



## **Accessibility as an Afterthought: Addressing Packaging Design Misconceptions in the Consumer Packaged Goods Industry**

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# Why Accessibility in Packaging Matters

- Packaging communicates critical product information
- Accessibility impacts consumer independence
- Visual design choices can create barriers
- Inclusive design is often overlooked in practice

# Research Problem

Accessibility in packaging remains inconsistent despite:

- Growing awareness of inclusive design
- Advances in technology and assistive tools
- Existing regulatory guidance

## Key Question:

- Why is accessibility still treated as a secondary consideration in packaging design?

## Research Question

**“How do misconceptions about cost, time, and competing business priorities lead to accessibility being treated as an afterthought in packaging design?”**



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# Key Insights from Literature

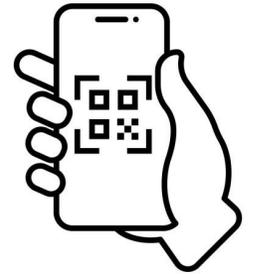
Literature revealed several misconceptions:

1. Accessibility is too expensive
2. Accessibility takes too much time
3. Accessibility conflicts with business priorities
4. Accessibility is driven mainly by regulation

# Research Approach

## Mixed-Methods Approach

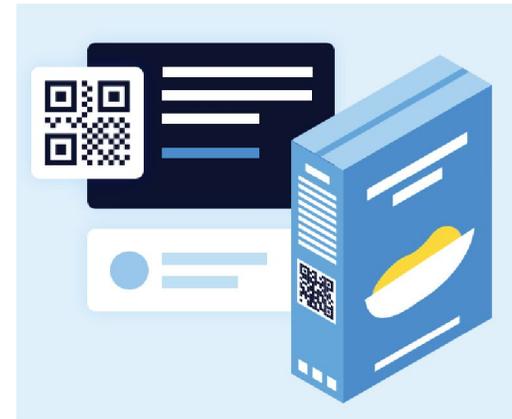
- Observational fieldwork using the **Seeing AI** app
- Evaluation of real packaging samples
- Secondary research from academic and industry sources
- Analysis of current packaging practices



# Accessibility Evaluation Criteria

Packaging was evaluated using five criteria:

- AI Recognition accuracy
- Text readability
- Contrast & font size
- Tactile accessibility
- Digital accessibility tools

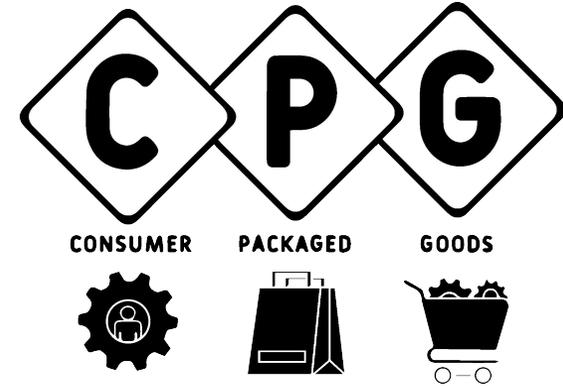


# Products Evaluated

## 11 Consumer Packaged Goods

Categories included:

- Food products
- Personal care products
- Healthcare products



Examples:

- Heinz Ketchup
- Dove Body Wash
- Tylenol Cold Tablets
- Zarbee's Immunity Syrup

# Examples of Sampled Products



The app generated the following text:

“The image shows a hand holding a bottle of Heinz Tomato Ketchup. The bottle is positioned upright with the label facing the viewer. The label displays the brand name "HEINZ" at the top, followed by "Tomato Ketchup" and "Aux Tomates" below it. The label also includes an illustration of a tomato with leaves and the text "57 Varieties" beneath it. The volume of the bottle is indicated as 750 mL. The bottom of the bottle, which is the cap, has some printed information, including a date and a code.”



The app generated the following text:

“The image shows a bottle of Dove body wash being held in a hand. The bottle is white with a light blue cap and features the Dove logo, which includes a gold dove symbol and the word "Dove" in blue text. Below the logo, the product is labeled as "sensitive skin" and "hypoallergenic" in both English and French. The bottle also mentions "24hr Renewing MicroMoisture" and indicates the volume as “20 US FL OZ / 591 mL.”

# Examples of Sampled Products



The app generated the following text:

“The image shows a box of Tylenol Cold Extra Strength medication. The box is labeled as a "24HR CONVENIENCE PACK" and contains acetaminophen among other ingredients. The packaging is divided into two sections: one for daytime tablets and one for nighttime tablets. The daytime section includes 10 tablets, which are yellow, and is indicated to relieve nasal congestion, dry cough, fever, and aches and pain. The nighttime section also includes 10 tablets, which are blue, and is indicated to relieve nasal congestion, dry cough, runny nose/sneezing, fever, and aches and pain. The total count of tablets in the package is 20, referred to as "20 eZ TABS." The DIN numbers for the daytime and nighttime tablets are 02276186 and 02276259, respectively.”



