Designing PREMIUM

A guidebook on how to invoke a sense of added value in packaging.

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Introduction

As a designer, new tools and techniques emerge to enhance the creative process and push the boundaries of what is possible. The rise of demand of FMCG products in India opens up a world of new possibilities, allowing brand designers to design innumerable types of packages and achieve higher-sales output. However, competing with large MNC's is a tough fight for SME's as they have vast resources at their expense, and SME's run on a strict financial budget which makes it even more difficult for them to stay at par with MNC's.

During my graduation thesis, my research focused on understanding the impact of brand elements (Color, logo, illustrations, font) on a product's premium perception, particularly defining a set of guidelines which make these elements much more premium. The study explored both qualitative and quantitative research methods for well founded and robust guidelines. This booklet aims to be a comprehensive guide to help designers and personnel of an SME in India to design a premium package for their product, in turn bringing a higher sales output. More information and references claims are made upon can be found in the thesis itself:

First, the concept of premium, premium elements and the brand elements focused in this booklet are discussed. This way, designers better understand the concept behind using this booklet. Second, the matrix with the overview of the guidelines is presented, giving designers a brief overview and a holistic understanding on how to apply these guidelines sequentially. Third, the guidelines are explained, provided with descriptions and examples for each guideline and what it means. Fourth, the approach on how the guidelines must be applied starting from authenticity till superior quality is shown. Last, Do's and don'ts along with an example on how the guidelines can be used is given so the designers have a clear overview of the flow of the process.

Whether you're a seasoned designer or just an manager who wears multiple hats comprising of different roles in a SME, this booklet will serve as a valuable resource. It will educate you on enhancing your package's design and invoke a sense of added value to your product and turn it into a premium product.

What is premium?

According to Wikipedia and Cambridge dictionary, the word premium in the marketing and product segment refers to "something as higher quality with tangible or imaginary superior value in the upper middle to high price range." The targeted consumer group is also often referred to as "Premium". Premium brands are designed to convey exclusiveness in a mass consumer segment.

In the packaging segment, premium refers to something when the consumers have a perception of added value and or experience compared to other packaging.

The four main factors of creating a premium perception in terms of premium packaging include [31]:

- 1. Extraordinary differentiation.
- 2. Higher quality of packaging materials.
- 3. Minimalistic design.
- 4. Authenticity.

Premium elements

The three premium elements which directly influence premium perception in packaging design are mentioned below.

Authenticity

Authenticity is the first of the three, as packaging design usually begins with the specific character of the brand; the premium perception of packaging is based on an honest, genuine, and trustworthy character. The focus group respondents stated that recognizability is crucial for premiumness along with a trustable and genuine character.

Differentiation

is the second premium element in creating premium perception, is differentiation. While being in line with authenticity it should also distinguish itself from competition. As per focus groups, being unconventional and different gave the product a fresh look, and immediately caught their eyes, they stated catching attention significantly influences premium perception.

Superior Quality

Superior quality is the final element in defining premium packaging perception. This is described as the effort put into designing the elements, the craftsmanship and the story told by these elements (Individually or combined). This is regarded as the final element seen by a consumer after closer inspection, and has a major influence on purchase intention and deciding the premium perception.

