

## **PACKAGING DESIGN IN BUILDING GREEN IMAGE: AN ANALYSIS OF SUSTAINABILITY CODES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF VISUAL COMMUNICATION DESIGN**

### **YEŞİL İMAJ İNŞASINDA AMBALAJ TASARIMI: SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİRLİK KODLARININ GÖRSEL İLETİŞİM TASARIMI YÖNÜNDEN ANALİZİ**

Merve KARAMAN<sup>1</sup>



ORCID: M.K. 0000-0002-6010-6996

Corresponding author/Sorumlu yazar:

<sup>1</sup> Merve Karaman

İstanbul Topkapı University, Türkiye

E-mail/E-posta: drmervekaraman@outlook.com

Received/Geliş tarihi: 09.02.2026

Similarity Ratio/ Benzerlik Oranı: %6

Revision Requested/Revizyon talebi:

17.02.2026

Last revision received/Son revizyon teslimi:

19.02.2026

Accepted/Kabul tarihi: 06.04.2026

Ethics Committee Permission/ Etik Kurul İzni:

Çalışmada etik kurul onayı gerektiren bir unsur bulunmamaktadır. / There is no element in the study that requires ethics committee approval.

Citation/Atf: Karaman, M. (2026). Packaging Design in Building Green Image: An Analysis of Sustainability Codes From The Perspective of Visual Communication Design. Journal of Communication Science Researches, 6 (2), 215-231.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19437743>

#### **Abstract**

With the growing environmental awareness in contemporary society, the concept of sustainability has become central to brand communication strategies. This transformation is particularly evident in packaging design, where brands convey their environmental responsibilities to consumers through visual communication codes. The aim of this study is to analyse how green image is constructed in sustainable packaging designs of personal care and cleaning products from a visual communication perspective. The research examines the packaging designs of six different brands across four principal dimensions: visual aesthetics, material and form, discourse and expression, and sustainability codes. A descriptive analysis approach was adopted within the framework of qualitative research methods. The findings reveal that natural colour palettes, minimalist typeface, recycled material aesthetics, and ecological symbols constitute a coherent visual language in sustainable packaging. By emphasising the strategic role of visual communication design in the construction of green image, this study aims to provide a theoretical contribution to sustainability-oriented design practices.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Green Image, Packaging Design, Visual Communication Design.

#### **Öz**

Günümüzde çevresel farkındalığın artmasıyla birlikte sürdürülebilirlik kavramı markaların iletişim stratejilerinin merkezine yerleşmiştir. Bu dönüşüm özellikle ambalaj tasarımında kendini göstermekte; markalar çevresel sorumluluklarını görsel iletişim kodları aracılığıyla tüketiciye iletmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı kişisel bakım ve temizlik ürünlerine ait sürdürülebilir ambalaj tasarımlarında yeşil imajın nasıl inşa edildiğini görsel iletişim perspektifinden analiz etmektir. Araştırmada altı farklı markanın ambalaj tasarımı; görsel estetik, materyal ve biçim, söylem ve ifade biçimi ile sürdürülebilirlik kodları olmak üzere dört temel eksende incelenmiştir. Nitel araştırma yöntemleri kapsamında betimsel analiz yaklaşımı benimsenmiştir. Bulgular sürdürülebilir ambalajlarda doğal renk paletleri, sade tipografi, geri dönüştürülmüş malzeme estetiği ve ekolojik sembollerin tutarlı bir görsel dil oluşturduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma yeşil imaj inşasında görsel iletişim tasarımının stratejik rolünü vurgulayarak sürdürülebilirlik odaklı tasarım pratiklerine kuramsal katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sürdürülebilirlik, Yeşil İmaj, Ambalaj Tasarımı, Görsel İletişim Tasarımı.

## INTRODUCTION

The escalating effects of climate change and the rise in energy consumption have prompted brands to adopt design approaches that foreground environmental sensitivity. Within this context, concepts such as environmental awareness, sustainability, and ecological design have gained increasing visibility among both designers and consumers. As society demonstrates a progressively conscious stance on environmental issues, designers are encouraged to develop environmentally responsible solutions. Accordingly, it is no longer sufficient for designers to focus solely on aesthetics or functionality; rather, they are required to integrate elements such as sustainability, practicality, cost-effectiveness, creativity, and originality into the design process. Design is fundamentally a problem-solving process, and in order to develop sustainable solutions, designers are expected to adopt a more strategic and anticipatory approach in terms of both form and content.

Sustainability has transcended its initial confinement to production processes and has now positioned itself at the core of brand communication strategies, design philosophies, and user experience policies. With the intensification of global environmental challenges, the climate crisis, and the growing critique of consumer culture, there has been a marked increase in consumer preference for environmentally conscious products and brands. This transformation has necessitated that brands reconstruct their identities not merely through verbal messages but also through visual communication elements. In this regard, packaging design has emerged as one of the most significant visual components of both physical product presentation and sustainable brand discourse. Sustainable packaging design is addressed in a multi-layered manner, encompassing production materials as well as visual communication codes such as colour, typeface, symbolism, and graphic language. In addition to recyclable or reusable packaging that does not harm the environment, designs capable of effectively conveying environmentalist messages on a visual plane are now recognised as an integral component of brand value. At this juncture, the concepts of green image or eco-aesthetics represent, from the perspective of visual communication design, not merely a formal preference but also an expression of ethical, strategic, and cultural positioning.

