

# PRINT MAGAZINE COVERS AS PACKAGING

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## ABSTRACT:

Packaging and magazine covers share many common traits. Both these elements are very important in relation to marketing activities of media and non-media enterprises. And while there are quite a lot of studies on packaging itself, there are not as many in-depth analyses of magazine covers. This article is a part of a series of scholarly texts, in which the author analyses the phenomenon of magazines' front-pages, aiming to fill a certain scientific void when it comes to research on magazine covers and e-covers. In this article, the author confirms the hypothesis that covers of contemporary magazines are, in fact, their 'packaging'. The study also fulfils the following goals: 1) to define the term "packaging"; 2) to discuss the concept of media product packaging; 3) to present the phenomenon of magazine covers as packaging in various theoretical and empirical contexts. The empirical inquiry is based on quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative research was conducted by the survey method based on CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) technique between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2016, involving a nationwide research sample consisting of Poles. The qualitative research was based on analyses of scholarly sources related to the study of magazine covers, and then on comparison of data situated on magazine covers and data related to packaging when it comes to its function, composition and design.

## KEY WORDS:

cover, front-page, magazines, media product, packaging, the press

## Introduction

Packaging, just like a magazine cover, is the first element of contact between the customer and the product.<sup>1</sup> However, the similarities do not end here. Magazine covers and packaging need to communicate information about the product, its brand, values and goals in a complex way. They should not only attract recipients'/buyers' attention, but also encourage them to purchase products. On the other hand, media products and non-media goods differ in their content, dynamics, production procedures and distribution methods, in the (in)ability of rapid content modification, as well as in the extent of self-promotion and use of personalised brands; the functions of media themselves are very diverse, too.

<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: KOTLER, P., KELLER, K. L.: *Marketing*. 14<sup>th</sup> Edition. Poznań: Rebis, 2015, p. 372; WHITE, J. V.: *Designing for Magazines*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York, London: R.R. Bowker Company, 1982, p. 1.



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Taking into account these differences, may these two elements be compared at all? In other words, can a magazine cover be regarded as its packaging? This is a very important question: the answer might help magazine editors work more effectively by, for instance, obtaining the necessary practical knowledge and implementing packaging trade solutions into the sphere of publishing. And while there are many scholarly studies on packaging focused on different aspects of this field of interest, there are not as many academic sources related to the issue of magazine covers, as pointed out by S. Johnson and C. A. de Lozano.<sup>2</sup>

Considering the above-mentioned observations, we have decided to investigate the following research goals: 1) to define the notion of “packaging”; 2) to determine the concept of media product packaging; 3) to present the phenomenon of illustrated magazine covers as packaging in the light of various theoretical and empirical contexts.

Our empirical inquiry is based on both quantitative and qualitative research – the quantitative research was conducted by the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) survey technique between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2016 on a nationwide research sample of Polish people as selected by the Ariadna panel.<sup>3</sup> The sample was N=1094 people aged 18 and above, selected in accordance with adequate quotes as derived from the overall structure of population in terms of gender, age, education and size of their places of residence. The sample thus reflects the numerical composition of the whole population in terms of the quotation-related traits. The questionnaire was aimed at researching the respondents’ opinions on covers (front-pages) of magazines and e-magazines. It contained seventeen questions: four related to demographic data (the categories of gender, age, place of residence, education), and thirteen essential questions.

Most of the questions were close-ended (fourteen single-choice questions and two questions with the possibility of choosing multiple answers), while one question was open-ended. It is important to point out that the survey was not aimed at discovering the research participants’ preferences associated with content (i.e. key topics or specialisations) of magazines (and therefore with content of their covers), but at analysing the respondents’ overall approach to the phenomenon of magazines’ covers or rather their front-pages.

We would like to note that only the aspects related to the main objective of this article (as specified above) were subject to the analysis. The demographically categorised research participants were to indicate whether they thought that magazine covers were, in fact, a form of packaging. Our intention was to obtain a thorough answer to the question how Poles see the problem of magazine covers in relation to packaging. It is worth mentioning that other conclusions drawn from the results of the survey were presented in previously published articles (dedicated to topics such as people’s reactions to covers and e-covers, readers’ preferences, cover themes or cover elements). It also means that this article is a part of a series of texts dealing with the broader issue of magazine covers, and here only the context exceeding media studies is presented, since we refer to logistics and marketing as well.

The qualitative analysis is based on reflecting on scholarly sources related to magazine covers, and then on comparing their characteristics with those related to packaging in terms of their functions, structure and design.

The purpose of this part of the research is to identify common traits and differences between packaging and magazine covers. The juxtaposition of both parts of the research allows us to verify the assumption stating that covers of magazines may be regarded as their ‘packaging’.

2 See: JOHNSON, S., DeLOZANO, C. A.: The Art and Science of Magazine Cover Research. In *Journal of Magazine Media & New Media Research*, 2002, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 1-10. [online]. [2017-12-20]. Available at: <<https://aejcmagazine.arizona.edu/Journal/Fall2002/Johnson1.pdf>>.

3 Panel *Badawczy Ariadna*. [online]. [2017-12-20]. Available at: <<https://panelariadna.pl/userpanel.php>>.

# Theoretical Outlines of Product Packaging

## Defining the Concept

The Polish Legal Act from the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2001 on Packaging and Packaging Waste defines packaging as “every product made of any type of material and intended for the containment, protection, handling, delivery, or the presentation of goods, from raw materials to processed goods, as well as parts of the packaging and those elements that are attached to the packaging and intended for the same purpose as any given packaging”.<sup>4</sup> S. Chudy and M. Pietraszewski see it as “a physical construction appropriate for its product, the purpose of which is to protect the product from any damage and decay, to allow for its portioning and transport (utility functions), as well as to communicate about the product, present it aesthetically and allow for its exposure (promotional functions)”.<sup>5</sup>

Many marketing, logistics and commodity experts value the meaning of packaging significantly; according to them, it is the fifth element of marketing mix or a vital part of most product development strategies.<sup>6</sup> A growing role of packaging is frequently mentioned as well; for instance, due to the development of self-service forms of retail where most purchase decisions are made at the store, and these decisions also determined by whether the product attracts the customers’ attention or not.<sup>7</sup>

M. Ankiel-Homa stresses the role of packaging not only in the context of the above-mentioned product strategy (where it can be both a separate product and an element of an integrated product),<sup>8</sup> but also its promotion (when it becomes a part of the company’s communication with customers), price (in terms of evaluation of quality and cost of packaging’s design and manufacture as an element of the overall production cost) and distribution.<sup>9</sup> A. Walden-Kozłowska goes one step farther and claims that “consumer’s evaluation of any product’s quality, its brand and quality of its packaging are correlated”, which means that they are integrated and influence one another.<sup>10</sup>

M. Lisińska-Kuśnierz and M. Ucherek mention that the present understanding of the concept exceeds classic marketing, scholarly knowledge on commodities or the sphere of logistics more and more often. Various managerial and marketing approaches where packaging becomes “the external layer of the product inside it” are emerging noticeably.

