

Graduation research project (5 months)

Title: Stop and Re-think! How food packaging design contributes to sustainability

Starting date: any time in the academic year 2023/2024

Project description

If you think about how you move around, how you do grocery shopping, how you behave, you can certainly say that your actions and decisions are highly dependent on your habits and routines. Often you do not even think about it, you just repeat what you did yesterday and the days before. While this is beneficial, habits and routines also represent strong barriers to behavioural change.

Habits and routines, indeed, keep us anchored to our “business usual”, to the status quo, to a tunnel vision that prevents us from considering new and (maybe more sustainable) alternatives (for example, taking the train instead of the car or buying a more environmentally friendly product). In short, habits make us blind towards necessary changes, such as developing a sustainable life style.

Design can do a lot about it, as it can help interrupt and disrupt our habits and routines and, in turn, open a window of opportunity where sustainability gets noticed and considered. Look at this image below. Strange packaging eh? Probably this packaging design makes you stop for one moment, and re-think “What is this? What is this company communicating to me?, Is this a new packaging for liquors? Not a glass bottle as usual but more like a milk brick... let me read few information to understand...”.



In this thesis you will create and test different (virtual) food-packaging designs that make consumers stop and re-think (as the image above) and in turn, improve sustainability communication and eco-design efforts. You will investigate whether triggering a less automatic and less fluent categorization through design, can be beneficial for sustainability, by engaging consumers into a more cognitive (and less automatic/less habitual) process. As a result of this “stop and re-think”, consumers may notice and recognize the newness and improved sustainability of the new packaging, which otherwise would risk to go unnoticed.

Requirements and learning

Interested master students need to have a strong motivation for (consumer) research, graphic design and the topic of sustainability. For this thesis, the student will create a number of images with disruptive packaging designs and will conduct a series of experiments to test the developed designs.

During the project, you will develop relevant skills for the job market, such as graphical design skills, writing skills, marketing research skills and statistical analysis skills.

Relevant key words: consumer research, categorization, information processing, food packaging, experiments, habits, design for sustainable behavioural change, design newness, atypicality.

Note: This research project is not in collaboration with any industries.

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