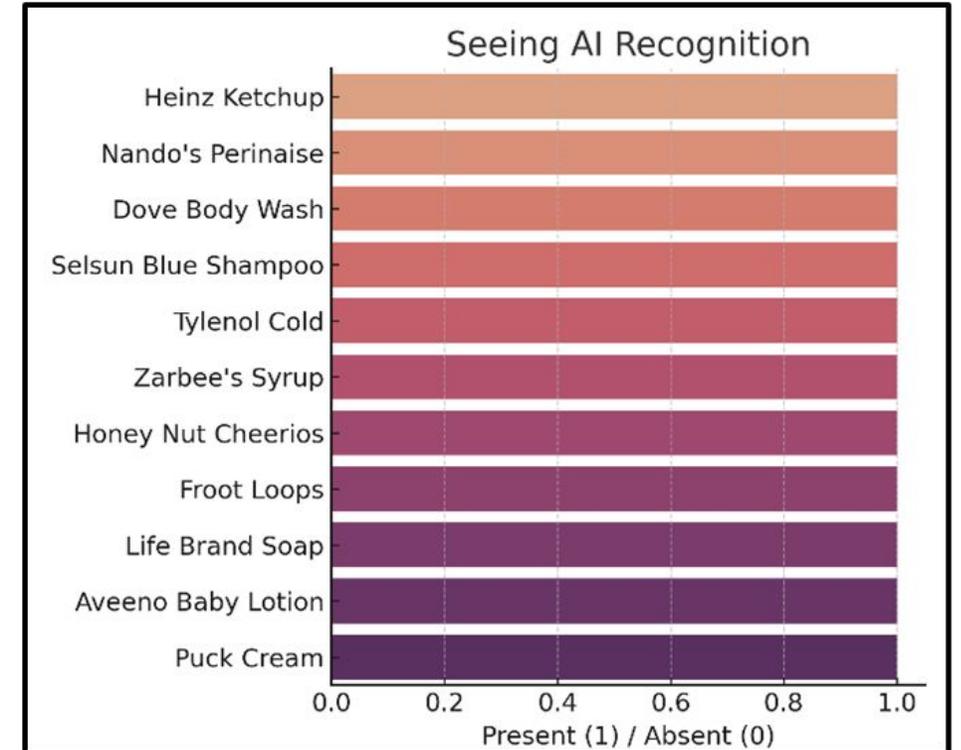
The app generated the following text:

“The image shows a bottle of Zarbee's Children's Immunity Syrup being held in a hand. The bottle is designed for children aged 2 years and older. The label indicates that the syrup contains honey, elderberry, vitamin D, and zinc, which are noted to support the immune system, provide a source of antioxidants, and soothe coughs and irritated throats. The flavor is mixed berry. The bottle has a capacity of 118 mL.”

# Recognition Accuracy

Findings showed:

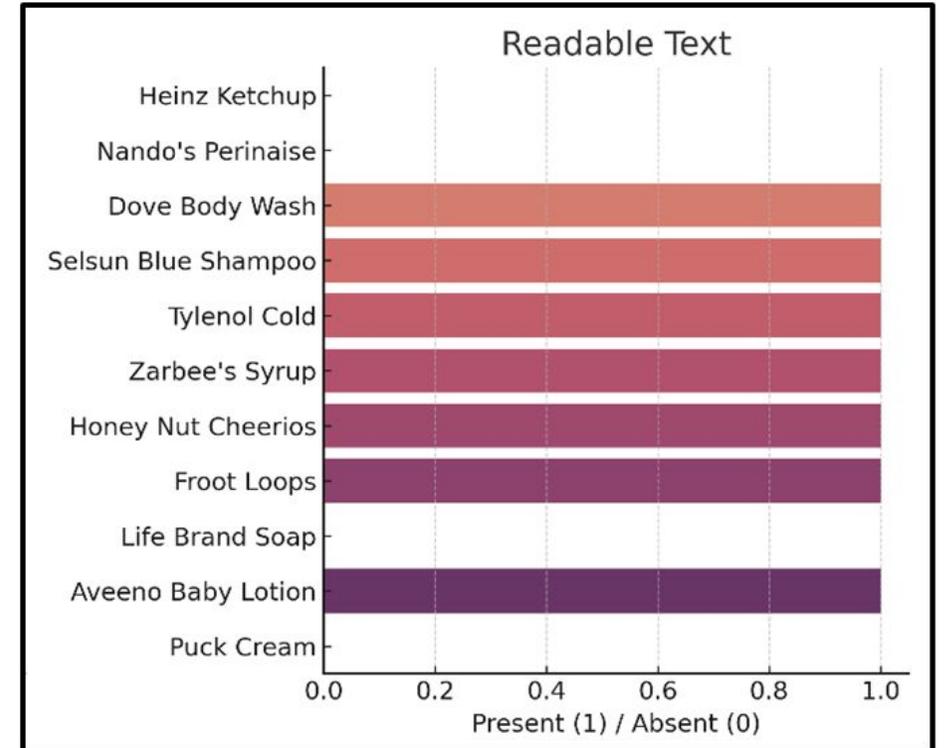
- Variability in AI recognition accuracy
- Packaging design influences recognition performance
- Visual complexity can reduce recognition success