Brand elements

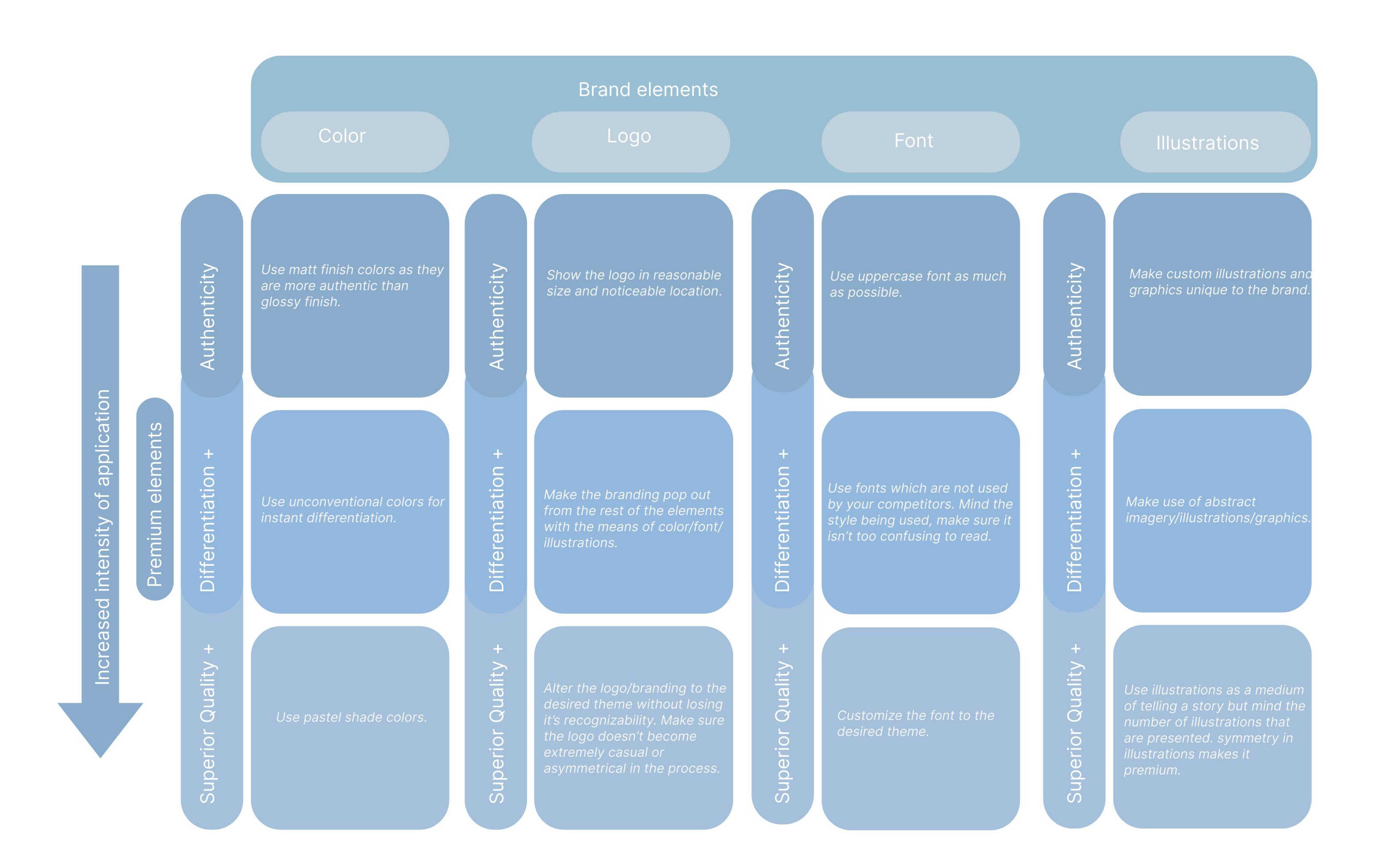
Color: Color is the most crucial brand element amongst the four discussed in this booklet. As most of the decision making and premium perception is influenced by color, consider all options carefully. Primary color palette can be tweaked in multiple ways. But as discussed previously, to give the color a premium feel, the three premium elements must be taken into consideration. This applies for all the brand elements that will be explained further.

Logo: Logo/branding has paramount importance in a package's recognition, loyalty and brand awareness. Hence, by making sure that the logo is tweaked according to the guidelines of the booklet without losing it's brand recognition is vital. I.e; Your re-designed logo should not look like a rip-off of an old logo, instead more like a premium version.

Illustrations: Illustrations are the key to telling a story, expressing effort and subtility, which are considered premium for a package. Illustrations can come in handy while conveying themes or limited edition's of your product.

Font: When looked at individually, it might not have a significant impact on the premium perception, but it is strongly correlated with color, and it impacts the readability of the text, which impacts premium perception.

Matrix



The above 3×4 matrix explains how the application of guidelines work. There are three levels of premiumness you can apply to your package, with four corresponding brand elements as shown above. Each of the 12 blocks contain 12 guidelines.

The direction of application is from to bottom, where you first start with the foundational premium element authenticity, then move down and add differentiation, and finally add superior quality in the third level of premiumness application.

There is no mandatory rule to apply all guidelines or even all the three levels, it depends on the level of premiumness you are trying to achieve or your product's particular need. Ideally, the more guidelines you apply, the better the final design will be.