This transformation compels a reconsideration of the discipline of visual communication design. Moving beyond the formal functions of packaging, the visual and semiotic relationship established with consumers raises the question of how sustainability ideology is communicated through brands. The manner in which large-scale or awareness-driven brands represent their environmentalist stance through packaging design constitutes the principal point of departure for this research. Sustainable production encompasses the development of products and services that do not harm the environment and minimise the use of energy and natural resources in an economically viable manner. Within this framework, the present study aims to examine sustainability practices and ecological packaging designs within the discipline of visual communication design.

### **The Relationship Between the Concept of Sustainability and Visual Communication Design**

Sustainability was defined in the United Nations Brundtland Report (1987) as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Over time, this definition has evolved into a multi-layered understanding encompassing not only environmental concerns but also economic, social justice, and cultural sustainability dimensions. In the field of design, sustainability extends beyond production methods to include modes of presentation and communication. Particularly in areas that directly engage consumers, such as packaging design, sustainability must be evaluated both through material selection and through visual codes that shape user perception (Steenis et al., 2017).

Visual communication design serves not merely as a vehicle for conveying aesthetic messages but also assumes a strategic role in the transmission of environmental, social, and cultural values. Within this context, sustainability principles have become determining factors in the design process in terms of both content and form. Environmental messages presented to consumers through visual products such as packaging design, posters, catalogues, digital media, and brand identity generate awareness regarding sustainable production, recycling, upcycling, and resource conservation, whilst encouraging environmentally responsible behaviours.

When sustainability is conceived not solely as a mode of production but also as a mode of communication, visual communication design becomes an indispensable instrument in this process. The effective engagement of sustainability themes with target audiences is contingent upon the designer's ability to present these values through a clear, comprehensible, and persuasive visual language. Consequently, designs developed within the context of sustainability not only contribute to environmental preservation but also render visible the social responsibilities of brands and facilitate the establishment of emotional connections with users.

In this regard, according to Erişmiş (2007), sustainable design aims at the strategic design of products, services, processes, and systems without causing environmental harm, taking into consideration the needs of not only present but also future generations. This approach encompasses a holistic solution framework oriented towards achieving equilibrium among social, environmental, and economic demands.

### **Sustainability and Green Image in Packaging Design**

Packaging serves not merely as an element that provides physical protection for products but also functions as a fundamental component in the distribution and marketing processes of modern consumer goods (İlhan, 2016). In terms of its primary function, packaging may be defined as a field of design and technology that ensures the protection of products during distribution, storage, sale, and use. Physical characteristics of the product, such as shape, weight, and durability, are influential in determining the type of packaging. Effective packaging design not only protects the product from external factors but also adds value to the product, assumes an informative role, stimulates purchasing behaviour, and possesses environmentally sustainable qualities (Satheesan, 2021). Packaging constitutes not solely an element serving product protection or transportation functions but also a communication medium that establishes the initial visual contact between brand and consumer. Within the context of visual communication design, packaging constructs a universe of meaning through form, colour, typeface, symbols, and text. The language of packaging may contain aesthetic and ethical messages that influence consumer behaviour (Spence, 2022). At this juncture, the necessity emerges for sustainability messages to be strategically communicated not only through content but also through the visual representations of packaging. When the concept of sustainability is evaluated along the axis of nature and ecology, it is defined as an approach that aims to resist environmental risks threatening life and to construct a low-carbon, self-regenerating, and resilient economic structure for future generations (Enes, 2019).

Within the framework of sustainability, the concepts of green image packaging, sustainable packaging, and ecological packaging carry closely related meanings yet are not entirely equivalent. Green image packaging constitutes a strategy for creating a brand identity perception that is environmentally sensitive and ecologically responsible; it is associated not only with the physical characteristics of packaging but also with visual communication language, brand messages, and consumer perception. Sustainable packaging, on the other hand, refers to packaging designed to minimise environmental impacts throughout the product lifecycle, manufactured from recyclable, reusable, or biodegradable materials. Ecological packaging denotes types of packaging that do not harm the environment, reduce natural resource consumption, and are produced with ecosystem-friendly materials. Consequently, green image represents a broader perception management process encompassing the visual and communicative representation of sustainable or ecological packaging. The concept of sustainability, in turn, encompasses all such activities. That is to say green image packaging, sustainable packaging, or ecologically prepared packaging is packaging conceived within the context of sustainability. Simultaneously, all of these possess a green image. In this sense, it may be stated that these three terms are considerably interconnected.



**Figure 1.** Examples of ecological packaging (Pinterest, 2025).

The possibility of reusing packaging with a different function after the product has been consumed or the packaging has been emptied enables it to be considered not merely as a protective element but also as a functional and sustainable design component. According to the Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC, 2024), sustainable packaging is an approach to the design, production, and distribution of packaged goods, guided by comprehensive principles that consider the impacts of sourcing, manufacturing, and disposing of materials across the entire life cycle of the package. This framework demonstrates that sustainable packaging design necessitates a multidimensional approach.