This means that packaging no longer refers only to physical objects (a box, a can, a plastic bag), but also to special events or services.<sup>11</sup> This approach is even more important in the context of the wide debate on media products where content – and thus its ‘packaging’ as well – is transitory (e.g. online newspapers, TV programmes).

4 Ustawa z dnia 11 maja 2001 r. o opakowaniach i odpadach opakowaniowych, Dz.U. Nr 63 poz. 638 ze zm. art. 3 ust. 1. [online]. [2017-12-20]. Available at: <<http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20010630638>>.

5 CHUDY, S., PIETRASZEWSKI, M.: *Ekonomika handlu. Część I*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo eMPI2, 2003, p. 208.

6 KOTLER, P.: *Marketing*. 11<sup>th</sup> Edition. Poznań: Rebis, 2005, p. 438.

7 For more information, see: CYREK, P.: *Opakowanie jako źródło informacji o produktach żywnościowych*. [online]. [2017-10-10]. Available at: <<https://wnus.edu.pl/miz/file/article/view/535/989.pdf>>; EMBLEM, A.: Opakowalnictwo i społeczeństwo. In EMBLEM, A., EMBLEM, H. (eds.): *Technika opakowań*. Warszawa: PWN, 2014, p. 7.

8 An integrated product consists of inherent elements, hence packaging and its content. It is also qualified as a real product which plays an important role in competitive battles. See: SZYM CZAK, J.: Wpływ warstwy wizualnej opakowań jednostkowych na decyzje nabywcze. In *Zeszyty Naukowe*. Poznań: Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu, 2003, p. 9; SZULCE, K.: Zarządzanie produktem i opakowaniem. In MRUK, H., PILARCZYK, B. (eds.): *Marketing. Uwarunkowania i instrumenty*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Poznań: Akademia Ekonomiczna w Poznaniu, 2007, p. 105.

9 ANKIEL-HOMA, M.: Proces projektowania opakowania jednostkowego dla produktu wprowadzanego na rynek (na przykładzie produktów częstego zakupu). In *Zeszyty Naukowe*. Poznań: Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu, 2003, p. 74-75.

10 WALDEN-KOZŁOWSKA, A.: *Towaroznawcze aspekty badania i oceny wartości promocyjnej opakowań jednostkowych towarów powszechnego użytku*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2005, p. 83.

11 For more information, see: LISIŃSKA-KUŚNIERZ, M., UCHEREK, M.: *Podstawy opakowalnictwa towarów*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2004, p. 10; SZULCE, K.: Zarządzanie produktem i opakowaniem. In MRUK, H., PILARCZYK, B. (eds.): *Marketing. Uwarunkowania i instrumenty*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Poznań: Akademia Ekonomiczna w Poznaniu, 2007, p. 110.

Functions of Packaging

Some of the above-quoted definitions are related to the functions of packaging (protection, carrying, logistics and presentation). It seems worthwhile, however, to present an even more precise and specific approach to the phenomenon, at first from the point of view of marketing. The following functions can be distinguished here:

- strategic (packaging is selected with regards to a product and its specifics, its positioning in relation to target groups according to their gender, age, affluence or interests, to fight competition and protect itself from counterfeit, to introduce innovative graphic and usable solutions, and to facilitate brand recognition);
- promotional (creating any desired impression of a product and distinguishing it from other similar products, placing a logo on the surface of the packaging, maintaining communication cohesion when it comes to image creation; self-promoting);
- informational (a product’s name, providing a list of all ingredients or components, expiry date, manufacturer’s address and price in the case of promotional sales);
- sales-related (facilitating and increasing the existing level of sales);
- supporting comfortable product usage (such as facilitating its use, measuring the correct amount, storing and exposing products as decorations);
- relational (attracting the customer’s attention, arousing trust, evoking a pleasant sensation while opening the package);
- technical (the right shape and size, useful while turning singular packaging into bulk packaging);
- protection of a product’s value (protecting it from any damage or from being opened by inadequate people, prolonging the product’s freshness, making its transport simpler and less demanding).<sup>12</sup>

Scholars and authors of scientific literature related to logistics and commodity science distinguish the following functions of packaging:

- production (selected as per its content);
- usability – creating the possibility of packaging being reused;
- offering comfort of product usage;
- logistic – facilitating completion of logistic processes;<sup>13</sup>
- protective – protecting a product “*throughout use, along with protecting it from mechanical, climatic and biological damage, as well as protecting its user and the environment from any harmful effects of the product*”;<sup>14</sup> additionally, it should facilitate transport and storing of the product, and also prevent the customers from buying counterfeits – by containing some indicator of originality;
- fixative – preventing a product from decomposition, prolonging its freshness;
- promotional – creating a brand and a product’s image, attracting attention, reinforcing its recollection and achieving a competitive advantage;<sup>15</sup>

12 The functions are based on: KOTLER, P.: *Marketing*. 11<sup>th</sup> Edition. Poznań : Rebis, 2005, p. 438-439; KOTLER, PH., KELLER, K. L.: *Marketing*. 14<sup>th</sup> Edition. Poznań : Rebis, 2015, p. 372; KOTLER, P. et al.: *Marketing – podręcznik europejski*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Warszawa : Polskie Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 2002, p. 639; SZULCE, K.: Zarządzanie produktem i opakowaniem. In MRUK, H., PILARCZYK, B., (eds.): *Marketing. Uwarunkowania i instrumenty*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Poznań : Akademia Ekonomiczna w Poznaniu, 2007, p. 108-109; WOJCIECHOWSKI, T.: *Marketingowo-logistyczne zarządzanie przedsiębiorstwem*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Warszawa : DIFIN, 2011, p. 163.

13 We have categorised these functions based on: LISIŃSKA-KUŚNIERZ, M., UCHEREK, M.: *Podstawy opakownictwa towarów*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2004, p. 12-15; ZAMKOWSKA, S., ZACOŹDŻON, B.: *Podstawy logistyki*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Radom : Wydawnictwo Politechniki Radomskiej, 2011, p. 99; EMBLEM, A.: *Opakownictwo i społeczeństwo*. In EMBLEM, A., EMBLEM, H. (eds.): *Technika opakowań*. Warszawa : PWN, 2014, p. 35-65.

