# Ecologically Sound, Please

Contributed by GfK
Monday, 07 December 2009

Survey by GfK Panel Services Deutschland on the significance of sustainable packaging

The aspect of environmentally friendly packaging is a major purchasing factor for around two thirds of consumers.

This is the result of a survey on the sustain-ability of packaging by GfK Panel Services Deutschland on behalf of Pro Carton, the European Association of Cartonboard and Carton Manufacturers.

Sustainability of packaging is an important issue to consumers.

Three quarters of them believe that it is important for packaging to be recyclable.

Just as many refuse to buy goods that they feel use an unnecessarily large amount of packaging material.
In particular, this applies to all products that come in plastic bags in addition to cardboard packaging.

Consumers pay more for environmentally friendly goods
The current study is based on a previous survey on corporate responsibility (CR), in which five CR clusters of consumers with different attitudes to sustainability and corporate responsibility were set up.

The segment of critical consumers, who are characterized by a strong sense of responsibility for others and a keen interest in environmental protection, also have higher requirements in terms of the ecological aspects of packaging.

The responsible, engaged consumers, whose main considerations are supporting non-profit-making organizations and who prefer to buy regional products, also proved to be highly discerning.

Both groups give a much stronger response to questions on the environmental soundness of packaging than the average German consumer.

For example, this becomes clear on the question of whether the consumers are willing to pay a higher price for more environmentally friendly packaging.

Overall, just under 16% of the entire population agree with this statement; in contrast, the figure is 25% in the two environment-oriented groups.

Glass and paper the soundest packaging in ecological terms
Around two thirds of those who took part in the survey want packaging made from environmentally friendly material.

Overall, a clear majority of 79% regard paper and cardboard as more environmentally friendly than plastic. More than half state that packaging should contain as little plastic as possible.

83% of consumers think that glass is ecologically sound packaging.

73% attribute this property to paper and cardboard, whereas the figures are only 21% for metal and just 12% for plastic.

These views also impact on purchasing behavior. If consumers have a choice between two products with the same content but with different packaging material, they choose the one that is more environmentally sound.

For instance, they opt for noodles in a cardboard box rather than in a plastic bag. This also applies to frozen pizza or sweets. They only accept the disadvantage of lower environmental soundness if their chosen product is not available in alternative packaging.

With liquid washing agents, for example, customers put the plastic bottle in their shopping trolleys for lack of alternatives.

It is interesting that environmental awareness increases with age: among the under-30s, 80% pay attention to how products are packaged.

Among 30 to 39-year-olds, the figure is 91% of consumers, and among the over-60s it is as much as 94%.

Packaging is an important information source
The information on packaging is also important to consumers. Almost half of consumers want more genuine information

on the environmental soundness and sustainability of the product and packaging material.

Overall, 40% say that they always look in detail at the product contents stated on the packaging. The responsible purchasers also show an above-average figure here with 45%. Among critical consumers, it is as high as 60%.

Packaging therefore has a particularly important function as a source of information and communication tool. According to the wishes of many consumers, the information should relate to the contents as well as the packaging itself.

Details on ecological aspects of the product and packaging are an important or even very important factor in the purchase decision for 35% of consumers.

Eco-labeling that relates to a productâ€™s packaging rather than the product itself can also be significant here. Such labeling would also make it possible to demand a higher price for a product.

However, consumers are largely unaware of such labeling at the moment; only a few buyers currently say that eco-labeling of packaging is particularly relevant.

Even so, if the type and statement of the labeling is sufficiently explained, 39% are willing to pay more for packaging that is certified in this way.

However, the labeling should be assigned by a trustworthy and independent organization such as Ã–kotest or Stiftung Warentest.

Overall, 78% would trust certification of this kind. Environmental protection organizations only achieve a figure of 17%. In contrast, less than 2% of the population would trust the details of manufacturers or retailers.

Further information: Erik LÃ¤mmerzahl, +49 911 395-3290, erik.laemmerzahl@gfk.com

The GfK Group
The GfK Group offers the fundamental knowledge that industry, retailers, services companies and the media need to make market decisions. It delivers a comprehensive range of information and consultancy services in the three business sectors Custom Research, Retail and Technology and Media.

The no. 4 market research organization worldwide operates in more than 100 countries and employs over 10,000 staff. In 2008, the GfK Groupâ€™s sales amounted to EUR 1.2 billion.

For further information, visit our website: www.gfk.com .

Follow us on twitter: www.twitter.com/gfk_group .

Nuremberg - 11 NovemberÂ  2009