According to Oduncu (2020) sustainable design is an approach that fundamentally considers environmental impacts in the design process. Particularly in printed materials, the choice of paper type, ink, and other materials plays a significant role in reducing the environmental footprint of design. This contributes both to the reduction of carbon emissions and to the more efficient utilisation of natural resources. Moreover, sustainable design encompasses not only the production stage but also the longevity of the product, its capacity to transform in harmony with nature at the end of its useful life, and even its potential to serve as a resource for other production processes (Oduncu, 2020).

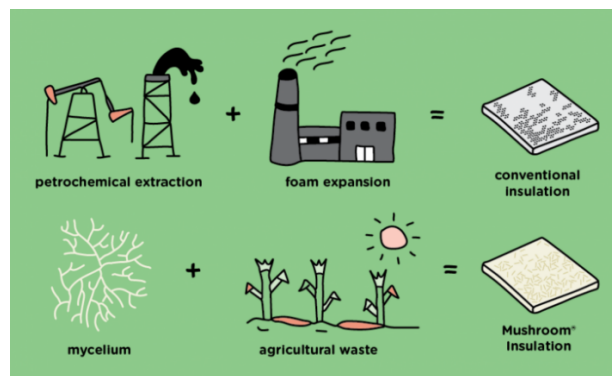
Recycling, one of the methods implemented within the framework of sustainability understanding, refers to the transformation of waste materials that have completed their useful life into raw materials that can be reintegrated into the production process through various procedures. Materials such as plastic, glass, aluminium, paper, and tin can be effectively recovered through this process. Recycling practices not only reduce the quantity of waste but also contribute to the conservation of natural resources, decrease energy consumption, and assist in balancing atmospheric carbon emissions by reducing environmental pollution.

Upcycling, another method implemented within the framework of sustainability understanding, aims to functionally repurpose materials that would otherwise be considered waste in a different context. This approach not only provides environmental benefits but also emerges as a means of transforming waste materials into higher quality objects by adding aesthetic and functional value to them. The upcycling process frequently involves a creative design or craft-based production process (Ersan, 2021).

The concept of upcycling is defined as the transformation of unused or obsolete products into functionally and aesthetically new objects through an original approach. This method offers an environmental solution that can be implemented by everyone at both individual and societal levels. According to Ersan (2021), the creative application of upcycling enables individuals to establish a deeper and more innovative relationship with materials. The revaluation of waste materials in the

design process can render objects more distinctive by conferring upon them originality and a redefined identity. Furthermore, the transformation of packaging for a different function can engender in those who undertake this process a sense of satisfaction derived from both creative fulfilment and environmental responsibility consciousness.

Green image may be defined as a symbolic, aesthetic, and ethical position through which brands express their environmental sensitivities. On the visual plane, this image is constructed through elements such as nature representations (leaf, earth, water symbols), simple and natural colour palettes, handwritten typographies, and kraft paper surfaces. Eco-aesthetics, in turn, interprets this form of visuality as an aesthetic strategy. Eco-aesthetic design aims to establish a balance respectful of nature between form and content (Hosey, 2012). Although green image has become a significant component of brand identity strategies in contemporary times, instances of greenwashing are occasionally encountered in the visual representation of this discourse. This situation causes the sustainability image created through visual codes to be questioned and may lead to a loss of trust among consumers (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).



**Figure 2.** IKEA mycelium-based mushroom packaging stage visual (Serim, 2016).

This visual creates sustainable packaging awareness by presenting conventional fossil fuel-based packaging production and bio-based alternatives produced from renewable resources in a comparative composition. The upper section employs negative ecological associations such as petrochemical extraction and factory chimneys, whilst the lower section utilises themes of naturalness and circularity such as mycelium, agricultural waste, and sun symbols. Through simple typeface, symbolic iconography, and colour contrast, the message is conveyed clearly and directly, whilst sustainability codes such as biodegradability, waste valorisation, and low carbon footprint are concretised in visual language.

In relation to this, regarding IKEA UK's sustainability approach, Joanna Yarrow, the UK Sustainability Manager, states that mycelium-based mushroom packaging development initiatives are regarded as an indicator of corporate sensitivity towards recycling processes and environmental responsibilities (Serim, 2016). Minimalism is also a frequently preferred approach in sustainable packaging designs. Designs that are purified of unnecessary visual elements, simple, legible, and non-distracting both support environmental conservation and aesthetically align with sustainability values. The minimalist design philosophy can evoke feelings of simplicity, naturalness, and trust in users (Ding et al., 2024). In this sense, the form of minimal yet meaningful visuality demonstrates parallelism with the principle of sustainability.

Green image is a brand identity strategy through which brands appear environmentally sensitive, ethical, and sustainable. From the perspective of visual communication design, this image is constructed through logo, packaging, font, colour usage, materials employed, and campaign discourses. The discourse of green image construction in visual communication is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Green Image Construction Discourse in Visual Communication.

Element	Green Image Application
Colour	Green, brown, beige, earth tones
Typeface/Font	Handwritten, simple sans-serif fonts
Material visualisation	Recycled paper, kraft paper, transparent packaging
Language/discourse	"eco-friendly", "recyclable", "organic", "less waste", etc.
Icons	Recycling symbol, leaf, earth, globe icons
Photography usage	Natural environments, product within its environmental context

Within this context, packaging possessing a green image generally employs colours evoking nature in its colour palette, such as green, brown, and earth tones. Similarly, ecological iconography including leaf, water droplet, tree, or recycling symbols is incorporated. In typeface, typefaces that are simple, legible, and evoke a natural aesthetic perception are preferred. Sustainability emphases such as "nature-friendly", "recyclable", "organic", or "carbon neutral" are prominent in the textual content. Materials such as recycled paper, bioplastic, or compostable contents are utilised, and this material preference is explicitly indicated on the packaging surface. Thus, the packaging not only provides environmental benefit but also constructs an environmentally conscious brand perception among consumers.



