

Metal Packaging - A Suitable Way Forward!

Sustainable packaging is no longer simply a buzz word. As society becomes more aware and conscious to the impact humans are having on the environment, brands all over the world are reconsidering their packaging strategies to be in line with the collective consciousness of evolving consumers.

A recent survey conducted by Nielsen in 2019 reported that nearly half of consumers in the US would change their consumption habits to lower their impact on the environment.

This indicates the sustainable packaging initiative is driven by customers, pushing brands to opt for more sustainable practices, rather than by governments.

Packaging used to be a tool simply to protect and differentiate a brand on retail shelves.

However now packaging has evolved to become a medium to add convenience, create customer engagement and most importantly communicate brand intent.



The word ‘Sustainable Solutions’ could be broadly classified as material possessing following characteristics of being – Biodegradable, Compostable or Recyclable.

Although all these terms are meant to be eco-friendly and are frequently used together, often interchangeably, they refer to different material and processes.



convenience



engagement



brand intent



'Biodegradable'

Biodegradable - Ability of materials to break down and return to nature. Theoretically, everything is biodegradable, although the timelines might be different, and it might take thousands of years for most things to biodegrade. Furthermore, select items are naturally biodegradable, like food and plants, whereas others could break down into harmful chemicals or gases. Therefore, the use of this word can be possibly confusing for the consumers both in terms of where to dispose and what happens to it once discarded.

It is important for one to understand the term biodegradable and make the right choices. In recent times, packaging made from plant-based material, has emerged as a solution, as it decomposes naturally, without affecting the environment.



“ Does biodegradable mean that the product or packaging is environmentally friendly? ”

“ The answer could be Yes & No ”

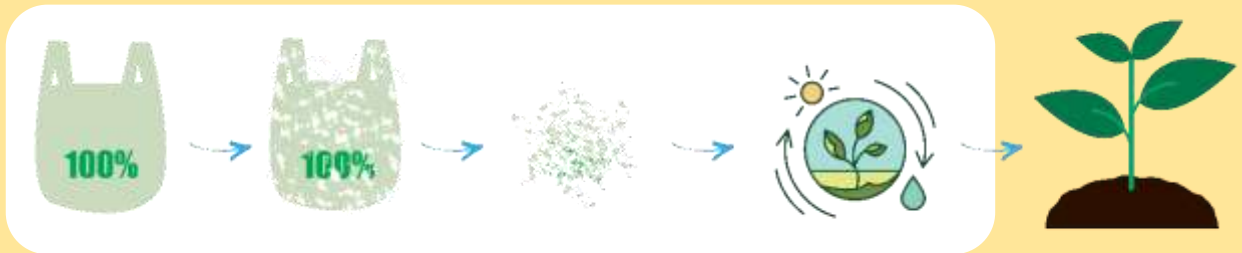


For instance, Press London, uses bottles that are made from 75% recycled plastic (PET) and 25% bioplastic made from cane sugar. Though this cannot be considered as the final biodegradable solution, it is a significant step towards using biodegradable solutions.



'Compostable'

Compostable: Like biodegradable materials, but goes one step further by providing the earth with nutrients once the material has completely broken down in a compost environment.



Compostable products are made from natural materials and decompose fully into "compost" without producing toxic residue as they break down. Materials that are classified as compostable require special composting conditions and are usually added to compost piles, having specific conditions dependent on wind, sunlight, drainage and other factors. Whereas biodegradable materials are designed to break down within landfills.

“ A biodegradable material is not necessarily compostable, but a compostable material is always biodegradable. ”

A UK retailer, Waitrose, introduced home compostable bags for their organic fresh produce segment. TIPA Corp., a compostable packaging company, developed an open bag made from home compostable film that was used to pack 'Waitrose Duchy Organic banana'.