Guidelines

The guidelines shown in the matrix in the previous page are explained in detail below. The guidelines come along with a description and a representative quote from the qualitative analysis, to instill a better idea of what the respondent feels when he see certain brand element or what he/she expects from them.

| Guidelines | Description | Quote |
|---|--|--|
| Use matt finish colors as they are more authentic than glossy finish. | Use of matt finish colors gives a product niche look compared to glossy finish, as focus group respondents felt, budget label brands use glossy finish colors. | "The color is very rich and smooth, so it feels very premium. Whenever you see that, it stands out in the group." |
| Show the logo in reasonable size and noticeable location. | When the logo is too big, it was seen as a sign of insecurity by the brand and seemed like an attention seeker by the respondents and keeping the logo is unconventional places confused the respondents. | "Only the name of the is big, and everything is small, so it just doesn't catch your eye. The logo is screaming for attention." |
| Make custom illustrations and graphics unique to the brand | When the illustrations depicted general images of the product type, it looked like a mass produced product to the respondents. | "Using good infographics with high quality and which are related to the flavor or made by company instead of using clique imagesthey are always appreciated, unlike endorsers or mascots." |
| Use uppercase font as much as possible. | Uppercase font projected a trustable and serious image, which was seen as an important contributor to the authentic character to the brand. | "If you take a look at the package, it should feel likeohokay, it's making a statement, not a funky font which distracts you." |
| Use unconventional colors for instant differentiation. | Different product categories have a standard set of colors which are used by majority of the brands, and using those colors set of a negative impression on the package, as it was seen as a rip off of a premium/popular brand using similar color. | "If you use similar colors, it's like walking on the shoulders of the giants, you will never have your own identity." |

| Guidelines | Description | Quote |
|--|--|--|
| Make the branding pop out from the rest of the elements with the means of color/font/illustrations. | When the logo/branding is made up with a similar font as the rest of the package, it becomes hard for consumers to notice the brand quickly which set of a negative start according to respondents. | "I can barely make that it's logo, i thought of four different names before guessing the brand name." |
| Use fonts which are not used by your competitors. | Look for the fonts and styles which are not used by major Allist brands, as you might not want to be in their shadow. This will make sure you stand apart from the rest of the crowd. | "When you try to be too safe, you end up being too boring, that's what i think at least, so doing something out of the box could be premium." |
| Make use of abstract imagery/illustrations/ graphics. | Use abstract images/illustrations as they tend to give out a nonmass and deep meaningful character to the package, as opposed to using regular imagery relating to the product type. | "Use raw photos, like that tyrelldo you know it? It gives an amazing chic vibe." |
| Use pastel shade colors. | Using pastel shade colors gives a subtle and luxurious look to the package as they are soft on eyes and luxury metallic colors like gold are seen to compliment these shades. | "Use raw photos, like that tyrelldo you know it? It gives an amazing chic vibe." |
| Alter the logo/branding to the desired theme without losing it's recognizability. Make sure the logo doesn't become extremely casual or asymmetrical in the process. | Logo's importance is paramount in the recognizability of the brand. Even though altering the logo according to the theme of the package is crucial, as it gives an exclusive look, make sure the logo is still recognizable by the consumers. Do make sure the logo is as symmetric as possible. | "Look at the Lays logo, it is just very simple and you know attractive, but it is also different from regular lays, you that premium design vibe." |
| Customize the font to the desired theme. | Only after the font is in line with the intended theme, the theme is effectively executed. But, unlike the logo, the degree of freedom is more as font does not carry as much weight as the logo in brand recognizability. | "Look at the Lays logo, it is just very simple and you know attractive, but it is also different from regular lays, you that premium design vibe." |
| Use illustrations as a medium of telling a story but mind the number of illustrations that are presented. symmetry in illustrations makes it premium. | Illustrations can be a powerful way to tell a story, and can be used to effectively tell a story. Make sure there is symmetry in the illustrations and are not onesided or uneven. | "If you look at three or four different font styles on a single package, it's a wreck, why you trying to confuse me kettle?" |

Approach

The first step of designing a premium package is to consider the three premium elements mentioned before in sequential order. First, authenticity, followed by differentiation and lastly superior quality. With each of the premium element, there are four corresponding brand elements; Color, logo, illustrations and font. Make use of the guidelines stated, to achieve satisfactory result.

