

Sustainable packaging can sell itself

Sustainable food packaging often has different properties to ordinary plastic packaging. PhD candidate Giulia Granato researched how companies can convey the greater sustainability of the new packaging using explicit and implicit signals.

Some forms of sustainable packaging are opaque or make a loud crackling sound. Companies find this inconvenient as consumers are less keen on such packaging: they can't tell if their salad is fresh and they find the loud noise annoying. Companies may therefore decide to process the sustainable material so that it mimics conventional plastic. But there is a risk consumers will no longer perceive the packaging as sustainable. The research by Giulia Granato (Marketing and Consumer Behaviour) shows that companies can use the distinctive sensory properties of sustainable packaging to their advantage by giving a more explicit explanation. She will defend her thesis on 3 October. Granato investigated whether the

'meaningful reminder' can be used as a tool to help bring about behavioural change in consumers. Various cues given by the packaging can take consumers out of their routine (reminder) and make them aware of the packaging as different.

'The loud crackling sound of packaging made from corn starch does not tell consumers it is sustainable'

example be used to focus attention on the package's sustainability.

Corn starch

However, combining those implicit cues (packaging) and explicit signals (text and logo) can prove counterproductive. 'It can be perceived as too good to be true,' Granato explains. 'Then people don't believe it anymore. There is a lot of greenwashing (making something appear more sustainable than it is) in

It is then important to give meaning to the packaging they have now noticed. Logos and

text could for



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food packaging, which makes consumers sceptical.' Certain combinations of explicit and implicit cues did work well. 'The unusually loud crackling sound of packaging made from corn starch does not in itself tell consumers that it is sustainable, so you need a logo or text as well,' says Granato. ss