'Recyclable'

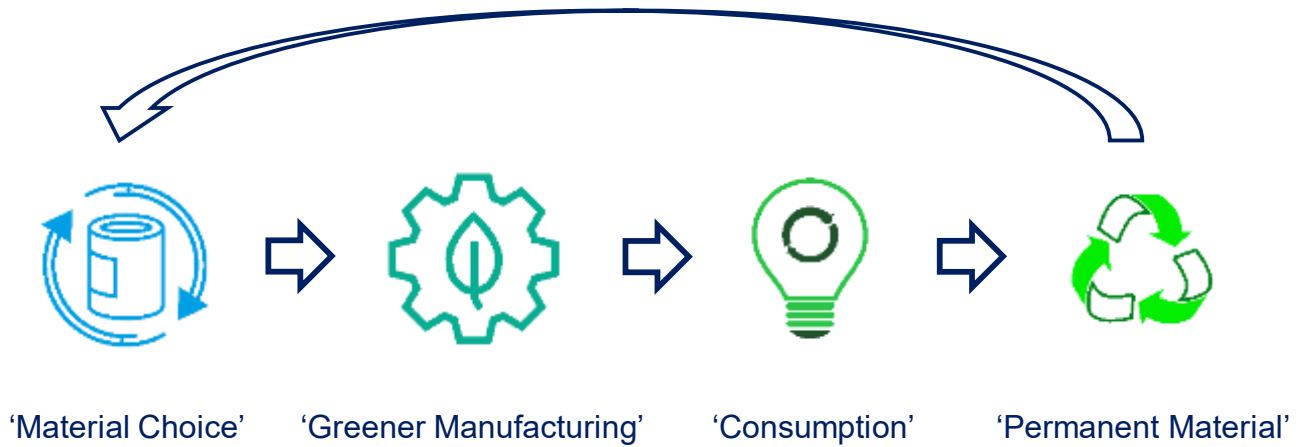
Recyclable: Materials that can be collected, sorted, reprocessed, and ultimately reused in manufacturing or making another item.


Plastic, a superior packaging material, is considered a non-sustainable option due to issues related to its disposal and recycling. This has resulted in increasing demand for materials such as metal, paper, and biodegradable polymers that support circular economy. Of which, "Metal Packaging" is considered as the material that "Recycles Forever."





Metal packaging finds application in various industries including food and beverages, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and paints, among others; it is used the most in the food and beverages industry. Region-wise, North and Latin Americas, Europe, and Japan largely use metal cans for packing beverages and processed food, while Asia-Pacific (excluding Japan) uses them for packing oil. In the Middle East, metal packaging is widely used for non-food items, such as cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and industrial products.


'Metal Packaging = Circular Economy'

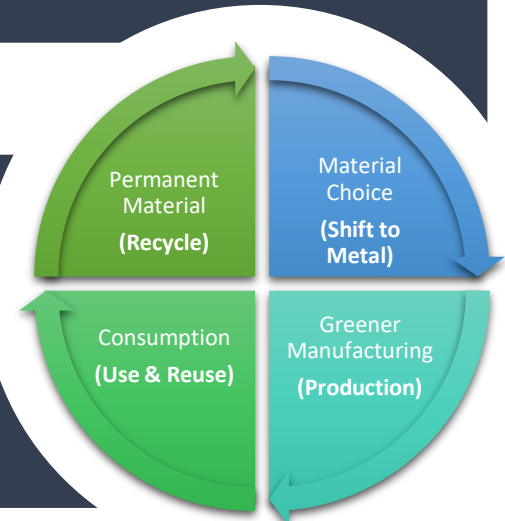


 'Material Choice – Shift to Metal-Based Packaging'

 'Greener Manufacturing – Production'

 'Consumption – Use and Reuse'

 'Permanent Material – Recycle'





'Material Choice – Shift to Metal-Based Packaging'

In early 2000s, sustainable packaging was considered a niche term. Eco-friendly packaging has currently become a standard practice and an identity for brands. As a result, several organizations (big and small) have started adopting greener solutions.