Firstly, we will start with authenticity, as every packaging should have the brand's intended product character, an authentic, trustable character as consumer's foundational premium perception is based on this. There are four guidelines, one for every brand element, which will aid in creating this image.

Secondly, we need to enhance the premium perception by differentiating the authentic design with additional guidelines, as a way to stand apart from the competition. The focus group research showed that, Indian consumers are pulled towards unconventional colors in a product category, giving them an edge over their market competitors.

Thirdly, we add the final premium element, superior quality. It acts like a finishing for the package, and is the final element noticed by the consumers when they look closely. The guidelines enable users to convert the package to one last step above than the previous phase.

Finally, not all guidelines are needed to be implemented into the packaging, but more incorporation means higher level of premiumness.

Do's and Dont's

Do's:

Stepwise modification of the package is highly encouraged.

Stepwise modification allows the designer to see how the elements are interacting and affecting other elements and the overall design.

Follow the order of the matrix shown above for better results.

By following the order of the matrix, the design process is uniform as that is the order in which a consumer notices a package's design and estimate's premiumness.

Implementation of most number of guidelines is highly encouraged, but not mandatory.

Even though implementing all the guidelines is beneficial, it is not possible all the time due to multiple restrictions, for example; the brand image or risk of

changing the entire design layout. Hence, focus on implementing as many guidelines as possible for desired results.

The design can be stopped at any phase, I.e Authenticity or authenticity + differentiation, or after using all the three premium element guidelines.

The implementation can be stopped at any phase, as the desired outcomes are could be different for different scenarios. Implementing even few guidelines could be beneficial for the package's design.

Multiple iterations of the process is encouraged until all stakeholders in the process are satisfied.

Just a single implementation of the guidelines sometimes might not be enough, here, it is important for the designer to understand the context and the specific requirements and perform multiple iterations until all the stakeholders involved in the process are satisfied.

Don'ts:

Random implementation of guidelines is discouraged.

Random implementation of guidelines by not following any order might result in a clumsy final output. This could cause a confusing image in the head of a consumer which has been linked with negative premium perception.

Reverse implementation of guidelines is highly discouraged.

As it might hinder the design of the package in reaching it's full potential as the premium elements are drafted in the order of implementation. As discussed before, premium elements define the package, and have a proven order, which creates premium perception.

Following the guidelines without understanding the context of the product category or design is highly discouraged.

Just following the guidelines without understanding the context of the design, might result in a superficial design which could be unappreciated by the consumers. Hence, it is vital for the designer to understand the context and nature of the product category that is being designed and customize the guideline accordingly.

Example

As an example, we will study a FMCG biscuits packaging from India, and draft a proposal for it's redesign. Stepwise considerations and decisions are stated below:





For example, look at the above figure: , it depicts the Indian biscuits brand "ROSE" which is based in Hyderabad, India. The package is designed in a poor way, and it can be redesigned using the guidelines provided in this guidebook, Let us first understand what went wrong with this package in terms of premium perception.

Color: The color scheme is quite confusing as it has five colors as part of its main color scheme. This makes it difficult for the audience to judge the package, and confusion usually connected in a negative way.

Logo: "ROSE" uses extremely large logo, which takes up a considerable amount of space, this large logo will come out as attention seeker and rip-off, stemmed from the research done in the project.

