

The ethical Packaging Charter

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promoted by:

Edizioni Dativo

with the collaboration of:

Dipartimento di Design, Politecnico di Milano

supported by:

Istituto Italiano Imballaggio

Graphic design:

d.com, *Dipartimento di Design, Politecnico di Milano*

Paging:

Paolo Panzuti Bisanti

Media partner:

ItaliaImballaggio

Impackt

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Printed by: Ancora Srl - Milano

THE ETHICAL PACKAGING CHARTER

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The project for the ethical Packaging Charter stems from a hypothesis that has emerged in the wake of much pressure and numerous appeals; it has materialised in the encounter between the world of university-based research, trade publishing, sectorial associations representing business concerns; the result is an open document that urges the commitment of all stakeholders involved in the design, the production and the use of packaging.

Why
packa-
ging

Packaging is everywhere. It is an object so widespread that it is truly universally manifest; each year everyone going about their daily business comes into contact with at least 8000 packaging items. It is a powerful means, even more so than might often be considered.

It is truly cross-sectorial, a true and proper mass object, that concedes itself to use by everyone; it is an emblem of our model of consumption, of a consumption that needs to be ever more responsible. It lures us with its seductive capacity, drawing us into the net of purchase; it flatters us. At the same time it is a necessary tool without which we would be unable to enjoy essential products: delicate foods, lifesaving drugs, fragile products.

It is an indispensable tool for allowing the products that we consume to safely circulate in time and in space, it guarantees commodities, satisfies our needs, it transmits information about the product, on how it should be used, its benefits and limitations, offering services that accompany consumption and use.

Why a Char- ter

Packaging, an essential and at times contradictory object, is going through a phase of full maturity; as such, it demands that we all embark on a **process of shared reflection** to enable an evolution in the **needs of the consumer, the user, the environment, and society as a whole**.

The ethical Packaging Charter wishes to be a **tool of reflection and commitment**, around which to converge. A document of principles to be shared to accompany packaging towards a future of greater awareness. The Ethical Packaging Charter offers itself as a **tool promoting a “system-culture”**: it wishes to relate duties, rights and obligations that bind the moment of production to that of use and consumption, featuring subjects that are bearers of obligations and subjects that enjoy rights and expectations.

The ethical Packaging Charter **relates the level of rights, the level of principles with the level of values** in order to sanction an ideal contract between the stakeholders of the system: so that they might commit themselves towards principles to be shared, without superimposing themselves on regulations, this by making their choice public.

The
commit-
ment of
its sup-
porters

The ethical Packaging Charter reaffirms that **we are all subjects implicated** in a system of design, production, use, consumption and reuse of packaging.

The Ethical Packaging Charter reminds us that it is indispensable that the consumer's needs be **placed at the center of the role of each and every stakeholder**: we are aware that the consumer is the user of packaging as a tool, recipient of the information offered by the same, recipient of the service supplied by the product contained, and also interpreter of packaging as a cultural and social object because it is for the consumer that the object is intended.

The Charter sees the involvement of designers, manufacturers, converters, users, sector experts and **all those who choose to adhere to and support** this project. Its supporters commit themselves to operating in accordance with the ten points of the Charter, to duly disseminating the same, to proposing undertakings that promote its contents.

*We designers, manufacturers,
converters, users and sector
experts intend devising, designing,
producing, demanding, using
packaging that is:*

[01. re- spon- sible

This is packaging seen as a responsibility shared by everyone towards everyone else: in its design, manufacture and application.

Responsible packaging is the bearer of quality, that combines environmental protection with respect for the needs of all users.

For the very reason that it affects an entire community, we also talk about the social responsibility of packaging.

All of us, to varying degrees and in different ways, are part of as well as feel that we are part of this common responsibility (every action has an impact on the subjects that comprise our society).

This is reflected in the principle of ethical responsibility that affects the choices made by designers who must place the user and his or her needs and requirements at the centre of their design work. Designing packaging involves the analysis of its instrumental functions, that are closely related to the communicative ones of medium and interface with the user.

[02. ba- lanced

*Where packaging is in its
right measure: optimised for
what is needed.*

Packaging is balanced when it has been devised and designed in the right relation to its contents and it is the result of what is needed for its correct dissemination.

—

The characteristics of each product should guide and determine packaging according to the quality, the fragility and the functions of the contents, be these practical or symbolic.

Balanced packaging means avoiding overpackaging, when this is exclusively aimed at guaranteeing product visibility. Balanced packaging does not over-promise, but is able to balance what it says with what it contains and communicates.

Balanced packaging avoids forms of information overload that disorient the receiver: it finds a correct communication that responds to informative needs. Balanced packaging takes on the natural role of dispenser of its contents, and is thus perceived as a necessary and essential device.

[03. safe

*In that it is healthy,
safe packaging that protects
individuals and communities
throughout its lifecycle.*

Safe packaging fully accounts for its traceability, throughout the supply chain; it is safe in terms of the protection of its contents and the non contamination of the same, safe during transport, the same as during its use and through its entire lifecycle.

