and consistent	MOST of the typography communicates the product's concept effectively ie clearly, readable, legible and consistent	SOME of the typography communicates the product's concept effectively ie clearly legible and consistent	The typography DOES NOT communicates the product's concept effectively ie clearly legible and consistent	
Product Brand																○	○	○	○	
Ramun Delights	√	√					3		√						√	○				
Eima Food			√				3	√						√	√				√	
Pak Lah	√						3	√						√	√	√				
Gaya-S			√				3	√						√	√			√		
Winaaz							2				√			√	√			√		
@My Café		√					3	√						√	√				√	
Wak Tunot	√		√		√		3	√						√	√				√	
Nazoha Enterprise	√		√		√		3	√	√					√	√			√		
Salleh Food	√	√	√		√		3	√	√				√	√	√			√		
De'Ria Rich	√	√					2							√	√				√	
Ieja Marketing							3	√	√					√	√				√	
Aida Maju Home Made	√	√					3	√						√	√				√	
Mahirhaya	√		√				3							√	√				√	
Ruyung Pecah	√						4	√	√					√	√			√		
Belanga Sakti	√	√	√	√			4	√		√				√	√				√	
Irusmas		√					3	√					√	√	√			√		
D'Ya	√		√				3	√	√					√	√			√		
Dinie	√		√				3	√					√	√	√	√			√	
Maz	√		√		√		5	√						√	√				√	
Larissa Tradition						√	4							√	√			√		
Melianna Enterprise	√		√			√	4	√	√			√		√	√			√		
Rempahku	√		√				3	√	√					√	√	√			√	
Hjh Rahmah Enterprise			√				2	√						√	√	√			√	
CocoDamia	√		√		√		2	√	√					√	√			√		
Zai Foodstaff					√		4	√	√					√	√			√		
Mak Ani Kitchen		√	√				5	√						√	√				√	
Perusahaan Kerepek Tempe			√		√		3	√						√	√				√	

**RESULTS**

The results of content analysis for 27 SMEs packaging of food products indicated that the typography used to describe product name and product brand were mostly in uppercase as this would make it stand out and draw attention from the customers. However the typeface on the packaging labels used to describe product name and product brand did not give the required brand personality to the products, as it looked plain and not catchy enough. Almost all the typeface used to describe product name and product brand were generic typefaces. The rest of the information on the packaging was using lowercase, which looked simple and clean, thus should deliver the information effectively. In this study, it was observed that between three to five type families were used on the packaging design. Too many typefaces can produce a distorted message, thus defeating the purpose. The typeface on the packaging should provide a clear, consistent, and unified message, and this can be achieved by simply limiting the number of typeface and carefully selected the typeface. The findings of this study also found that script, narrow and italic styles of typography were fairly unused. Likewise ornamental typeface was omitted in all samples because it is created specifically for non-text uses. The size of typeface, whether it is big or small implying to the size of the labelling.

## CONCLUSIONS

Typography is very helpful to communicate with consumer and to create a personality for the brand. The effectiveness use of different typeface, size and weight of visual contrast that make the packaging surface departmentalize, thus make it easy to acquire important information and brand identification. The use of sans serif letters for nutrition facts and other information on the package are very effective because it can help to retain heavy amount of text. Typography on packaging design should be kept simple, readable and right to the point. Future studies could also extend this study by exploring the important of hierarchy for product name, brand and manufacturer. The effective use of different size, types, styles and shapes on packaging, as well as communication aspects such as legibility, consistency and hierarchy are vital in order to optimised communication with the consumer.

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