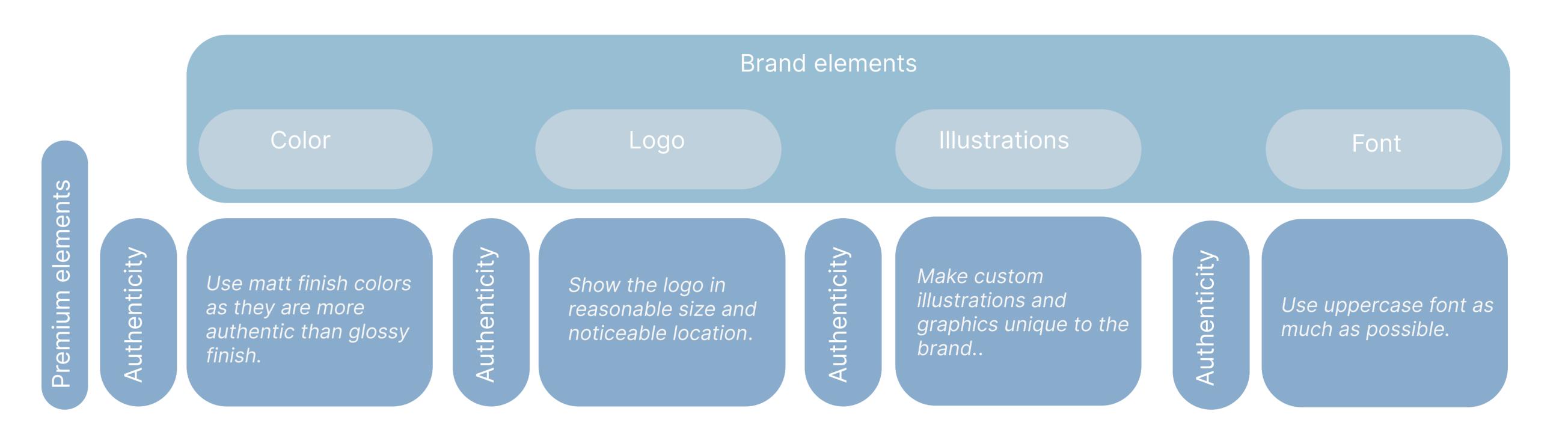
Illustrations: The illustrations are very direct and seem effortless, with biscuits and a monument on the package. This again makes it difficult for the audience to judge the package.

Font: The font is also lower case which give a casual appearance, as opposed to the definition of premium element authenticity. Using three different types of fonts does not help with the confusion caused by colors and illustrations.

Redesign:

The redesign will involve three phases in accordance to the premium elements. The changes will be explained with the help of concerning guidelines. Every redesign does not have to include all the 12 guidelines, of course adding more guidelines and using them will make the package more premium. The number of guidelines used depends on the goal or the designer and the company

PREMIUM PERCEPTION GUIDELINES



First, we will apply the foundational premium element "Authenticity" to the redesign. The aspects which can be changed here are:

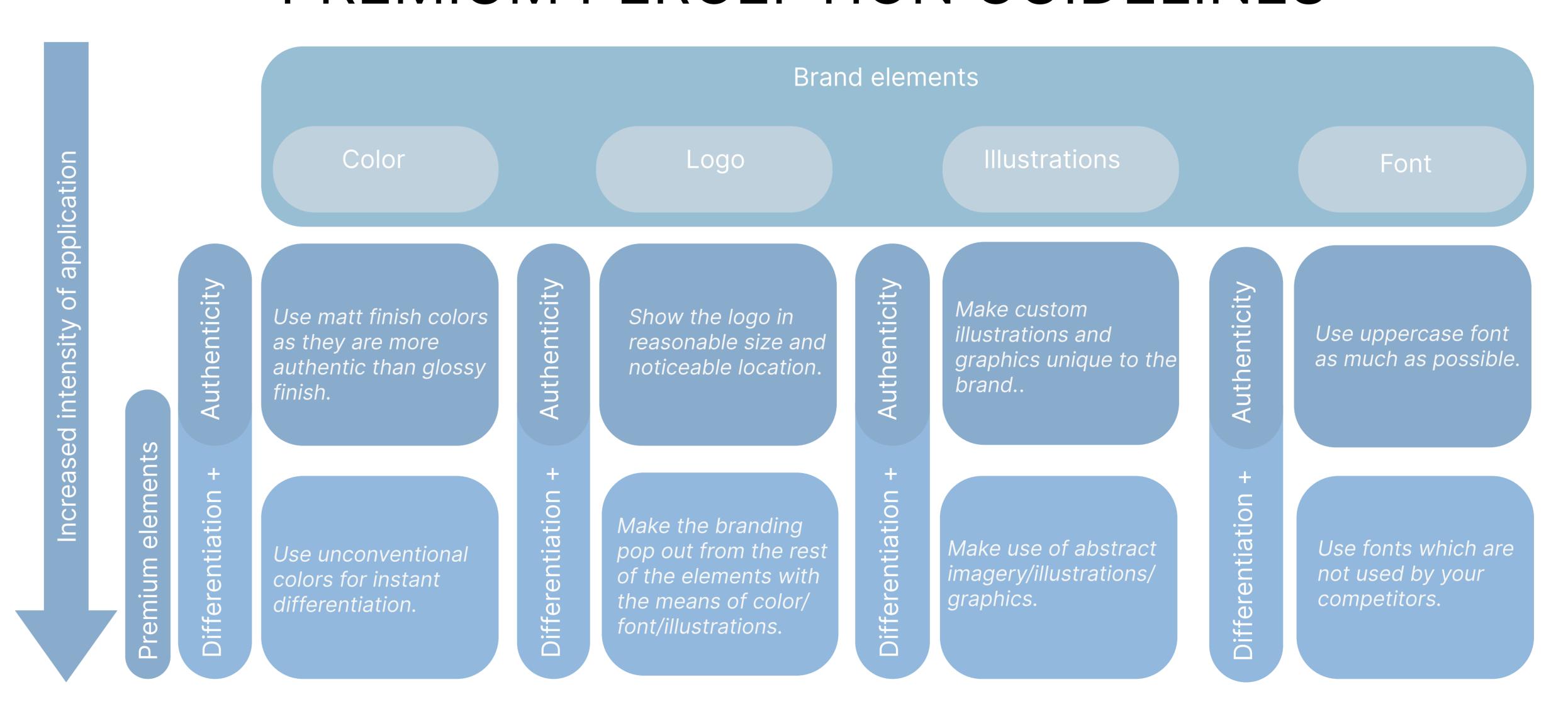
Color: To make it look more authentic, multiple color palette is removed and instead a dark red color with matt finish gives it a rich and authentic look.

