

Modern methods of packaging reduce the amount of waste that society produces

[Society](#)



Introduction

The claim that “ modern methods of packaging reduces the amount of waste that society produces” can indeed be said to be true given that in modern packaging methods - efforts are geared towards techniques which focuses on maximizing resources while generating minimal waste.

Ultimately, such technique focuses on saving costs and resources through flat packaging, environmentally smart designs and such designs which cuts down on large packaging materials while cutting inventory space and allowing for lean form of logistics. In many contemporary organisations where packaging is utilized in their product designs - modern methods of packaging have been largely espoused over the years to save costs and reduce wastes. An example is IKEA, the Swedish furniture company which has over the years turned to flat packaging for all its products. The company claims that flat packaging has helped to reduce its material resources while overwhelmingly cutting down on wastes (Landis, 2000, ikea. com).

Modern methods of packaging also help society by allowing the prevention of wastes. For example in the food industry - modern packaging techniques helps to prevent foods from damaging or spoiling before getting to the final consumer. Research shows that nearly 60% of foods produced in the last 20 years were not consumed because they get spoilt or are damaged before getting to the final consumer (CSI, 2005). Such trend is on the reverse as the number of foods getting damaged or contaminating before getting to the final consumer has reduced drastically over the last 10 years since the introduction of modern forms of packaging. While packaging indeed has

enormous benefits on waste reduction, many scholars and industry experts have voiced concerns about the numerous disadvantages of contemporary packaging methods. Some argue that these methods of packaging increases the costs of goods because they require more resources to produce as they need to be built with rigour to withstand tough conditions (Floros et al, 1997). Other scholars argue that modern forms of packaging are often unnecessary and indeed add to the amount of wastes that society generates rather than reducing it. Robertson (1993) for example argues that wastes generated by western countries have increased by almost 20% since last decade owing to increased food packaging.

These opposing viewpoints have made the debate about packaging and waste reduction a more controversial one. However, the answer might be to determine whether some of the most prominent and efficient forms of packaging generates such wastes as mentioned by Robertson or adds to the costs of products in the claims of some authors. A study completed in 2004 for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) concludes that, for a packaging to be termed as efficient, it must have as many of the following properties as possible: demand less resource to produce, large opening, transparent appearance, ability to be placed upside-down and easy to re-close. The contents should be easy to pour, press or scrape out and have a long shelf life. Three critical examples of waste reduction strategies which fit into these described criteria are assessed in the following section.

Refill System

Refill system is one of the most realistic forms of packaging that leads to waste reduction because it encourages the 'reuse' of packaging materials which eventually results in less wastes being dumped into the landfill. This form of packaging is more popular in Germany and other countries where beers, detergents and milk are being refilled into old packaging. Refillables are believed to not only have benefits for reducing wastes but also offer environmental benefits as well as cost efficiency for both the company and the consumer therefore an efficient method of waste reduction for society in general.

In recent times, many companies and homes have replaced small water bottles with refillable water jars, thus cutting down on waste water bottles which would have otherwise been disposed off and dumped into the landfill.

Although some have argued that refillable packagings require tougher materials to make them withstand harsher condition and thus are more expensive but when the waste reduction advantage is considered refillable systems are more favoured.

Flat Packs

Flat methods of packaging designs is another effective way of reducing waste that society generates through packaging because it cuts down on the need for bigger and larger packaging materials. Flat packaging is a relatively new concept in packaging and has been commercially introduced by IKEA.

According to the Wise Geek, " a Flat pack utilizes the form of packaging which are fabricated in flat parts and designed to be quickly and easily

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assembled. It is also sometimes called ready-to-assemble packaging or knock-down packaging and its principal advantage is that because it is packed flat, it is extremely space efficient, needs less materials, thus saving significant amounts of money for the manufacturer by reducing shipping and storage costs. Consumers in turn benefit from this because the company can pass the savings down with less expensive prices". Flat packs were initially used for furniture packaging but have recently been employed across different products, for example, gadgets, home wares, toys, etc.

It can help society to reduce wastes but cutting down the excess materials which are usually dumped in the landfills when products are packaged in their usually large sizes.

Bulk Packaging

Bulk Packaging is another effective method of reducing wastes that society generates because it helps to cut down on small, fanciful and unnecessary materials that are used to package small products. Larger packages through bulk packaging often allows products packages to be reused in other occasions therefore a reasonable method of cutting down on wastes.

According to a report by plastemart (2011) higher-value containers offers enhanced performance and are more cost-effective than smaller containers with shorter service lives.

While there are two different forms of packaging (rigid and flexible packaging) it is believed that flexible packaging offers more benefits for waste reduction than rigid packaging because flexible bulk packaging can be used for different products and adapted to different sizes. Bulk forms of

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packaging are sometime utilized in form of larger product sizes across many brands and are known to generate less waste because more product quantity can contain one larger size. For example, a bulk size of uncle bens rice weighting up to 10 kg would cut down wastes numerous small packages that would otherwise have been generated through small packages of 1kg.

Conclusions

This paper has explored various debates about modern packaging and its capability to assist society in waste reduction. Indeed, while several packaging methods contribute to society wastes, some other forms are efficient and more reasonable towards waste cutting. Some of them are those explored in the previous sections. Bulk packaging for example has enormous benefits because it not only has less cost implication, it is a smart way to cut unnecessary packaging and achieve overwhelming waste reduction.

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