**Figure 3.** Example of packaging with green image (Pinterest, 2025).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study has been structured within the scope of qualitative research methods, and a descriptive analysis approach has been adopted. Qualitative methods offer a flexible and multi-layered form of inquiry that focuses on meaning production in social and cultural contexts. Within this framework, the study aims to analyse sustainability principles in the context of visual communication design and to interpret the brand-specific functions of design elements such as symbols, colours, typeface, and packaging materials. The packaging samples selected for the research were analysed using the descriptive analysis method. During the analysis process, each brand's packaging design was classified according to the following four main themes:

Visual Aesthetics: Colour palette, composition, typeface, graphic density

Material and Form: Packaging material, textural representations, shape characteristics

Discourse and Expression: Texts, messages, and slogans on the packaging

Sustainability Codes: Recycling icons, nature representations, ethical labelling

The six brands included in the study were selected on the basis of four criteria. First, each brand explicitly positions itself within a sustainability discourse through its packaging communication, employing visual elements such as recycling icons, nature-based imagery, and ecological labelling. Second, the selected brands represent a diverse range of sustainability strategies: from material-based approaches (e.g., biodegradable and cork-based packaging in Natural Vegan) to discourse-driven strategies (e.g., measurable environmental claims in Kérastase). Third, the brands vary in scale and market positioning — from mass-market labels to premium segments — allowing for a comparative analysis that reflects a broad spectrum of sustainable packaging practices. Fourth, packaging visuals for all selected brands were accessible through verifiable digital sources, ensuring analytical transparency and replicability. By interpreting the data across these four dimensions, the manner in which the sustainability approach integrates with visual communication design in personal care and cleaning product brand packaging has been demonstrated. This study focuses solely on the existing packaging applications of the selected six brands. Other visual communication channels of the brands (such as television advertisements, in-store experiences, etc.) have been excluded from the scope of this study. Furthermore, the data set has been limited to visuals accessible in digital environments and annotated sources. Consequently, the analyses are based on interpretations within the context of meaning production through visual representation and do not include direct user experience or quantitative measurement.

### **Research Aim and Significance**

The primary aim of this research is to analyse the visual communication strategies employed in packaging designs of personal care and cleaning products that adopt a sustainability approach, and to demonstrate how these strategies contribute to the processes of green image construction. In contemporary times, sustainability has become a concept that directly influences not only production processes but also visual communication and brand identity construction. Within this context, packaging design establishes a bridge between environmental consciousness, consumer perception, and aesthetics. The academic discussion of sustainability-oriented packaging strategies within the discipline of visual communication design holds significance in terms of both providing theoretical contribution and offering sectoral guidance.

### **Research Problem**

The concept of sustainability has increasingly positioned itself at the centre of brand communication strategies. However how this concept is represented through visual communication design, particularly in the context of packaging design, has not been sufficiently discussed. Accordingly the research focuses on the following question: Which visual communication codes are employed to construct a green brand image in packaging designs of personal care and cleaning products that adopt the principle of sustainability?

The sub-questions of the research are as follows:

- Through which symbols, colours, typeface and materials do the selected brands convey sustainability messages?
- What coherence exists between the discursive messages and visual narratives of the brands?

In this study packaging belonging to personal care and cleaning products has been selected as the sample in order to examine sustainable packaging design applications. These two product groups are among the most frequently consumed product categories in daily life and those with which consumers have direct contact through packaging. Personal care and cleaning products must meet critical user expectations such as health, hygiene, and safety, whilst also being considered priority areas for the visual communication of sustainability policies due to their high consumption volume in terms of environmental impact. Furthermore, the packaging developed for products in these categories offers rich examples in terms of visual communication language regarding sustainable material use, recycling practices, and green image construction. Within this context, personal care and cleaning products present a representative sample appropriate to the aim of the study as areas that both influence consumer awareness and most visibly reflect the environmental responsibilities of brands.

## FINDINGS

The analysis of six brand packaging designs reveals that sustainability is communicated not through a single dominant strategy but through a constellation of visual, material, and discursive choices that vary considerably across brands. Despite these differences, certain recurring patterns emerge, most notably the convergence of natural colour palettes, minimalist composition, ecological iconography, and verifiable environmental claims, suggesting that sustainable packaging has developed a recognisable visual grammar within the personal care and cleaning product categories.



**Figure 4.** "Faith in Nature" brand shampoo sustainable packaging design (Pinterest, 2025).

**Visual Aesthetics:** The Faith in Nature packaging employs a striking colour palette with red leaf patterns on a green background that is identified with nature. This colour preference contains bio-aesthetic codes that support the brand's "natural content" emphasis and reinforces environmental sensitivity on a visual plane. The typeface preference consists of uppercase sans-serif characters, with legibility being prioritised. The brand name is centred and positioned vertically, which creates a strong effect in terms of visual hierarchy. A balanced design is evident in terms of graphic density; the arrangement of text and icons presents an informative and persuasive structure to the user whilst avoiding visual complexity.