Logo: The size of the logo can be reduced by at least 50%, which will make it look less attention seeking and more trustworthy.

Illustrations: Instead of just having a digital graphic of biscuits, a custom illustration of a biscuits, placed in a pattern gives it a customized appearance and authentic look.

Font: The font can be changed to uppercase and and thin styled font, for a more serious and trustworthy appearance.

PREMIUM PERCEPTION GUIDELINES



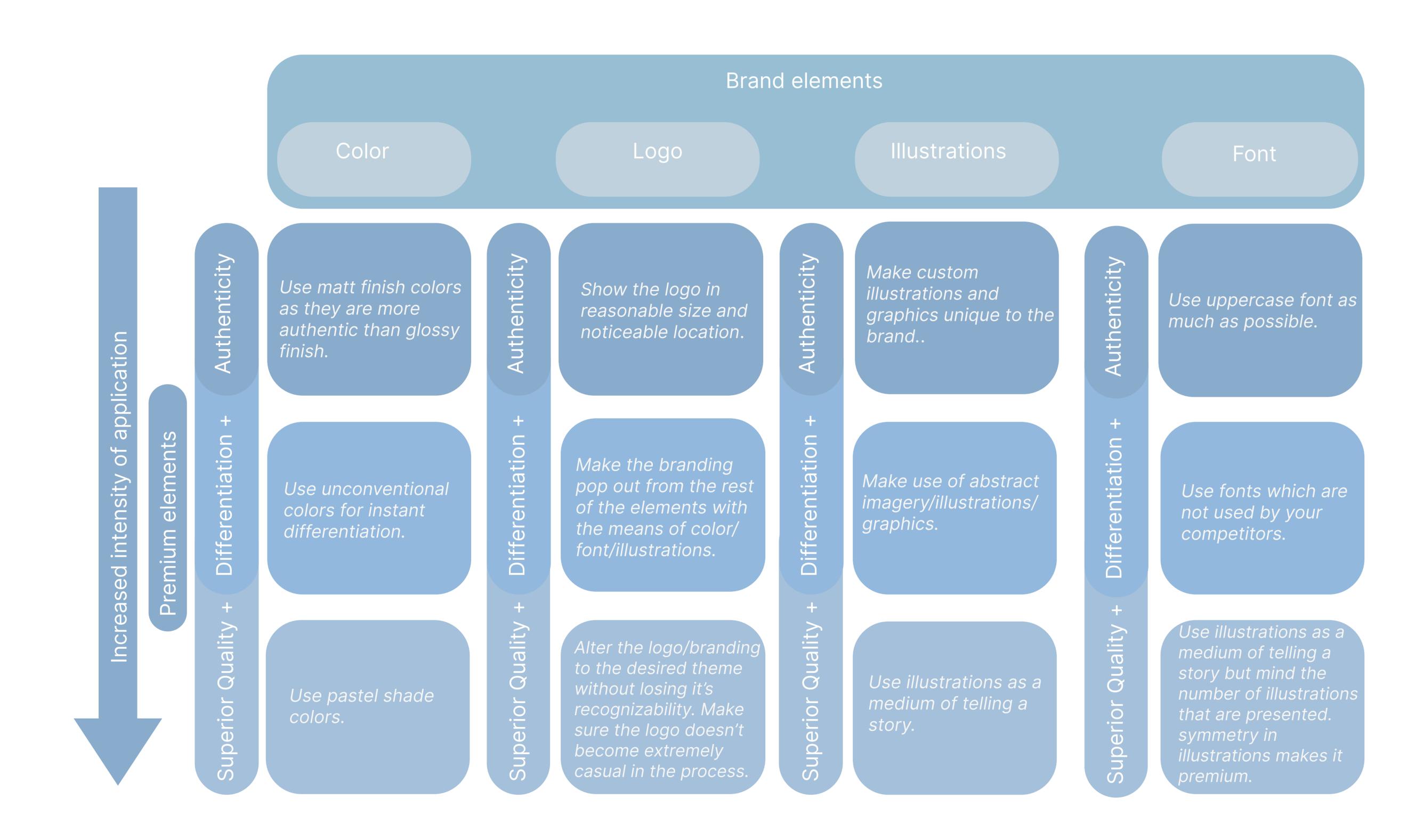
Secondly, in the next phase, we will add the premium element differentiation to the package, to set itself apart from competition.