FMCG giant Unilever announced its commitment to reduce virgin plastic consumption by eliminating plastic packaging, where possible. The company launched Sedal shampoo in reusable aluminum bottles rather than the usual plastic bottles in Mexico. The company set up refill stations at Walmart stores, allowing consumers to fill the reusable bottles.



Coca-Cola introduced an alternate packaging option, a metal water can, for its brand Dasani. The innovation is in line with the company's environmental goals, including decreasing the use of virgin plastic bottles (currently, ~1 billion) over the next five years.



‘Greener Manufacturing – Production’

Developing Processes to Help Reduce Environment Impact. Whether it is metal or plastic, all are extracted from the earth, processed, refined and converted to reach its final form. Metal Packaging Europe has been conducting life cycle assessment of aluminum cans and containers; the association discovered that there has been a significant reduction in CO₂ emissions during the entire life cycle (raw material extraction to manufacturing and end-of-life) of the products.



“Did you know Since 2000 – 2015 the average weight of a water bottle has reduced 50%”



The reduction in CO₂ emissions can be attributed to the following:

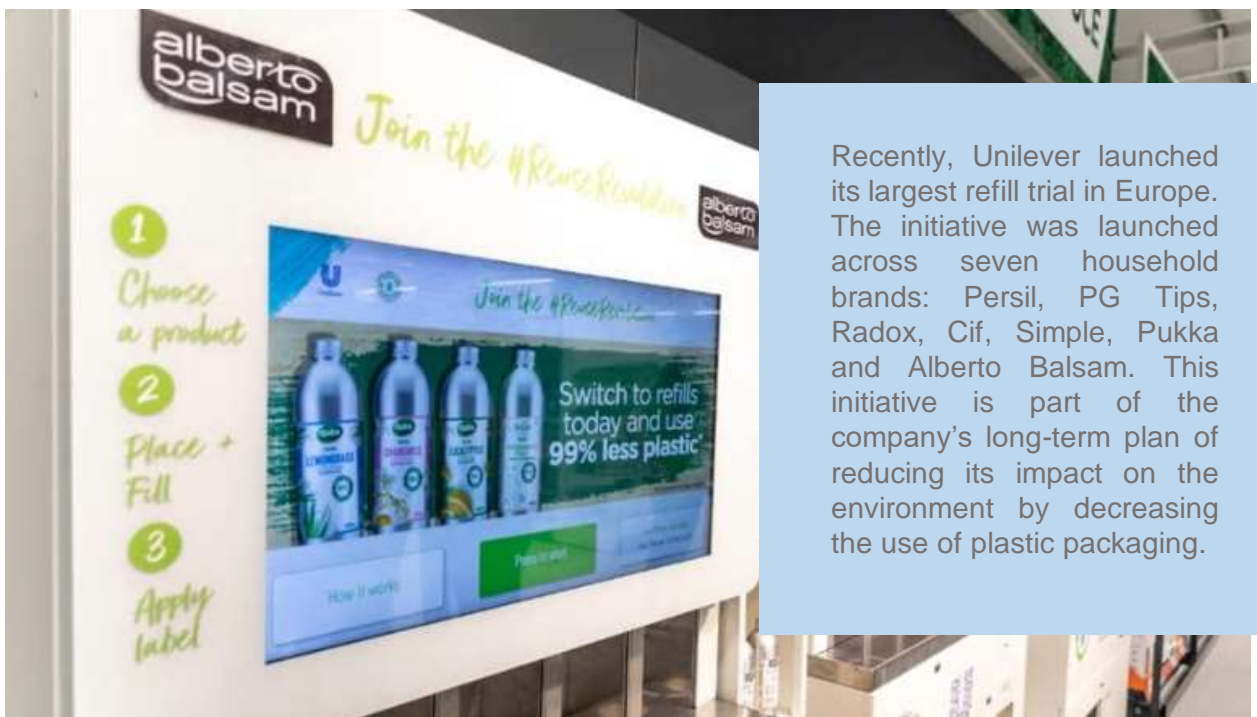
- Improved manufacturing processes – Reduction in electricity, heat, and water consumption
- Reduction in product weight – Continuous reduction in weight of packaging materials in recent years.