14 LISIŃSKA-KUŚNIERZ, M., UCHEREK, M.: *Podstawy opakownictwa towarów*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2004, p. 13.

15 For instance, A. Walden-Kozłowska names all the aspects in which this function should be regarded, that is: aesthetic, technical, ergonomic, protective, operating, display, informative, ecological, educational and pricing. Single packaging present a certain value to consumers, a value that can be described as “*a promotional value of packaging*”, that is “*a degree to which a group of packaging characteristics defines the attractiveness of the product hidden inside the packaging as seen by consumers*”. For more information, see: WALDEN-KOZŁOWSKA, A.: *Towaroznawcze aspekty badania i oceny wartości promocyjnej opakowań jednostkowych towarów powszechnego użytku*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2005, p. 25, 27.

- informative – a compilation of illustrations, texts and barcodes communicating legal data (such as the name of the product, its weight, name, ways of its use and address of its manufacturer, expiry date, its list of ingredients, lot number for identification, potential hazards) and image-related data (its logo, product use, price reduction, website or related social media accounts);
- ecological – correlating with the notion of sustainability where ecology is one of the elements of the so-called integrated order;<sup>16</sup>
- educational – communicating information with certain added value;
- sales-related – stimulating in-store purchase decisions, which is also described as a ‘discreet advisor’ or ‘silent salesman’. It is estimated that about 68% to 80% of all purchase decisions are made on basis of store shelves’ design and composition,<sup>17</sup> and 90% of all consumers make their decisions according to what they see on the packaging, especially on its front;<sup>18</sup>
- economical – related to seeking the balance between the cost of packaging and of the product itself.

It is obvious that many functions of packaging appear repeatedly, in different categories, which in turn means that regardless of which perspective we apply, packaging is always an important element of goods and it strongly supports manufacturers’ activities on the market.

Packaging Classification

Based on related body of knowledge, packaging can be subdivided into several categories. Due to a large number of those categories, it seems the most appropriate to present this division in a graphic form (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: Packaging Classification

DIVISION CATEGORY	TYPE OF PACKAGING	BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PACKAGING
Level	Primary (basic)	“all packaging that surrounds a product brought home by its buyer” *
	Secondary (additional)	Additional packaging
	Tertiary	Sorting of secondary packaging
Purpose	Single	“serves to transfer any product to its user in the place of purchase” **
	Bulk	“packaging containing multiple single products, regardless of whether they are transferred to its user or to selling points; this type of packaging can be removed without altering the product’s features”***
	Transport	“serves to transport products in single or bulk packaging and protect products from any damage” ****
Packaging Material	Made of one or multiple materials, such as paper or cardboard, ceramics, glass or wood, plastic (including foil), metal	
Turnover Rate	National and export	
Level of Wear	New and used	

16 SZTUMSKI, W.: Idea zrównoważonego rozwoju a możliwości jej urzeczywistnienia. In *Problemy ekorozwoju*, 2006, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 74.  
17 FARMER, N.: Opakowania i marketing. In EMBLEM, A., EMBLEM, H. (eds.): *Technika opakowań*. Warszawa : PWN, 2014, p. 128.  
18 CLEMENT, J.: Visual Influence on In-Store Buying Decisions: An Eye-Track Experiment on Visual Influence of Packaging Design. In *Journal of Marketing Management*, 2017, Vol. 23, No. 9-10, p. 917-928.

Type of Ownership	Own and foreign	
Type of Packaging Use (also in Trade)	Single-use and multiple-use packaging	
Accounting Practices in Trade	Sold	Becomes the buyer's property
	Refundable	Of multiple use, returned to the supplier
	Leased	Most commonly transport packaging
Industry	Division resulting from type of industry	
Ecological Context	Biodegradable (or not), recyclable (or not)	
Packing Method	Directly on the product	Packed on the product (wrapping, ability to shrink)
	Prior to inserting product	Prepared earlier
Contact with Content	Indirect	Product does not touch its packaging
	Direct	Product touches its packaging
Packaging Location in Relation to One Another in a Set	External	Packaging + other external packaging
	Internal	Packaging inside another packaging
	Combined	Multiple (or one) internal packaging
	Compound	Internal packaging (or a number of them) fixed inside external packaging
	Group	External packaging with a few single layers of packaging (for retail)
Packaging Presentation	'Real' packaging	Available in traditional trade
	E-packaging	Internet representation of packaging that exists in stationary trade (pictures, video, 360° visualisation) enriched by all additional values resulting from the characteristics of the Web *****

Source: own processing based on: LISIŃSKA-KUŚNIERZ, M., UCHEREK, M.: *Podstawy opakowalnictwa towarów*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2004, p. 21-26; SZULCE, K.: *Zarządzanie produktem i opakowaniem*. In MRUK, H., PILARC-ZYK, B., SZULCE, K. (eds.): *Marketing. Uwarunkowania i instrumenty*. Poznań : Akademia Ekonomiczna w Poznaniu, 2007, p. 109-110; EMBLEM, A.: *Opakowalnictwo i społeczeństwo*. In EMBLEM, A., EMBLEM, H. (eds.): *Technika opakowań*. Warszawa : PWN, 2014, p. 8.

\* EMBLEM, A.: Opakowalnictwo i społeczeństwo. In EMBLEM, A., EMBLEM, H. (eds.): *Technika opakowań*. Warszawa : PWN, 2014, p. 8.

\*\* *Legal Act on Packaging and Packaging Waste No. 63/2001 Coll.*, from 11th May 2001. [online]. [2017-04-06]. Available at: <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20010630638>.

\*\*\* *Legal Act on Packaging and Packaging Waste No. 63/2001 Coll.*, from 11th May 2001. [online]. [2017-04-06]. Available at: <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20010630638>.

\*\*\*\* *Legal Act on Packaging and Packaging Waste No. 63/2001 Coll.*, from 11th May 2001. [online]. [2017-04-06]. Available at: <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20010630638>.

\*\*\*\*\* NALEWAJEK, M.: E-opakowanie wyzwaniem dla współczesnego marketing. In *Studia Ekonomiczne. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego w Katowicach*, 2016, No. 254, p. 129.

## Basic Information on the Process of Designing Packaging

Packaging defines the qualities and value of any product and its brand; it has an affective, cognitive, and volitional effect on consumers. It reinforces the cohesion of industry communication by supporting its position *“throughout the whole range of products, or even throughout the product’s whole life”*.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, by looking after the brand’s integrity, it co-creates and supports the relationship between product, brand and recipient.<sup>20</sup>

19 FARMER, N.: Opakowania i marketing. In EMBLEM, A., EMBLEM, H. (eds.): *Technika opakowań*. Warszawa : PWN, 2014, p. 133.  
20 STEWART, B.: Projektowanie i rozwój opakowań. In EMBLEM, A., EMBLEM, H. (eds.): *Technika opakowań*. Warszawa : PWN, 2014, p. 532-533.