Suggested changes include, Color: using innovative color palette, something that is unprecedented in that food category, but make sure it is also graceful so that it doesn't come out as flashy.

Logo: The border circling the logo can be removed, and a more contrasting metallic or dark colors can be used for the logo.

Illustrations: Since the flavor of the biscuits is salty or salted, play with the word "salt" to create abstract images or digital illustrations. Since abstract illustrations are perceived much differently, it instantly grabs the audience's attention.

Font: Use unprecedented font styles, but keep in mind to use a different style font from the logo, as using similar font might end up confusing the consumers.



Thirdly, Our final premium element is added to the previous two elements, superior quality.

Color: To give an authentic+ different+ superior quality look, the color will be changed to a pastel shade color, like lemon yellow, or even white. Since it is a sober color with matt finish, and pastel shades are rarely used, which gives touches all three premium elements.

Logo: The logo can be written in regular uppercase instead of italic.

A theme could be followed as suggested in the guideline (For example: Since the original design had a historic monument "Charminar" as part of the illustration. A silhouette of the same monument could be featured in the back

of the logo, and give it a theme or the city. This will give an authentic + superior quality look.) Keep track of how you are altering the logo regardless of the theme, make sure it is not extremely different from the original logo as it will alienate the consumers from the company. By making sure it is contrasting well enough from the background, it could touch all the three premium elements.

Illustrations: The illustrations should follow a theme as well, same as the one with logo and font, and not individually. (For example: If you take the above theme, you could have custom illustrations of these tiny biscuits falling into a glass of hot "chai" (an Indian beverage), as these both are a popular combination. It would work better if the illustrations are custom made sketches rather than real life images, since they are seen as more customized and effortfull. Now, this illustration will tell a story of a chill evening where you could be having a cup of "chai" with the biscuits.)

Font: Make sure the font used in uppercase for the most part(Authentic), with an unprecedented font style(different) and go with the font that best matches with the theme.(superior quality) (For example: Avoid fonts like "CHAI" / "CHAI". Even though they are uppercase and novel, they don't go with the theme mentioned above, using fonts which go with the theme are highly encouraged.)

Conclusion

This booklet is a condensed iteration of the research project, and as mentioned in the introduction, all the references to the claims including the detailed research design and drafting of guidelines are in the thesis report. Overall, this booklet provides designers with the final outcomes of the project, and could be incredibly useful if followed as suggested in creating a premium package. Please bear in mind that all the guidelines have to be taken into consideration with the context and specific requirement of the individual design for good results. This set of guidelines are also prone rapidly changing tastes from time to time, and need to be consistently updated according to the needs of the consumers.