**Material and Form:** The descriptions on the packaging explicitly state that the product is manufactured using 100% recycled and recyclable plastic. In this context, this information on the packaging indicates that the packaging material is integrated into the sustainable production cycle. In terms of shape, the classic cylindrical PET bottle form has been preferred. Textural representations convey a sense of naturalness and softness through plant motifs expressed visually rather than physically.

**Discourse and Expression:** The texts on the packaging are expressions that directly reflect environmental and ethical sensitivity, such as "99% natural ingredients", "100% natural fragrances", "Sulphate-free - Paraben-free", and "Respectful to Nature – Vegan". These discourses aim to create a brand perception among consumers that is nature-sensitive, healthy, and trustworthy. Furthermore, the expression "Ideal for your whole family" demonstrates the use of inclusive language from a marketing perspective by emphasising the product's universal ease of use. The phrase "Faith in Nature", which serves as the main slogan, represents faith in nature and transforms into a powerful verbal representation of brand values.

**Sustainability Codes:** The packaging features recycling symbols, Vegan certification, the 100% natural content statement, and origin and quality indicators such as "Made in UK". These markings emphasise that the product both meets ethical production conditions and is integrated into an environmentally friendly production chain. Leaf-shaped graphic elements provide a visual equivalent of sustainability at both aesthetic and representational levels. All these codes enable consumers to quickly recognise environmental values through the packaging and make a conscious decision in product selection.



**Figure 5.** "Yves Rocher" brand shampoo sustainable packaging design (Yves Rocher, 2025).

**Visual Aesthetics:** In this product series by Yves Rocher, a colour palette of green and light blue tones close to natural hues has been preferred. These natural tones visually reinforce the brand's "plant-based content and environmentally sensitive" image. Simple, sans-serif typefaces have been employed in the typeface. The typefaces preferred for the packaging present a modern, clean, and direct communication style. Visual density has been configured within an informative and hierarchical arrangement; the numerical indication of "cleansing" and "care" steps points to a functional design language that guides the user. The plant illustrations on the packaging are graphically simple yet laden with meaning, supporting the botanical content emphasis on an aesthetic plane.

**Material and Form:** The statement "recyclable nature-friendly packaging" appears at the bottom of the packaging. The material used is presumably PET-derivative plastic; however, the recyclable nature of this plastic type is significant. The shape characteristics include ergonomic and standard dispenser

pumps or tube forms. Such packaging forms both facilitate user experience and provide advantages in terms of transportation and storage. Textural representations have been achieved not physically but through plant illustrations placed on the packaging.

**Discourse and Expression:** The discourses employed on the packaging are highly explanatory: expressions such as "normal and dry skin", "combination/oily skin", "cleansing", and "care" contain direct functional guidance. In addition, the discourse "recyclable nature-friendly packaging" serves to explain that the product attaches importance not only to skin health but also to environmental responsibility. Furthermore, the use of plant names directly in product names such as "Pure Menthe" and "Pure Algue" constitutes linguistic strategies that support the natural content emphasis.

**Sustainability Codes:** The expression "recyclable nature-friendly packaging" located beneath the visual explicitly demonstrates the evaluability of the products in terms of sustainability. The use of plant motifs representing nature (seaweed, mint leaves, etc.) in each packaging visually encodes the product's environmentalist identity. The French flag symbols provide transparency regarding the product's origin whilst offering ethical information concerning the place of production. Such visual coding aims to establish trust and environmental consciousness in visual communication.



**Figure 6.** "Kerastase" brand hair care shampoo sustainable packaging design (Trendyol 2025).

**Visual Aesthetics:** The packaging has been designed in light blue-turquoise tones that support the brand's positioning in the luxury care segment. This colour strengthens both hygiene and freshness perception whilst creating a visual metaphor associated with water. The typeface reinforces the brand's premium identity through a modern, thin, and minimal serif-sans-serif combination. Graphic density is considerably low, with extensive use of negative space, which enables the packaging to acquire a simple, refined, and trustworthy appearance. The centrally aligned logo and product name in the design ensure that the eye focuses directly on the brand.

**Material and Form:** The packaging has been designed in a flexible plastic refill format compared to traditional rigid plastic bottles. According to product information, this design provides 82% less plastic usage. The shape characteristics have been functionally optimised for refilling purposes, with a spout form that facilitates easy pouring. Textural representation creates a premium perception not physically but through the glossiness and smoothness of the surface.

**Discourse and Expression:** The discourses on the packaging explicitly emphasise the brand's environmental responsibility claim: expressions such as "82% less plastic usage" and "Produced in a water-recycling facility" are directly sustainability-themed messages. These discourses establish credibility by supporting environmentally friendly practices with numerical data. These messages, conveyed through minimal typeface, adopt a professional and transparent communication strategy by avoiding exaggerated visual elements.

**Sustainability Codes:** Although a direct recycling icon does not appear on the packaging, sustainability codes have been conveyed through discourse. The expression "water-recycling facility" indicates a certification or practice aimed at reducing the environmental impacts of the production process. The blue tones employed in the colour palette function indirectly as representations of water and nature. Furthermore, the refill format itself constitutes a structural code that encourages sustainable consumption behaviour.