The consumer, choosing a product and its packaging, entrusts him/herself to it along with his or her own safety. As consumers it is our duty to be informed, but it is certainly our right to be able to believe in what the pack tells us: the packaging sanctions that ‘implicit contract’ that is proposed by the brand.

Safe packaging becomes the essence and the materialisation of the guarantee of the product’s conformity: it implies a supervised production process and controls that guarantee the adequacy of the product.

Packaging is safe if all subjects along the supply chain respect the legal standards, but it is safer still if the consumer is made aware of the same.

[04. acces- si- ble

*Where packaging is capable
of “easily” explaining itself
to the user.*

Packaging is accessible when it is simple and easy to use, and thus considers the right of any consumer to be able to approach, understand and use a product.

Packaging is accessible when it is easy to understand even beyond the user's experience, knowledge or knowhow or their level of attention, outside of the set conditions and context. When it guarantees a flexible use, even if the consumer is left or right handed; when it also effectively communicates with physically or mentally impaired users.

Accessible packaging guarantees access to the product; packaging seen as a whole, via all the elements that comprise it, favours the use/consumption of the product. Its sensorial and tactile aspects, and their quality, actively contribute to making packaging accessible in all its aspects: due to the graphic design of the wording that guarantees its legibility; because the overall design and the layout ensure that the information is easy to find; accessible because the contents are expressed through a vocabulary that does not raise barriers and that uses a language that is easily comprehensible; accessible because it offers an immediate interaction that enables its use.

[05. trans- pa- rent

*Or that is where packaging
builds an immediate relationship
with its recipient.*

Packaging is transparent when it is sincere, when it tells the truth in full respect of legal standards and it does so plainly.

Via the quality of transparency it manages to build up a relationship of trust with the recipient.

Packaging must speak of its contents without any alteration, and communicate directly, immediately, comprehensibly and unequivocally.

It should in no way produce a communication that might deceive or appear ambiguous, this even within the principle of error tolerance.

It must use a common language to guarantee effective communication. A transparent communication minimizes the risks of erroneous interpretation, the occurrence of accidental or non intentional actions with not always foreseeable consequences.

Packaging that speaks plainly to its recipient is unambiguously identified within the sales or promotional context or within the context of its use. Transparent packaging is packaging with a low error risk: it helps the recipient in its use, both in daily contexts, as well as in any particular emergency contexts in which the distribution and use of the goods may occur.

[06. infor- ma- tive

*Where packaging guarantees
the best information, both useful
and necessary.*

Informative packaging respects legal standards, bears all information useful to know about the contents and its packaging, their use and disposal.

Packaging becomes our information interface because it allows us to relate with the product.

It allows us to gain knowledge on the contents and its container. It informs us on the composition of the product, the origin of the materials, on the methods of preservation, on the nutritional value and on the food chain: from the information for the preparation and administration of the contents to those of an environmental nature, indicating how to dispose of it and attesting to its sustainability.

It should inform in a forthright manner, with the awareness that product information is a right and priority of the discerning consumer.

The information must be proposed in order to facilitate the perception of its importance, ie through a clear organization of the contents and clearly showing the information needed to respect the environment.

Similarly, maximum legibility of the essential information must be ensured, to allow the recipient to gain a good knowledge and understanding of the product.

[07. up- to- date

*Where packaging
is constantly in tune with
the society of which
it represents the values.*

Packaging reflects the culture of our society and in turn contributes to creating the same.

It does so via messages, that are transmitted via its shape, its graphics, its symbols: it thus transfers values and messages and takes part in the evolution of contemporary social life.

This is why packaging has to be aware of its own potential as a vehicle of communication, of the power that arises from its dissemination.

Packaging must be sensitive to the values and messages that it transmits, avoiding participating in the spread of offensive or stereotyped messages that might in some way offend people's sensibility.

Packaging transmits dietary habits, models of luxury, models of social life: this is why it must avoid the dissemination of stereotypes that under any form constitute obstacles to a fair society, it must avoid gender stereotypes that might inhibit the development of a fair and equal society, in particular where children are concerned.

[08.
for-
ward-
look-
ing

In which packaging has good relations with its own future.

Packaging is capable of intervening today in terms of possible future effects. The choices that determine the packaging of today cannot develop starting from an immediate advantage but must consider the consequences that derive from the initial choices.

Forward-looking packaging is capable of grasping impending changes, of favouring new models of consumption and behaviour capable of evolving over time.

Thus packaging is aware that it has to change over time: it has to experiment on itself to be able to favour its own future transformations. Packaging should be able to incorporate all necessary changes: to be subject of research and forms of experimentation that allow it to evolve; it must be capable of foreseeing the changes that will affect it.

Packaging should imply a constant commitment in terms of research and innovation. As consumers we are thus aware we are facing an object capable of redevising itself for the users of tomorrow.

[09. edu- ca- tive

*In that packaging, as
a common object, is capable
of assuming an educative
function.*

Packaging is a tool that is fully part of everyone's daily lives, in constant dialogue with its recipient. Hence it has a great educative potential: its dissemination also makes it a powerful tool in these terms.