# Text Readability & Information Gaps

Common issues observed:

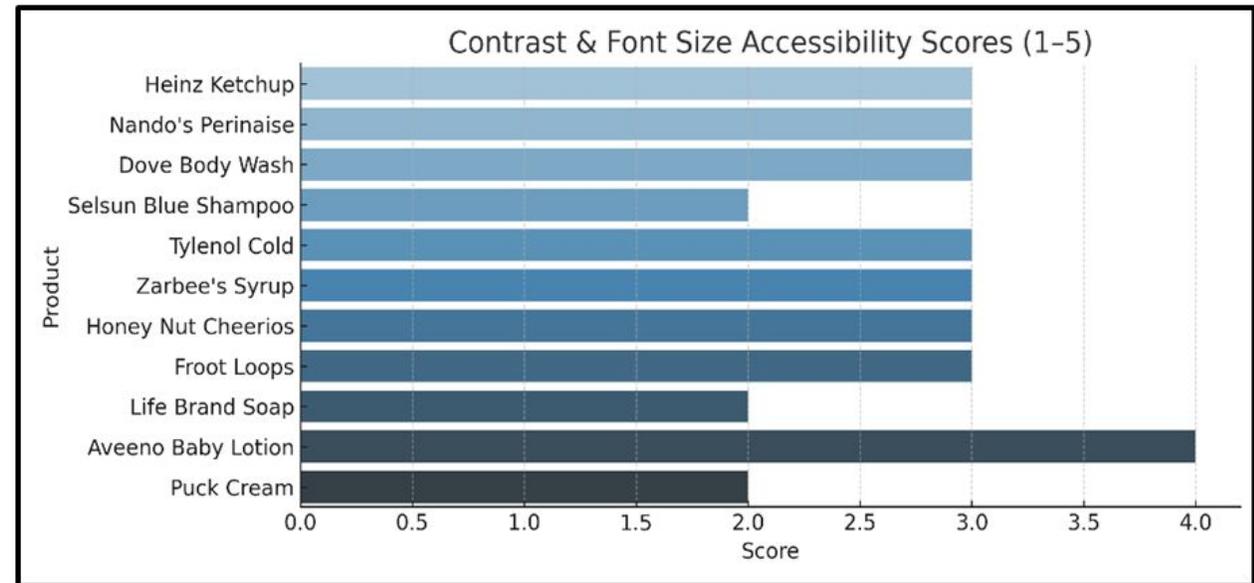
- Small font sizes
- Dense information panels
- Difficulty locating key information



# Contrast and Font Size

Accessibility concerns included:

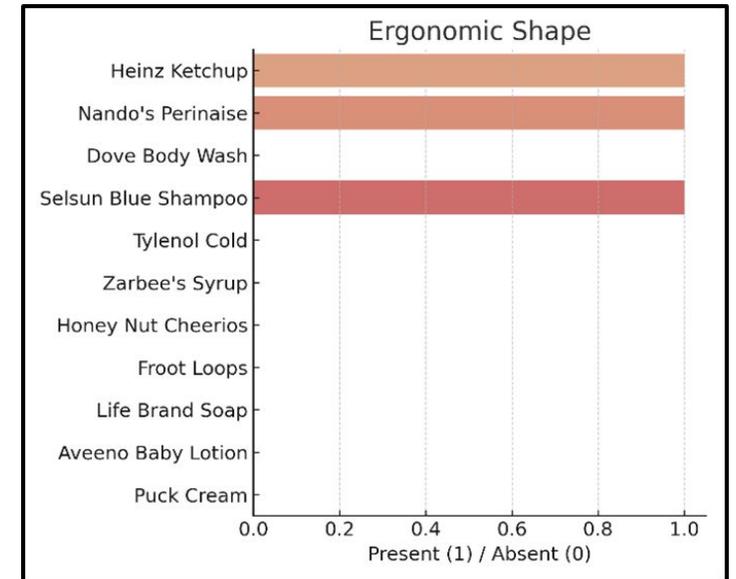
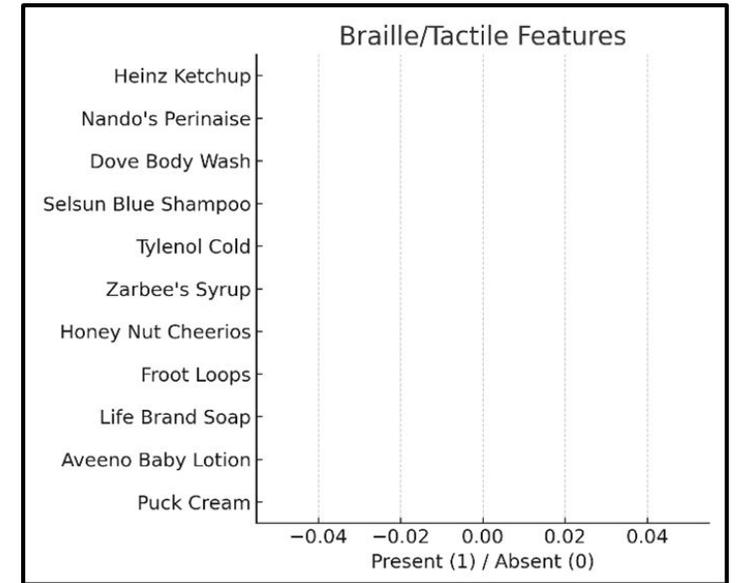
- Low color contrast
- Limited font size hierarchy
- Reduced readability in certain lighting conditions