**Figure 7.** "Natural Vegan" brand shampoo sustainable packaging design (Natural Vegan, 2025).

**Visual Aesthetics:** The colour palette employed in the packaging design is based on natural tones: colours such as kraft paper beige, natural green, and natural cork texture establish a strong connection with nature. These colours support perceptions of organicity and environmentally friendly production. The composition on the packaging is minimal, with no unnecessary visual complexity present on the packaging, and the legibility of information is high. Typeface, has been preferred with plain sans-serif fonts, which creates a natural and sincere brand perception. Graphic density has been kept low, with product information and sustainability emphases presented in a simple arrangement.

**Material and Form:** The packaging has been manufactured from entirely biodegradable materials such as 88% recycled paper, 7% natural cork, 4% PHA biopolymer, and 1% biodegradable soy wax. The cylindrical form provides both ease of handling and a distinctive stance on the shelf. The cork cap used as material strengthens the natural material sensation both tactilely and visually. The surface texture reinforces the perception of naturalness in consumers by imparting a matte and organic feel.

**Discourse and Expression:** The texts on the packaging directly convey key messages such as the product being entirely natural, hypoallergenic, handmade, and vegan. Expressions such as "100% compostable" and "bio-degradable" appeal to consumers with high environmental consciousness. Furthermore, the indication that production and design were carried out in different countries (Made in USA / Designed in Canada) enhances brand credibility. The presentation of messages through simple typeface, reflects a content-focused communication approach.

**Sustainability Codes:** The packaging communicates sustainability codes through both textual and material selection means. The recycled paper surface, natural material usage, cork cap, and biodegradable contents visually present an "eco" identity as well. The leaf logo referencing nature strengthens the brand's ecological responsibility vision at a visual level. The expression "100% compostable in backyards, landfills, waterways & oceans" encompasses not merely recyclability but also the promise of being a product that safely decomposes in nature.



**Figure 8.** "Ecover" brand cleaner sustainable packaging design (Ecover, 2025).

**Visual Aesthetics:** The colour palette employed in the packaging design consists of blue, green, and white tones. The white background strengthens perceptions of cleanliness, purity, and hygiene, whilst green tones represent environmentally friendly and ecological values. Blue, in turn, references both the water theme and a sense of reliability. The composition on the packaging has been arranged with a clear information hierarchy from top to bottom. Accordingly, the brand name and logo are positioned at the top, the product description in the middle, and sustainability information in the lower section. Typeface has been reinforced with highly legible, bold, sans-serif characters. Graphic density is minimal, which enables the target audience to access information rapidly.

**Material and Form:** The packaging has been manufactured from 50% recycled plastic. The material preference supports the product's sustainability claim, whilst the rigid plastic form provides long-lasting use and durability. The bottle form features an angled neck design specific to toilet cleaners. This form offers an ergonomic solution in terms of ease of use. The surface texture provides both a clean appearance and easy grip through a matte-glossy balance.

**Discourse and Expression:** The texts on the packaging have been presented multilingually, which reflects a brand strategy oriented towards the global market. Expressions such as "Con ingredientes biodegradables a base de plantas" (Plant-based biodegradable ingredients) demonstrate both that the product content is nature-friendly and that it instils confidence in consumers. The statement "50% recycled plastic bottle" directly supports environmental benefit with numerical data. A direct and plain language has been employed in the texts, thus enabling consumers to perceive the message rapidly.

**Sustainability Codes:** The recycled plastic statement and recycling iconography on the front face of the packaging constitute a visual reflection of sustainability codes. The flower form used within the logo strengthens the brand's ecological stance by referencing nature. The plant-based content emphasis has been supported with green typeface and explanations reinforcing environmental responsibility have been placed in the lower section.



**Figure 9.** "Green Clean" brand plant-based dishwasher detergent sustainable packaging design (Green Clean, 2025).

**Visual Aesthetics:** A colour palette of green, blue, white, and orange has been employed in the packaging design. Green represents nature and environmentally friendly values, whilst blue reinforces perceptions of water and cleanliness. The white background supports the product's purity and hygiene message. Orange has been used as an attention-grabbing accent in the product type and information regarding the absence of harmful chemicals. The composition has been arranged with an information hierarchy from top to bottom. On the packaging, the brand and logo are positioned at the top, product description in the middle, and technical information and sustainability messages in the lower section. The typeface possesses a clear textual arrangement emphasised through different colours and point sizes. Graphic density is at a moderate level. Visual elements (leaf icon, water wave imagery) have been balanced with text.

**Material and Form:** The packaging has been manufactured from recycled plastic. The "Recycled Plastic" statement and icon on the label support the sustainability of the material. The bottle form provides ergonomic use for dishwasher detergents with its rectangular body and narrow neck structure. The surface appears smooth and glossy. The glossy preference of the packaging enhances both hygiene perception and shelf visibility.

**Discourse and Expression:** The packaging has been designed with environment and health-focused discourses. The expressions "Bitkisel" (Plant-based) and "Plant-Based" indicate that the product possesses naturally sourced ingredients. The statement "Contains no harmful chemicals" constitutes a direct trust message oriented towards consumer health. The "Organic orange oil" emphasis foregrounds the product's naturalness and aromatic properties. The Vegan logo supports ethical values. A plain, persuasive, and bilingual approach suitable for the international market has been employed in the texts.