Given all the above-mentioned reasons, creating its design is a long and strenuous process. E. Jerzyk points to an interdisciplinary nature of this phenomenon and its relation to arts, production technology, logistics and marketing.<sup>21</sup>

The final design scheme should complete the VIEW model, according to which packaging must comply with the following criteria: visibility, information, emotional appeal and workability.<sup>22</sup> B. Stewart presents the concept of designing packaging and divides it into steps of gathering information:

- on the market – acquiring knowledge of a product, brand, trade, target group, direct and indirect competition, of benefits for consumers;
- technical – related to methods of production, distribution, sales and characteristics of any product;
- environmental and legal – sources and origin of product ingredients, requirements regarding packaging construction and its biodegradability.<sup>23</sup>

According to the scholar, the two first stages are of creative nature (they include meetings with manufacturers and their opinions, consumer and transport tests), while the last one is related to accepting the project and sending it to production. The same author subdivides types of packaging into: conceptual (where means of linking the product with its packaging are sought); construction (working with actual shapes, like models); graphic (illustrative imagery of packaging).

Therefore, the fundamental task is to situate the project of packaging into the context of its product’s specifics and any particular market’s characteristics. The effectiveness of this type of communication needs to be verified by tests (technical, visual, consumer) and marketing surveys focused not only on the brand itself, but also on the packaging. The designing process is also affected by the promotional value of packaging, which has already been mentioned above.<sup>24</sup> It is based on fields of interest, in which design can be organised in terms of:

- aesthetics, which in turn is associated with colour harmony, placement of construction elements, contextuality, correct choice of materials the packaging is made of;
- functionality that consists of ergonomics, weight, easy use (which includes closing and emptying), limpidity and stability;
- information that is visible in data readability, suggesting potential product use, warning against any hazards related to product use.

An important stage in designing packaging is to complete the graphic design. It has two very important functions: 1) it affects customers visually; 2) it evokes emotions and hence creates an impression of the product itself and suggests the benefits of owning it (for example, elevating one’s social status, auto-creation). According to J. Szymczak, the graphic aspect of packaging is *“a carrier of encoded (...) market statements”*, which in turn is supposed to lead to customers noticing the product, getting interested in it, remembering it, to encouraging them to purchase.<sup>25</sup> This aspect is also regarded as the creator of product and brand image.<sup>26</sup> It consists of shape, material, size and protection from any unwanted use, as well as of graphics, text along with printing, colour, symbols, photographs, pictures and spatial composition of all these elements. This makes packaging look balanced and refined.<sup>27</sup>

21 JERZYK, E.: Design opakowania i jego elementy w procesie podejmowania decyzji zakupowych. In *Marketing i Rynek*, 2014, Vol. 4, p. 392.

22 ANKIEL-HOMA, M.: Proces projektowania opakowania jednostkowego dla produktu wprowadzanego na rynek (na przykładzie produktów częstego zakupu). In *Zeszyty Naukowe*. Poznań : Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu, 2003, p. 77-78.

23 STEWART, B.: Projektowanie i rozwój opakowań. In EMBLEM, A., EMBLEM, H. (eds.): *Technika opakowań*. Warszawa : PWN, 2014, p. 77-78.

24 WALDEN-KOZŁOWSKA, A.: *Towaroznawcze aspekty badania i oceny wartości promocyjnej opakowań jednostkowych towarów powszechnego użytku*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2005, p. 29.

25 SZYMCZAK, J.: Wpływ warstwy wizualnej opakowań jednostkowych na decyzje nabywcze. In *Zeszyty Naukowe*. Poznań : Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Poznaniu, 2003, p. 91, 98-100.

26 SZYMCZAK, J., ANKIEL-HOMA, M.: Warstwa wizualna opakowań jednostkowych – kreatorem wizerunku produktów kosmetycznych. In *Opakowanie*, 2004, Vol. 8, p. 28.

27 WALDEN-KOZŁOWSKA, A.: *Towaroznawcze aspekty badania i oceny wartości promocyjnej opakowań jednostkowych towarów powszechnego użytku*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2005, p. 41-47.

V. Butkeviciene, J. Stavinskiene and A. Rutelione arranged and clarified the aforementioned elements. They also proposed the Theoretical Package Communication Model where packaging elements are grouped into the following sets:

- verbal – brand, name, information, instructions, manufacturer, special offers;
- non-verbal – fragrance, material, colour, shape, size and illustration (photographs and images);
- related to perception of packaging – designer’s name, fashion, modernity, environmental performance, innovation, simplicity.<sup>28</sup>

Each of these components has its own set of rules. When considering any of them, one should bear in mind an important fact: “*the meaning of each component may differ depending on a number of factors, such as type of product, brand image, or consumer’s experience (...)*”, while packaging design itself should be closely related to variables such as time pressure, consumer’s participation and type of purchase decision.<sup>29</sup> And so, for instance, texts (signs, letters, digits or written symbols) need to be kept straight, short, simple and brief. The way they are spread across packaging should aestheticize, support brand identification and position. It is important because all these markings will usually remain on the packaging for a long period of time.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, we have to remember that text is not there only to provide additional information and obligatory data (such as a list of ingredients, the manufacturer’s name and address, expiry date, barcodes), but also to clearly define the product’s name embedded in its logo.

The key factor for packaging graphics is the choice of colours. They are to be used with caution, according to appropriate symbolism, combinatorics, harmony and dynamics. Only then they will affect people’s senses, attract consumers’ attention, help them easily remember products and create positive connotations with a certain brand (which may influence purchase decisions). Graphics are also photographs and pictures, the use of which is determined by the size of packaging, the product’s destination, the target group’s preferences and the number of details in the illustration material.