# Tactile Accessibility

Findings showed:

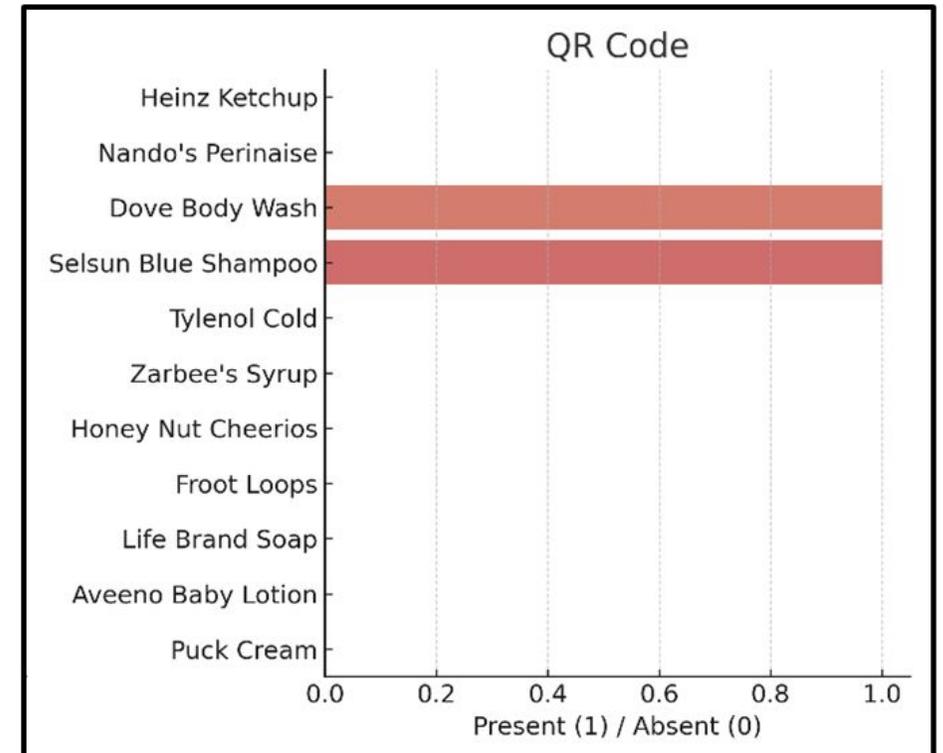
- Minimal use of tactile features
- Limited implementation of raised indicators
- Missed opportunities for inclusive design



# Digital Accessibility Opportunities

QR codes offer potential to:

- Provide expanded product information
- Improve accessibility through digital platforms
- Support assistive technologies



# Discussion

Key themes from results:

- Accessibility often treated as an afterthought
- Misconceptions about cost and time remain
- Business priorities frequently outweigh accessibility considerations

# Industry Opportunities & Impact

## Opportunities for Accessible Packaging

- Integrating accessibility earlier in design processes
- Improving readability through better contrast and font size
- Expanding tactile and digital accessibility tools

## Why It Matters

- Greater consumer independence
- Increased brand trust
- Expanded market reach



*Many improvements require only minor design adjustments.*

# Conclusion

## Key Takeaways

- Accessibility gaps remain in packaging design
- Industry perceptions influence implementation
- Inclusive packaging presents opportunities for innovation and consumer engagement



**Thank you  
for listening!**



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