**Sustainability Codes:** The packaging features a recycling icon, leaf imagery, and vegan certification. The leaf symbol stands out as a visual representation of ecological sensitivity. The "Recycled plastic" statement explicitly indicates environmental benefit. The Vegan logo emphasises that the product is free from animal-derived contents and adheres to ethical production principles. The water droplet and wave imagery evokes both cleanliness and the natural cycle of water.

**Table 2.** Sustainable Packaging Characteristics in Cleaning and Personal Care Products.

Brand Product	Visual Aesthetics	Material Form	and Discourse Expression	and Sustainability Codes
Yves Rocher – Cleansing Gel & Serum	Green and white natural tones; plant illustrations; balanced composition; simple typeface	Recyclable plastic; ergonomic pump bottle; transparent body	"Recyclable nature-friendly packaging"; skin type-appropriate information; naturalness emphasis	Leaf imagery; recycling statement
Kérastase Shampoo Refill Pouch	Light blue minimalist design; low graphic density; modern typeface	82% less plastic; flexible packaging; surface	"82% less plastic usage"; "Produced in water-recycling facility"; measurable messages	Recycling percentage icons
Natural Vegan – Shampoo	Kraft brown and green; natural material; handwritten-style typeface	88% recycled paper, 7% cork cap, 1% soy wax; compostable; cylindrical form	"100% compostable", "Vegan", "Handmade"; strong naturalness emphases	Nature representations; compost and recycling statements
Ecover Toilet Cleaner	White background; blue-green palette; flower and leaf symbols; simple typeface	50% recycled plastic; ergonomic narrow-necked bottle	"Plant-based biodegradable ingredients" emphasis	Leaf-flower logos; recycling percentage
Green Clean – Dishwasher Gel Detergent	White, green, blue, and orange contrast; water wave imagery; attention-grabbing headline	Recycled plastic; ergonomic glossy surface	"Plant-based"; "Organic orange oil"; "Contains no harmful chemicals"; Vegan logo	Recycling icon; vegan certification
Faith Nature Shampoo	Vibrant green and natural leaf patterns; dense plant imagery; nature-evoking typeface	100% recycled and re-recyclable plastic bottle; standard cylindrical form	"Vegan", "Free", "Origin"; expressions	"Cruelty-free", "Natural vegan and cruelty-certified free logos; recycling symbols

According to the comparative analysis conducted across six brands, the distinctive common characteristics of sustainable packaging design in cleaning and personal care products have been identified. It is observed that in all examined packaging, the colour palette has been configured through green, blue, and white tones. These colours support perceptions of environment, water, and naturalness, thereby creating associations of ecological sensitivity in consumers. Nature representations occupy a significant place in visual aesthetics; symbols such as leaves, flowers, and water waves emerge as fundamental elements of brands' efforts to construct an image harmonious with the environment.

In material preferences, it has been determined that ecological materials such as recycled plastic, recycled paper, cork, and plant-based biopolymers are widely employed. These materials not only reduce environmental impacts but also reinforce the visual integrity of the design through textural simplicity and natural appearance. In formal terms, ergonomic, user-friendly, and refillable design solutions emerge as functional elements supporting sustainability objectives.

The discourse and expression on packaging is supported by clear, measurable, and verifiable data in a manner that enhances the credibility of sustainability messages. Percentage expressions (such as 82% less plastic, 100% recycled) along with certified declarations such as "Vegan", "Organic", and

"Biodegradable" create an element of trust in consumers and strengthen brand image. Ethical certifications, recycling icons, and nature representations have been prominently positioned on the front face of packaging as integral components of visual communication strategy. Within this context, all these elements emerge as common characteristics in packaging designated as sustainable, green, or ecological. Within this framework, sustainability principles in these brands' packaging designs are integrated with the aesthetic, material, discourse, and symbolic language elements of visual communication design. This holistic approach, constructed through colour, form, typeface and iconography, demonstrates that sustainable packaging constitutes not merely a domain of environmental responsibility but also a strategic communication instrument in terms of brand identity and the visual connection established with consumers.

## CONCLUSION

This research has analysed visual communication strategies conducted through exemplary packaging designs that have adopted the concept of sustainability, thereby revealing how sustainable design understanding has been transformed into a visual language in contemporary times. It has been concluded that packaging is not merely a surface carrying technical information about the product but rather a communication instrument symbolising the relationship that the brand establishes with the environment and society. One of the fundamental findings of the study is the frequent use of codes such as simplicity, natural representations, ethical messages, and recyclable material aesthetics in the visualisation of sustainability. These codes, whilst reflecting aesthetic preferences, are communication instruments that reinforce the trust relationship sought to be established with the conscious consumer.

The examined cleaning and personal care product packaging exhibits distinct commonalities in sustainability-oriented visual communication strategies. In colour palettes, natural tones such as green, beige, brown, and pastel blue, along with low-saturation soft colours, are generally preferred, thereby strengthening perceptions of naturalness, environmental friendliness, and tranquillity. In terms of materials, options with low environmental impact such as recycled plastic, biodegradable polymers, glass, and reusable containers are prominent. A brand image that is sensitive to nature, possesses an ethical production understanding, and encourages conscious consumption is presented to the target audience. Typeface emphasises reliability and transparency through simple and legible characters, whilst nature representations, recycling icons, and ethical labelling such as "eco", "organic", and "vegan" reinforce the sustainability message. Within this context, the visual language and employed materials integrate to present a coherent communication strategy that strengthens both brand identity and green image.