The shape of packaging facilitates brand identification. One needs to take into account such rules as maintaining cohesion with brand, adapting to product’s specifics and target group needs, assuring comfort of use, finding a way to achieve economic and technological aspects of production that correspond with the manufacturer’s financial and material capabilities.<sup>31</sup> Designing packaging is a laborious process. However, fulfilling all of the above-mentioned criteria results in improved recognition of brand, as well as in transferring the qualities of packaging onto the product. Well-designed packaging establishes a link between brand and product, which in turn influences the level of brand credibility, its quality and functional, expressive and competitive values.<sup>32</sup>

# Cover as Packaging of Media Products

## Media Product and Its Packaging Concepts – Defining the Phenomenon

Media product is a “*regularly or impulsively (obtained) consumer goods of everyday use functioning on the media market, and offered on this market (by its producers)*”.<sup>33</sup> It might as well be a product that exists independently in the media space and one that has its own brand:

28 BUTKEVICIENE, V., STRAVINSKIENE, J., RUTELIONE, A.: Impact of Consumer Package Communication on Consumer Decision Making Process. In *Engineering Economics*, 2008, Vol. 56, No. 1, p. 58–64.  
29 JERZYK, E.: Design opakowania i jego elementy w procesie podejmowania decyzji zakupowych. In *Marketing i Rynek*, 2014, Vol. 4, p. 396.  
30 WALDEN-KOZŁOWSKA, A.: *Towaroznawcze aspekty badania i oceny wartości promocyjnej opakowań jednostkowych towarów powszechnego użytku*. Kraków : Wydawnictwo Akademii Ekonomicznej w Krakowie, 2005, p. 47.  
31 SZYMCZAK, J., ANKIEL-HOMA, M.: Warstwa wizualna opakowań jednostkowych – kreatorem wizerunku produktów kosmetycznych. In *Opakowanie*, 2004, Vol. 8, p. 29.  
32 LIN, S., YEN, J., FANG, K.: The Influence of Packaging-design Benefits on Brand Equity. In *The Science of Design*, 2012, Vol. 58, No. 5, p. 455–459.  
33 JUPOWICZ-GINALSKA, A.: *Marketing medialny*. Warszawa : DIFIN, 2010, p. 55.

- in the broad sense – a TV channel, a TV programme, a magazine, a newspaper, a website, an online TV channel or online radio station;
- in the indirect sense – broadcast programming and VOD platforms aggregate other media goods (they can only be identified after linking them with a specific brand, such as *TV Polsat* broadcasting programming or the *Netflix* platform);
- in the narrow sense – particular TV and radio programmes (such as sitcoms, news programmes, entertainment and journalistic shows).

Each media product consists of its source, medium and content, being either palpable (one you can actually touch, materialise, replay multiple times), or impalpable (ephemeral, one-off). The basic distinction of media product elements is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Media Product Components

MEDIUM	TYPE	SOURCE P – Palpable IP – Impalpable	CARRIER	CONTENT P – Palpable IP – Impalpable
The Press	traditional	P, IP	palpable	P, IP
	online	P, IP	palpable	P, IP
Radio	traditional	P, IP	palpable	P, IP
	online	P, IP	palpable	P, IP
Television	traditional	P, IP	palpable	P, IP
	online	P, IP	palpable	P, IP
The Internet		P, IP	palpable	P, IP

Source: own processing

Written documents (palpable) may be a source, and hence an inspiration, for any other media product. It can also be inspired by a conversation, gossip or an idea (impalpable). Carriers in the media business are always palpable: these are communication devices allowing us to experience the reception of media content, such as radio and television sets or telecommunications devices. At the same time, media content becomes palpable (a recorded programme, digital archives, a printed online text) and impalpable – in the form of an unsaved picture and sound (not recorded TV or radio show).

Can one speak of packaging in relation to media products, given their heterogeneity and varying specifics? In order to answer this question it is helpful to examine the opinions of B. Bartholdy’s interlocutors in the book on visual identification of TV channels. The word “package” appears several times there when the issue of graphic layout is in question.<sup>34</sup> According to this book’s authors, the role of design is to convey values, aims and philosophy of any given brand. First, however, it needs to be adapted to the target group’s specifics and to the media products and their content.<sup>35</sup> As it is stated there: “*As much as content must be a tool that is the most effective at creating brand image, design must represent it in its purest, most condensed form.*”<sup>36</sup> Amongst its most vital elements are logo, colours, font, sound and animation. All these elements must be coherent and compliant with brand vision. According to practitioners, good design is also able to carry emotions in communication with its consumer, offering something unexpected, magical and atypical.<sup>37</sup>

Design undergoes constant evaluation: positioning of the brand it is linked to is systematically

34 BARTHOLDY, B.: *Broadcast Design*. Cologne, London, New York : Daab Books, 2007, p. 221, 326 346, 379.  
35 BARTHOLDY, B.: *Broadcast Design*. Cologne, London, New York : Daab Books, 2007, p. 132, 229, 282 334, 362, 366.  
36 BARTHOLDY, B.: *Broadcast Design*. Cologne, London, New York : Daab Books, 2007, p. 246.  
37 BARTHOLDY, B.: *Broadcast Design*. Cologne, London, New York : Daab Books, 2007, p. 178.



verified. The results, along with quantitative research inquiry and qualitative analysis, enable making decisions regarding its future, as well as those regarding brand image campaigns and communication.<sup>38</sup>

The reasoning described above suggests that in media it is necessary to apply a managerial approach to packaging, and it should be understood not only as the visual or auditory identification, but also as the complete communication-related aspect of branding, as the process of building a brand (as it is shown here, features of design are close to those of packaging). Nonetheless, this sort of statement would be overly generalising, as there are also magazine covers that seem to fit into the criteria of packaging. This approach is justified by examples from related branches: the music industry and the book publishing industry. In the former, packaging is also known as CD cover,<sup>39</sup> while in the latter it is known as book cover. A. Sitek claims that “*just like product packaging, book cover is the first one to reach its consumer, hence making its communication the most important*”.<sup>40</sup> His statement has been confirmed by K. Szczęśniak<sup>41</sup> and A. Damasiewicz; the latter being the author of over 1000 book covers.<sup>42</sup>

# Print Magazine Covers as Packaging – Quantitative Research

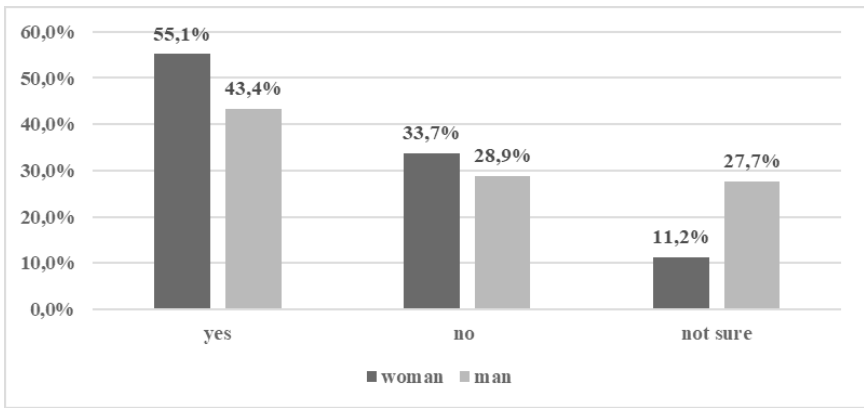
J. V. White describes magazine covers as “a cabinet for content” and “public packaging of content”.<sup>43</sup> We therefore decided to investigate whether Polish respondents regard covers in a similar manner. Average results of the survey show that 49.6% of research participants regarded covers as magazine packaging (31.4% provided the negative answer and 19% selected the ‘Not Sure’ option as their answer). Looking at the results in terms of gender, women were more likely to give the positive answer to the question rather than men (men seemed to be a bit more undecided, choosing the “Not Sure” answer more often), as it is demonstrated in Graph 1 below.