‘Consumption – Use and Reuse’

Attribute of Metal Packaging That Supports Reusability. FMCG companies are constantly looking to innovate and offer solutions that support – REUSE | REFILL | RETHINK. A key benefit of metal packaging is that it can be reused multiple times.

Häagen-Dazs, a Nestlé brand in the US and Canada, has launched a reusable stainless steel container as a part of its initiative to reduce waste. The container is designed to keep ice cream fresh and cold until it is delivered to the customer.



Recently, Unilever launched its largest refill trial in Europe. The initiative was launched across seven household brands: Persil, PG Tips, Radox, Cif, Simple, Pukka and Alberto Balsam. This initiative is part of the company’s long-term plan of reducing its impact on the environment by decreasing the use of plastic packaging.



'Permanent Material – Recycle'

Material That Does Not Lose Inherent Properties When Recycled. Once the metal packaging solution reaches the end of useful life, it is collected and recycled instead of being taken to landfills – AGAIN & AGAIN.

Some of the key benefits for metal recycling:

- No loss of quality on recycling
- Have the highest scrap value, hence subsidizes the collecting & recycling cost
- Short recycling period – can be returned to shelf in 60 days
- Easily stackable making it cost-effective to transport



“According to Metal Packaging Europe, up to 80% of all metal ever produced in the world is still available for use, making metal packaging the most recycled packaging.”

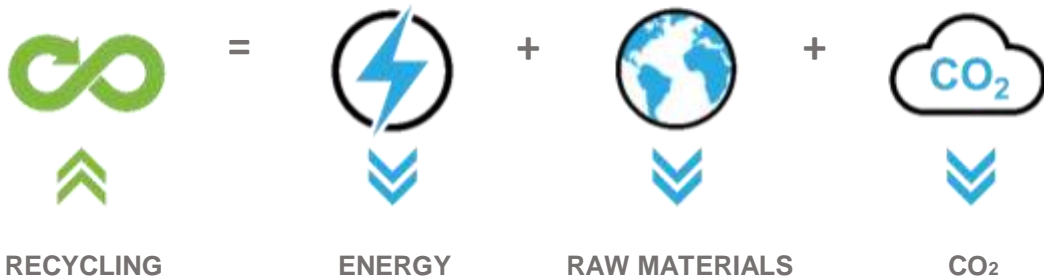


Europe is at the forefront of adoption and development of metal packaging and circular economy solutions. In 2014, members of Metal Packaging Europe introduced the “Metal Recycling Forever” trademark that can be embedded on metal packaging. The purpose of the mark is to prompt consumers to sort and recycle any kind of metal packaging to make the product available for the next round of production.



'Permanent Material – Recycle'

Metal packaging recycling helps in reducing the environmental impact caused by products during their entire lifecycle, besides enabling a circular economy. Metal recycling decreases the utilization of Earth's resources and reduces the CO2 emissions that gets generated during production. Beverage cans are the world's most recycled drinks packaging. Recycling of these cans saves over 90% of the energy required to manufacture new aluminum cans and 74% of the energy used to produce virgin steel.



Companies such as Freedea and L'mon have adopted the Metal Recycling Forever mark in:

- Freedea soda
- L'mon canned sparkling fruit water





'Permanent Material – Recycle'

“ *One of the larger questions is how can we make the world a greener place to live?* ”



Packaging might be a fraction of the overall waste generated from household, commercial and industrial sectors. But it is very much visible and, in a world of scarce resources, attracts attention from consumers, the media and nongovernmental organizations. Hence, the drive towards sustainability in packaging and choosing the right packaging materials can help in reducing the burden on the environment. Thus, both organizations and customers are required to contribute to the success of circular economy.



Leader of the Pack



COMMITTED TO SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING



Food Cans



Paint Cans



Industrial Cans



Aerosol Cans



Plastic Pails



Can Components