Within this context the research recommendations are as follows: The incorporation of specialised courses and projects on sustainable visual communication by institutions providing design education will contribute to the development of new generation designers with environmental consciousness. Brand communicators should configure not only product contents but also packaging surfaces with a meaningful and simple narrative language. In design research sustainability should be studied more extensively not merely in terms of production or consumption but also in the context of communicative representation forms. It is considered that in future research, how visual sustainability perception is shaped could be examined with larger samples through user experience perception analysis and impact measurements supported by quantitative methods.

## REFERENCES

- Delmas, M. A., & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The drivers of greenwashing. *California Management Review*, 54(1), 64–87. <https://doi.org/10.1525/cmr.2011.54.1.64>
- Ding, Y., Meng, X., & Sun, C. (2024). Simplicity matters: Unraveling the impact of minimalist packaging on green trust in daily consumer goods. *Sustainability*, 16(12), Article 4932. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16124932>

- Ecover. (2025). *Toilet cleaner sustainable packaging* [Product packaging image]. Retrieved February 9, 2026, from <https://uk.ecover.com/products/household/toilet-cleaner-pine-and-mint/>
- Enes, E. (2019). *Adaptation of zero-waste pattern design method to fashion industry with the case of Turkey* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. İzmir University of Economics.
- Erişmiş, M. C. (2007). *Sürdürülebilir oluklu mukavva ambalaj tasarımı: Olmuksa örneği [Sustainable corrugated cardboard packaging design: The case of Olmuksa]* [Master's thesis]. Istanbul Technical University.
- Ersan, M. (2021). Upcycling as a sustainable alternative in packaging design. *21. Yüzyılda Eğitim ve Toplum*, 10(30), 679–692.
- Faith in Nature. (2025). *Shampoo sustainable packaging* [Product packaging image]. Retrieved February 9, 2026, from <https://faithinnature.com.tr/faith-in-nature-sampuan-normal-kuruya-donuk-saclar>
- Green Clean. (2025). *Plant-based dishwasher detergent sustainable packaging* [Product packaging image]. Retrieved February 9, 2026, from <https://www.ugreenclean.com/bulasik/>
- Hosey, L. (2012). *The shape of green: Aesthetics, ecology, and design*. Island Press.
- İlhan, M. (2016). Examination of the promotion of provinces in Turkey according to regional product packaging. *Medeniyet Sanat Dergisi*, 2(2), 105–120.
- Kerastase. (2025). *Hair care shampoo sustainable packaging: Refill pouch* [Product packaging image]. Retrieved February 9, 2026, from <https://www.trendyol.com/kerastase/resistance-bain-force-architecte-zayif-ve-yipranmis-saclar-icin-onarici-sampuan-500-ml-p-858922209?gads=true>
- Natural Vegan. (2025). *Shampoo sustainable packaging* [Product packaging image]. Retrieved February 9, 2026, from <https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/335729347232797127/>
- Oduncu, S. (2020). The role of graphic design in sustainability and bioposter design. *İdil Sanat ve Dil Dergisi*, 9(67), 481–496.
- Pinterest. (2025a). *Ecological packaging examples* [Image]. Retrieved February 9, 2026, from <https://in.pinterest.com/pin/ecofriendly-packaging-design-inspiring-vega-protein--509821620327663602/>
- Pinterest. (2025b). *Green image packaging example* [Image]. Retrieved February 9, 2026, from <https://tr.pinterest.com/pin/ecofriendly-oneway-box-for-secure-food-packaging--557390891401309147/>
- Satheesan, A. (2021). Designing for second life: Systemic design for sustainable packaging in appliance manufacturing industry. In K. Sung, J. Singh, & B. Bridgens (Eds.), *State-of-the-art upcycling research and practice* (Lecture Notes in Production Engineering). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-72640-9\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-72640-9_3)
- Serim, M. (2016, March 15). IKEA'nın yeni ambalajları doğada iz bırakmadan yok oluyor [IKEA's new packaging disappears in nature without leaving a trace]. *Bigumigu*. <https://bigumigu.com/haber/ikea-nin-yeni-ambalajlari-dogada-iz-birakmadan-yok-oluyor/>

Spence, C. (2022). Visual communication via the design of food and beverage packaging. *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 7, Article 42. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41235-022-00391-9>

Steenis, N. D., van Herpen, E., van der Lans, I. A., Ligthart, T. N., & van Trijp, H. C. M. (2017). Consumer response to packaging design: The role of packaging materials and graphics in sustainability perceptions and product evaluations. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 162, 286–298. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2017.06.036>

Sustainable Packaging Coalition. (2024). *Definition of sustainable packaging*. GreenBlue. [https://sustainablepackaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SPC\\_Definition-of-Sust-Packaging\\_Landscape.pdf](https://sustainablepackaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SPC_Definition-of-Sust-Packaging_Landscape.pdf)

World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our common future*. Oxford University Press.

Yves Rocher. (2025). *Shampoo sustainable packaging: Pure Menthe and Pure Algue series* [Product packaging image]. Retrieved February 9, 2026, from <https://www.trendyol.com/kerastase/resistance-bain-force-architecte-zayif-ve-yipranmis-saclar-icin-onarici-sampuan-500-ml-p-858922209?gads=true>