Age-related results differ from the average results significantly (Graph 2). Cover was regarded as packaging mostly by Poles aged 25 to 34 and by those belonging to the eldest age groups (45 and above). These respondents also expressed the strongest certainty in relation to their opinions. However, respondents from the 35 to 44 age group mostly did not identify magazine cover as its packaging (the greatest number of negative and “Not Sure” answers was identified here).

Looking at the research results divided on basis of different places of residence, cover was seen as packaging by inhabitants of small and medium-sized towns: these respondents used the “Not Sure” category as their answer the least frequently (see Graph 3). It is worth mentioning here that reactions of other subgroups did not differ significantly from the average results.

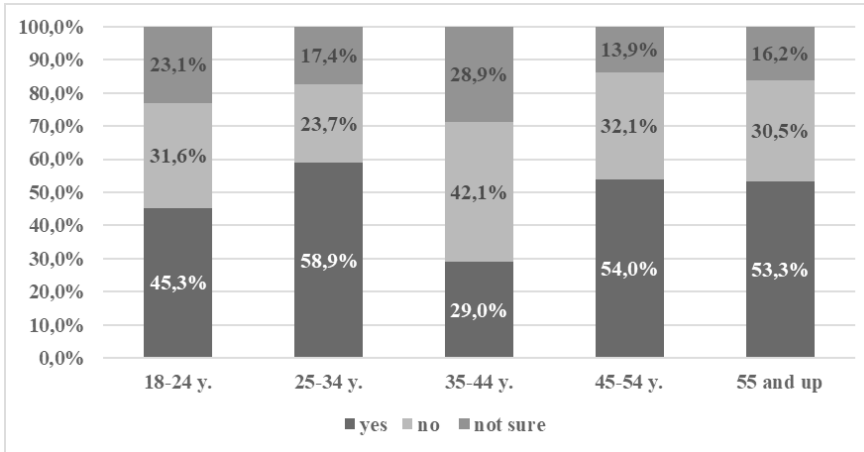
It is also interesting to look at the results while considering different levels of the participants’ education (Graph 4). A certain principle is visible here: the higher the level of education, the larger number of people saw front-pages as packaging.

Thus, thanks to the empirical data, the initial assumption may be verified: many respondents associate cover with packaging in case of print magazines (the greatest differences between the average results and the specific results divided in accordance with the categories of age, gender, education level or place of residence can be observed in the categories of education and age). This is an important conclusion; after all, the participating respondents were all readers of various print magazines.



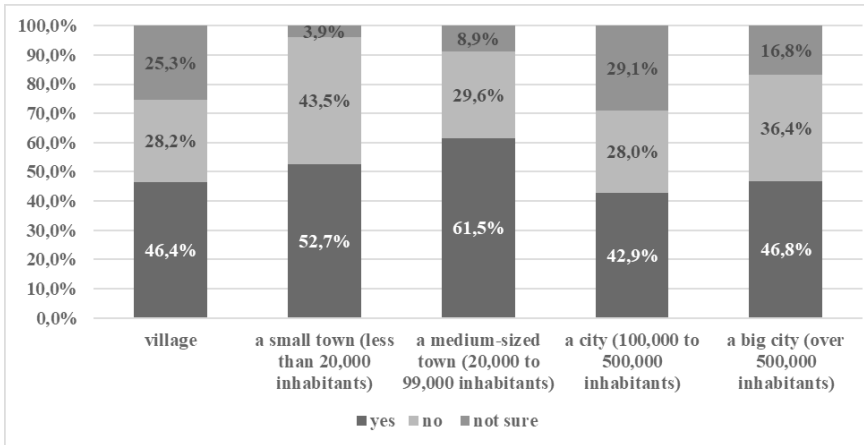
Graph 1: Cover as Magazine Packaging – the respondents’ gender

Source: own processing



Graph 2: Cover as Magazine Packaging – the respondents’ age

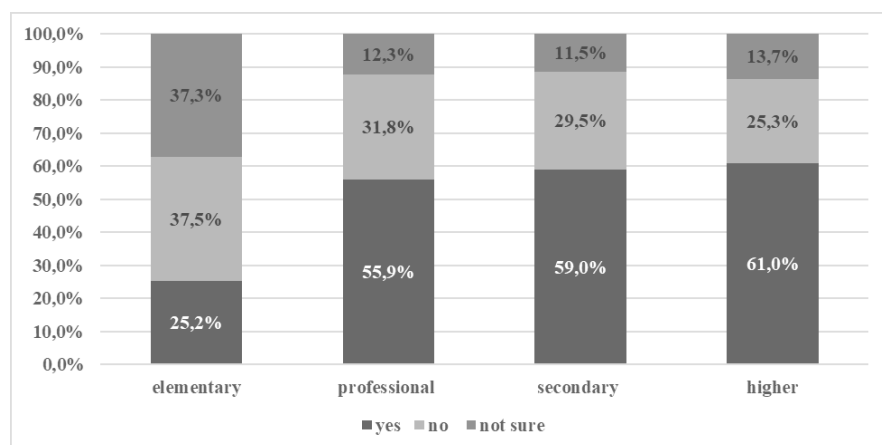
Source: own processing



Graph 3: Cover as Magazine Packaging – the respondents’ place of residence

Source: own processing

38 BARTHOLDY, B.: *Broadcast Design*. Cologne, London, New York : Daab Books, 2007, p. 140.  
39 ZAIKS: *Opakowanie muzyki*. [online]. [2017-12-20]. Available at: <[http://www.zaiks.org.pl/231.154.65\\_opakowanie\\_muzyki](http://www.zaiks.org.pl/231.154.65_opakowanie_muzyki)>.  
40 SITEK, A.: *Okladka książki zachęca do kupna?* [online]. [2017-12-20]. Available at: <<https://www.designer.pl/artykul/okladka-ksiazki-zacheca-do-kupna-58>>.  
41 SZCZĘŚNIAK K.: Okładka i obwoluta książki jako przedmiot badań interdyscyplinarnych. In *Toruńskie Studia Bibliologiczne*, 2011, Vol. 2, No. 7, p. 38-40.  
42 DAMASIEWICZ, A.: *About Me*. [online]. [2017-12-20]. Available at: <<http://www.annadamasiewicz.com/about-me/>>.  
43 WHITE, J. V.: *Designing for Magazines*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York, London : R.R. Bowker Company, 1982, p. 1.



