



I Want More Packaging-Not Less!!

By JoAnn R. Hines, Packaging Diva

Wow, what a statement! I'm sure I'll be excoriated for this opinion.

But seriously, this is how I make my living. I understand and analysing how the packaging industry works. It's complicated and it's big business. To be cost effective consumer products companies have been forced to use packaging as an integral part of their marketing campaigns. Remember the salesperson? When was the last time you saw one who actually knew anything about the products inside the store? Selling - that is one job of product packaging. It has to tell the customer all about what's inside the packaging. It helps you make an informed purchasing decision too.

Let me pose another question. When was the last time you bought something in a beat up shopworn, dog-eared package? That's another packaging job - to protect and secure the product inside (what a concept).

One factor these nay-sayers never consider is who pays for damaged products? You do, the consumer of course! One study says that there is a 20% waste factor in fresh produce that's packaged properly. The detractors say no excess produce packaging! What will be the waste factor with no or limited packaging? And who will absorb this cost? You will again not the package manufacturers or the retailers.

My mind is numb from all the hue and cry about problem packaging: bad packaging, excess packaging, wrap rage packaging, get rid of packaging, leave packaging at the store and so on. This one gets to me too - stories about how many injuries there are from people trying to open packaging.

Packaging is under attack by the very people who need it the most and understand it the least: The Consumer. I counted no less than 10 stories this week decrying the bane of packaging. But it's true that what is considered excess packaging is in the eye of the beholder. But with media headlines like this how can one not be swayed? Weekend of action against packaging waste; Don't fall victim to Wrap Rage this holiday; Parents urged to fight toy packaging, and don't forget these current trendy buzz phrases: Packaging Hall Of Shame, Consumer Reports Oyster Awards; and packaging related accidents. Yikes! Who wouldn't be on the lookout.

But let's get down to packaging basics. Here are a few packaging factoids you might consider before beginning your annual holiday rant.

True packaging facts

- Packaging is the third largest industry in the US;
- 10% of every dollar spent at retail can be directly attributed to packaging;
- The packaging industry employs over a million people;
- Food accounts for 70% of all product packaging;
- Packaging is a trillion dollar industry;
- The US accounts for 25% of the global packaging economy with China closing fast;
- The consumer has no idea the role packaging has to play in modern society;
- Without a package, you can't have a product (in most cases).

So what is the 'packaging' reality here? While researching this article I came across a staggering amount of what I call misinformation or misunderstood information.



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These are packaging facts I'm not so sure about: Packaging makes up 1/3 of the average household's garbage? Defined by who? US consumes about 660 pounds of packaging per person? Are we eating this? (just kidding). 90% of that packaging becomes solid waste. I know this is not true from a seminar I attended recently. It's closer to 30-35%.

So lets get a little reality check here. Yes, there is bad packaging, yes, some things are overpackaged, yes we should give more consideration to the way we package products and how much packaging is used; yes, we should investigate more environmentally friendly materials, (the jury is still out on this one as to the true cost benefit analysis) and finally yes we the packaging industry should do a better job of educating the consumer about product packaging.

Yes, I want more product packaging. I want the things I want undamaged, fresh, uncontaminated, secure, accessible and available where and when I want them.

To me that means more and better product packaging not less.

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