Packaging participates in formulating and spreading the aesthetics of our everyday and as such should perform an exemplary function. It must centre on quality, and indeed become a bearer of aesthetic quality, capable of educating our visual perception; it has to speak with a model language, without the complicit use of deformed languages.

It should have an educative function, inducing virtuous behaviour with its messages, increasing the user's knowledge and awareness on issues that are recognized as priority or emergencies true and proper as the case may have it.

It should indicate how to act to dispose of, recycle or reuse packaging and how to reduce waste. Today packaging, beyond the economic value of its contents and the product field represented, is a bearer of values: quality communication costs no more than bad communication, but makes all the difference in the eyes and the mind of the recipient user of the same.

[10. su- staina- ble

*This is packaging that
respects the environment.*

Packaging is sustainable if designed in a holistic manner, fully balanced with the product and its ways of use, so as to optimize its overall environmental performance.

Sustainable packaging is designed, manufactured, transported and recycled using, where possible, renewable and clean energy.

Sustainable packaging protects the product on its way to the end user with the least environmental impact and lowest production of waste deriving from the product and the packaging used, causing the lowest production of waste in general and the least environmental emissions.

Sustainable packaging is made from responsible sources, from renewable raw materials; it is effectively recovered after use. It is environmentally responsible because it has been obtained with the lowest consumption of resources and energy. The choice of the material that constitutes the same should be consistent with product's scope and its distribution. Sustainable packaging is designed and manufactured within a perspective of reducing the number of materials used, reducing the number of components making it easily separable.

It must be designed and manufactured according to principles of recyclability and should be based primarily on recycled materials.

Sustainable packaging is disposed to extend its own lifecycle and that of the product, it includes reusability among its guiding principles, as well as any other uses before the termination of its lifecycle.

Lastly, sustainable packaging should prevent waste production and be devised to optimize storage and transportation. All of us, as subjects involved in the supply chain, should feel ourselves relentlessly committed to reducing its impact in each step of the production cycle, from weight reduction to saving energy and raw materials.

Thanks

This text has come into being thanks to the lively discussion that has been kept up over the years between all the stakeholders in the packaging system. A particular thanks, for the contribution on the scientific level of its drafting, go to Francesca De Vecchi, who contributed with her social ontological sensitivity, and to Eleonora Fiorani, epistemologist with a keen eye to issues associated with the sensitive qualities of objects. Our thanks also go to Franco La Cecla and Francesco Marsciani for their readiness to exchange opinions and to Marco Sachet and Antonio Feola for their contribution to the debate at an institutional level. Lastly, a thanks to the young designers who helped in the preliminary research phase and in particular to Cecilia Percivale.

DAILY LIFE. CROSS-SECTORIAL OBJECT. MASS OBJECT. MODEL OF CONSUMPTION. PRODUCTS. INSTRUMENT. SAFETY. TIME. **TRANSPARENT.** SPACE. INFORMATION. BENEFITS. SERVICES. ETHICS. REFLECTION. COMMITMENT. FUTURE. AWARE. CULTURE SYSTEM. OBLIGATIONS. RIGHTS. **UP-TO-DATE.** PRODUCTION. USE. PRINCIPLES. VALUES. IDEAL CONTRACT. REGULATIONS. PACKAGING. CULTURAL OBJECT. DESIGNERS. MANUFACTURERS. CONVERTERS. USERS. EXPERTS. **RESPONSIBLE.** DESIGN. PRODUCTION. USE. QUALITY. PROTECTION. ENVIRONMENT. USERS. **BALANCED.** REDUCTION. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. INSTRUMENTAL FUNCTIONS. COMMUNICATIVE FUNCTIONS. MEDIUM. INTERFACE. ENOUGH. AS NEEDED. **SAFE.** HEALTHY. PROTECT LIFECYCLE. INDIVIDUALS. COMMUNITY. TRACEABILITY. PROCESSES. SUPPLY

CHAIN. PROTECTION. UNCONTAMINATING. GURANTEE. CONTROLS. SUITABILITY. LEGAL STANDARDS. KNOWLEDGE. EASY. **ACCESSIBLE.** INTUITIVE. LEGIBILITY. COMPREHENSIBILITY. SINCERE. PLAIN. TRUST. FACILITATE. DISPOSAL. **INFORMATIVE.** INFORMATION INTERFACE. SUSTAINABLE. EVOLUTION OF CONTEMPORARINESS. AWARE. COMMUNICATION VEHICLE. MODELS OF SOCIAL LIFE. REUSE. **FORWARD-LOOKING.** IN RELATION WITH ITS OWN FUTURE. ANTICIPATE CHANGE. TESTING. DISCLOSURE OF DAILY AESTHETICS. DISPOSE. **EDUCATIVE.** RECYCLE. ANTI-WASTE. ECONOMIC VALUE. ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY. RENEWABLE ENERGY. CLEAN ENERGY. PROTECT. **SUSTAINABLE.** RESPONSIBLE SOURCES. RENEWABLE RAW MATERIALS. MATERIALS. EASY SEPARATION. PREVENTION. OPTIMIZE STORAGE.

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