Graph 4: Cover as Magazine Packaging – the respondents' level of education

Source: own processing

## Magazine Covers as Packaging – Qualitative Analysis

In order to verify the initial assumption, we compare functions, categorisation and designing process of magazine covers and packaging. Amongst the most important functions of packaging, the following ones should be pointed out:<sup>44</sup>

1. Informational and promotional (image-related) – analysed together due to their common influence. On the one hand, cover provides information on a magazine, its price, issue, date of publication and content. On the other hand, it creates the magazine's brand and expresses its values, allows the readers to identify it, displays its logo and directs the recipients' attention to the content, inviting them to explore it by appropriate selection of cover (front-page) themes. It also promotes the content itself, being both the subject and the object of media communication activities.
2. Financial:
  - a) advertising – cover as a display of paid advertising;
  - b) sales-related – cover has an impact on a magazine's sales (most of all, its price and logo presented on the cover).
3. Relational:
  - a) communicative – cover helps form a closer bond between a magazine and its reader by using the right appeals;
  - b) entertaining – magazine cover may be criticised or included in pop cultural ranks.
4. Ideological:
  - a) culture-forming – cover comments on social, political, cultural or religious phenomena;
  - b) educational – cover provides important data, encouraging discussion and further exploration of various topics.
5. Innovative – cover introduces new graphic and technological solutions.
6. Protective – cover protects a magazine's content (depending on the quality of the paper used).
7. Metafunctions – superior cover functions aiming at supporting the magazine's battle for recipients and advertisers. These include: competitiveness, guarantee of stability (magazine layout model) and changeability simultaneously.

44 JUPOWICZ-GINALSKA, A.: Zadania okładek współczesnych magazynów drukowanych. In *Rocznik Bibliologiczno-Prasoznawczy*, 2017, Vol. 9, No. 20, p. 75-76.

The comparison of functions of packaging and covers is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Packaging Functions vs Cover Functions – Comparison

<b>Packaging and cover – common traits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>educational</li> <li>promotional</li> <li>informational</li> <li>relational</li> <li>protective</li> <li>financial</li> </ul>	<b>Non-recurring packaging functions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>ecological</i></li> <li><i>economical</i></li> <li><i>logistics</i></li> <li><i>production</i></li> <li><i>strategic</i></li> <li><i>technical</i></li> <li><i>usability</i></li> <li><i>supporting the comfort of use</i></li> <li><u>fixative</u></li> </ul>
<b>Non-recurring cover functions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>innovative</i></li> <li><i>competitive</i></li> <li><i>culture-forming</i></li> <li><i>stability</i></li> <li><u>changeability</u></li> </ul>	

Source: own processing

The table above shows three groups of functions: common (typical for both cover and packaging), those typical for covers and those typical for packaging. A thorough analysis reveals that a large part of the functions that were classified as specific to one of the subjects of our analysis is also performed by the other (these are marked in italics). This means that, in fact, there are more common functions than we initially assumed.

Packaging performs some of the non-recurring cover functions simply because it also has to be innovative, competitive (packaging helps a product to be easily distinguished from other products), culture-forming (some wrappings may be related to a certain social situation or history, evoking discussion or controversy, such as the packaging of COBI blocks – Small Army the Warsaw Uprising series, presenting a complete set of information on firearms used during the Uprising); stabilising (based on a regular model, modification of which might be dictated by, for instance, necessary changes in branding strategy). The only function of cover that is not typical for packaging is changeability – no packaging undergoes modifications as often as the front-page of a magazine, which is related to this media product's specific traits.

Moreover, covers perform some of the non-recurring packaging functions. They are often ecological (made of biodegradable paper); economical (only few editors use innovative solutions such as 3D paper or VR applications, as the production cost would be too high); logistics and technical (the shape of magazines allows distributors to wrap them in bulk packaging in order to transport them more easily); production (cover content depicts a certain amount a magazine's content); strategic (covers are designed for specific target groups, they are a part of magazine branding and a tool that is useful in terms of the highly competitive media environment); usability (cover can be re-used, is looked at repeatedly, recycled or used for the purposes of archiving) and supporting the comfort of use of a product (in the context of haptic sensations that are based on the sense of touch). In our opinion, covers do not perform the fixative function (as paper does not 'go off' or lose its 'freshness').

We may conclude that there is a very high scale of similarities between the functions of covers and those of packaging. Based on that, we state that given the similar or almost identical functions covers and packaging fulfil, covers can be seen as magazine packaging.

The next stage of our analysis is comparing the classification of the phenomena in question. This is presented in Table 4. One can clearly see that cover fits into the definition of package as described by logistics and marketing (which means that yet again, cover and packaging have become the very same thing).

Table 4: Classification of Packaging vs. Classification of Covers – Comparison

Division Category	Type of Packaging	Cover as Packaging
Level	Primary (basic)	Yes – magazine cover
	Secondary (additional)	Yes, distributed as packages tied with a plastic tape
	Tertiary	Yes, transport of magazine packages on pallets
Purpose	Single	Yes, a form of primary packaging
	Bulk	Yes, a form of secondary and tertiary packaging
	Transport	
Packaging Material	Made of one material or multiple materials, such as paper or cardboard, ceramics, glass or wood, plastic (including foil), metal	Made of a single material (paper) or multiple materials (if wrapped in foil); additionally on pallets (for transport)
Turnover Rate	National and export	Yes: magazines available nation-wide and abroad (retail sales and subscriptions)
Level of Wear	New and used	Yes, both levels available
Type of Ownership	Own and foreign	No, editors typically use original covers
Type of Packaging Use (also in Trade)	Single-use and multiple-use packaging	Multiple use exclusively
Accounting Practices in Trade	Sold	Yes – magazine covers
	Refundable	Yes, when it comes to bulk or tertiary packaging
	Leased	
Industry	Division resulting from the type of industry	Publishing
Ecological Context	Biodegradable (or not), recyclable (or not)	Biodegradable and recyclable
Packing Method	Directly on the product	Yes
	Prior to inserting product	No
Contact with Content	Indirect	No
	Direct	Yes
Packaging Location in Relation to One Another in a Set	External	Yes, if wrapped in foil
	Internal	Yes, e.g. double cover, expandable cover
	Combined	Yes (rarely), e.g. double cover where one needs to be cut
	Compound	No
	Group	Few cases of selling two magazines wrapped in foil
Packaging Presentation	‘Real’ packaging	Yes
	E-packaging	Yes – e-magazine covers

