

Press Release COF, 2 October 2018

Packaging in the fruit and vegetable section:

What impact does it have on the customer experience – and on the attractiveness of the section?

Carton Ondulé de France reveals the results of a new neuroscientific study of consumer behaviour

Paris, 2 October 2018 – The role and impact of packaging on consumers is the subject of research and special efforts on the part of distributors and manufacturers; but what is the situation in the fruit and vegetable section? Is there a link between the customer experience and packaging? Does this link affect the attractiveness of the section – and of its products? The trade association Carton Ondulé de France (Corrugated Board of France) has carried out a new study to understand the role of packaging in the customer experience in this section.

Packaging goes unnoticed in the fruit and vegetable section, but it still has a powerful impact

The study was carried out by Négosciences*, consulting firm specialising in neurosciences applied to business, and Carton Ondulé de France. First of all, it looked at how packaging is perceived in the fruit and vegetable section and found that **95% of customers interviewed did not notice the packaging** used to display fruit and vegetables. However, the study showed that packaging has a strong, clear impact on the customer experience, depending on its nature or its absence.

The first indicator, **the nature of packaging, has a direct influence on the time spent in the section: a customer spends between 17% and 50% more time in front of the stands if the fruit and vegetables are displayed in corrugated board trays** rather than in plastic containers or without packaging (displayed directly on the shelves with stainless steel separators).

The second indicator, which enables the impact on the customer experience to be measured, lies in the **“coverage rate”**, a quantification of the surface area explored in the section. This rate is identical, whether fruit & veg are displayed between stainless steel separators or in corrugated board trays.

On the other hand, when customers are faced with fruit and vegetables displayed either in plastic containers or in corrugated trays, they will **cover 51% more surface area with the “corrugated” solution**: 23.8% coverage rate with plastic containers compared with 35.9% for cardboard trays.

“It was necessary to use scientific methods to precisely identify and quantify the potential impact. We can now confirm that visits to the fruit and vegetable section are longer and more exploratory when the shelves contain corrugated board trays. This is real added value offered by our packaging”, explains **Bertrand Arnault**, CEO of Carton Ondulé de France.

Packaging for fruit and vegetables has a direct impact on buying behaviour

The interest shown in the product is a determining factor in the act of buying. It makes the difference between a pleasurable purchase and an “obligatory” purchase where only the economic variable is taken into consideration. The results are clear on this point: of the two comparisons carried out, **81% and 86% of customers showed an interest in the product rather than in the prices displayed when fruit and vegetables were displayed in corrugated board trays.**

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These figures drop to 59.2% when plastic containers are used as packaging; and to 15.5 % for products displayed without packaging in stainless steel separators.

Cardboard trays lessen interest in the price: -65% in relation to plastic containers, and -77% in relation to stainless steel separators, and hence induce the customer to assess the value of the product and its quality.

Finally, the study reveals that the number of customers buying fruit and vegetables increases between 13% and 16% when they are presented in corrugated board trays rather than on stainless steel shelves or in plastic containers.

“The nature of the packaging reveals different customer behaviours. This is a proven fact for packaged products that are displayed on the shelf, but it is a new finding for self-service products, and more particularly for fruit and vegetables, even though the customer only perceives the packaging subconsciously. Corrugated board offers an unparalleled and sustainable customer experience!” This is the conclusion of **Kareen Desbouis, Managing Director of Carton Ondulé de France.**

Corrugated board, an advantage for large retailers

In the 1960s, corrugated board was part of the boom in mass distribution by encouraging the consumption of agri-food through improved hygiene and logistics. And today this packaging still appeals to producers, manufacturers and distributors. With 73 production sites located close to customers all over France, the sector offers guaranteed responsiveness and flexibility in the supply of packaging.

Corrugated board is a packaging solution that is well-suited to the distribution chain for fruit and vegetables. **Corrugated board trays are hygienic, allow for longer preservation, are ergonomic, robust and light**, easy to handle, adaptable and economic, and guaranteed by the CFQ quality label. In this way, they provide significant added value throughout the whole value chain.

Biosourced, renewable, biodegradable, recyclable and recycled, corrugated board is an innovative, high-performance and responsible packaging solution that responds perfectly to the needs of large retailers. *“It is an efficient, light and understated material that has the advantage of being able to meet all specifications (cold chain, protection of fragile foodstuffs, etc.). It is also a key marketing tool because packaging can be customised. Corrugated board is the retailer’s fairy godmother!”* says Bertrand Arnault.

Key figures from 2017 on the corrugated board business

- 15 groups – 73 sites
- 11,600 employees
- **Total production in 2017:** 2.847 million metric tons or +0.1% compared to 2016 5.53 billion m² or +2% compared to 2016 of which 20% is sold as sheets and transformed into packaging
- **Export in 2017** 398,000 metric tons imported, or +11.15% compared to 2016 225,000 metric tons exported, or +3.7% compared to 2016
- **Turnover 2017** 2.69 billion euros, or +2.5% compared to 2016

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**Methodology: Négosciences' study carried out in 2 different chain stores (1,500m² and 1,800m²), based on 2,016 hours of in-store observation between Sept. 2016 and Dec. 2017, involving 4,530 customers.*

About Carton Ondulé de France

Carton Ondulé de France is the trade association of corrugated board manufacturers in France. Its mission is to emphasise the value of a key industrial sector, which represents more than one quarter of the packaging sector in France and is renowned as a model of the circular economy: 92% recycling rate and 80% utilisation of recycled material. Carton Ondulé de France supports its members, which represent more than 70% of the sector, by highlighting the benefits of a sustainable, indispensable material that is a medium for high added-value services for the French economy – in particular for the transport & logistics sector and retail. The industry employs 11,600 people in France at 73 production sites and produces 2.8 million metric tons (5.53 billion m²) of corrugated board with a turnover of 2.69 billion euros (2017 figures).

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