Source: own processing based on sources indicated under Table 1

Some common traits of the phenomena in question may also be found in their design processes. Cover needs to be adjusted to fit a specific magazine (just like packaging needs to fit a product), i.e. the magazine’s content, its thematic specification, recipients’ needs, preferred means of disseminating information. And so magazines sold in retail care about their logo being visible, whereas titles sold by subscription may decide not to stick to the general convention and place its logo in the most unexpected places.<sup>45</sup>

J. V. White claims that cover design expresses the values and content of any magazine. It should also have a credible and reliable impact on the whole media brand image.<sup>46</sup> W. Owen believes that “*designing covers undergoes the greatest level of control (...) and is potentially a strong factor in conflicts*”, mainly where aesthetic ambitions of the designer collide with the editor’s business attitude.<sup>47</sup> This is supposed to result in the creation of the so-called “house style”, which is a constant, appropriately selected group of elements that allows recipients for an easy and quick identification of originator.<sup>48</sup> Every single classification of covers known to us is related to their designing process, which proves how important this conceptual work on covers is to editors (Table 5).<sup>49</sup>

Table 5: Magazine Covers Classification

AUTHOR OF THE CLASSIFICATION	TYPE OF PACKAGING
C. Smith	1. Multicolour or single-colour with elements printed onto the cover. 2. Pictures printed on white paper, partly covering the front-page. 3. White or single-coloured cover with no pictures. 4. White of colourful cover with many pictures matched with cover topics. 5. Colourful cover with black or colourful font. 6. Partly white or partly single-coloured cover with pictures taking the rest of the page.
S. Johnson, P. Prijatel	1. As a poster – with title, picture and price, but no text. 2. With one picture and one topic. 3. With one picture and many topics, so-called “cover lines”. 4. With many pictures and many topics. 5. With typography only.
D. E. Sumner, S. Rhoades	1. With a single picture and single wording. 2. With a single picture and many wordings. 3. With many pictures and many wordings. 4. With pictures only or with typography only.

Source: own processing based on quoted literature

The question of cover construction is related to its classification system. As we have proved in a different scholarly study aimed at front-pages,<sup>50</sup> the following components can be listed here: logo with the magazine’s name, brand’s theme, price, barcode, date of issue, cover topics (image-based and textual representation of the magazine’s content) and reference to the magazine’s website. It seems worthwhile to repeatedly mention the already presented Packaging Communication Model (Table 6) in order to present cover elements in this context.

Table 6: Packaging Communication Model (PCM) vs Magazine Covers

GROUP OF PACKAGING ELEMENTS	PACKAGING ELEMENTS IN PCM	COVER ELEMENTS APPEARING IN PCM
Verbal	Brand, name, information, instructions, manufacturer, special offers	Brand, name, information, special offers (e.g. discounts)

45 SMITH, C.: *Magazine Layout*. New York : Cortland Gray Smith, 1973, p. 148-149.  
46 WHITE, J. V.: *Designing for Magazines*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York, London : R.R. Bowker Company, 1982, p. 1.  
47 OWEN, W.: *Modern Magazine Design*. New York : Rizzoli, 1991, p. 186.  
48 FROST, CH.: *Designing for Newspapers and Magazines*. London, New York : Routledge, 2003, p. 19.  
49 Apart from the simplest, related to its traditional and digital form, as well as those deciding on its numbering. Remark by the author.  
50 JUPOWICZ-GINALSKA, A.: Wybrane elementy budowy frontowych okładek magazynów a reakcje polskich odbiorców. An article sent to *Naukowy Przegląd Dziennikarski*: to be published in April 2018.



Non-verbal	Fragrance, material, colour, shape, size and pictures (photographs and images)	Material, colour, size and pictures (photographs and images)
Related to Perception of Packaging	Designer's name, fashion, modernity, environmental performance, innovation, simplicity	Fashion, modernity, environmental performance, innovation, simplicity (depending on graphic concept)

Source: own processing based on PCM (source quoted in the previous chapters)

Once again, it is clear that there are numerous similarities between cover and packaging. In this context, those elements that particularly evoke the readers' interest and encourage them to look through the content are of the greatest importance. These elements are logo and cover topics: J. V. White, W. Owen and Ch. Frost point to their significance expressed by appropriate colour and typography.<sup>51</sup>

Taking into consideration the importance of cover design, level of its complexity, tasks it needs to fulfil and the role of logo, illustrations and textual messages, it is also evident that in this area covers and packaging have a lot in common as well.

# Conclusion

We may conclude that we have fulfilled all objectives of the study – the phenomenon of packaging has been defined and described, the concept of media product has been characterised, which in turn leads us to draw a broader (branding) and a narrower (cover) concept of packaging in relation to media products; the phenomenon of magazine covers as packaging has been examined both empirically (through the presented survey) and theoretically (via the comparative analysis).

The quantitative part of the research shows that most of the respondents identify magazine covers as its packaging. At the same time the comparison of covers and packaging in terms of their functions, classifications and design shows numerous common traits between the two phenomena in question.

It should be noted that there are some differences, too, mainly visible in the aspect of packaging and cover construction. The former does not always feature price or manufacture date (the equivalent of which would be date of issue), while the latter lacks instructions for use, call centre phone number, social media reference, list of ingredients, expiry date.

The shape of the two discussed phenomena is also different: it would be hard to produce covers of atypical formats, especially in comparison with the number of possibilities when it comes to packaging. Additionally, selected cover content (such as featured topics) changes with every issue, while packaging hardly undergoes radical modifications so often. The given differences result from the specific nature of media products. It is commonly known that to a certain extent, their packaging always differs from packaging used by other types of goods. However, we believe that these differences are not substantial. The results of our quantitative and qualitative inquiry confirm that the initial assumption is true, and so we state that magazine covers may be recognised as their packaging. One question, however, still needs to be answered: whether wider acceptance of this approach means that the managerial concept of magazine branding is rejected. However, our answer is negative, as designing any front-page naturally requires brand building, while branding elements are at the same time parts of packaging (such as logo or colours).

The question of e-covers, or rather e-magazines, seems to be a different problem. Do they, too, function as packaging? This definitely deserves a separate analysis, especially due to the current importance of online versions of the press within today's publishing industry.

51 For more information, see: WHITE, J. V.: *Designing for Magazines*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York, London : R.R. Bowker Company, 1982, p. 5-10; OWEN, W.: *Modern Magazine Design*. New York : Rizzoli, 1991, p. 187-189; FROST, CH.: *Designing for Newspapers and Magazines*. London, New York : Routledge, 2003, p. 105.

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