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## **Does Packaging Matter?**

Consumer experience of sustainable bread packaging

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## Introduction

Bakery products, especially bread, have been a popular staple in Northern Europe for hundreds of years, enabling mankind to learn the art of bread making and develop it throughout this time (Gellynck et al, 2009). Bread is a product that is used regularly for breakfast and lunch throughout Northern Europe and over these hundreds of years many variants of bread have been developed to suit all kinds of pallets. Thus, many kinds of bread exist, from classic white breads to ecologically produced breads. Sustainability is indeed a growing trend within the bread industry, as organizations become more aware of the necessity to produce bread responsibly. However, while consumers are mostly favorable to the development of sustainable bread consumption, the share of sustainable bread sales remain low and new ways of attracting the consumer are sought for (KRAV, 2015). Packaging has been shown to be one of the most influential marketing tools in-store and can certainly help in understanding what could attract the consumer towards the shelf (Ampuero & Vila, 2006). In fact, there is a research gap concerning consumer experience of sustainable packaging within the bakery industry. This gap opens up an opportunity for our research to delve into this segment so as to find out how the consumer experiences sustainable bread packaging.

With there being many different competitors within the bakery industry gaining a competitive advantage is key and having a product that stands out can aid in attracting customers. With this in mind, 73 percent of consumers rely on packaging to decide whether or not to purchase a product (Hagberg et al, 2012). Having an in depth comprehension of the product and its packaging can be an important marketing tool for a company. There are two main purposes to packaging including logistical, the aspect of packaging that is used to help protect the product and the marketing aspect, when the consumer sees and interacts with the product (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007; Well et al, 2007; Butkeviciene et al, 2008; Liao et al, 2015). For

our research, the marketing aspect is what we will be analyzing. In overcrowded supermarkets, marketers do not have many ways to push consumers to purchase their products. Therefore packaging, which has an influential power over the consumer, is definitely one of the most reliable ways to attract the latter (Ampuero & Vila, 2006).

As society has developed, we have become conscious of the World around us and realized that sustainable products and packaging can help create a positive change. Our main focus will be to explore the marketing aspects of sustainable bread packaging, analyze the importance of packaging and how the overall experience is for the consumer. Our research looks at normal consumers of bread in Sweden and the United Kingdom. From analyzing these two groups we are able to gain an insight as to how the Northern European bread market experiences purchasing bread and in order for us to understand how packaging can be effective in attracting the consumer's attention, we must look at the consumer experience and see what it is that draws them to a product. Furthermore, to thoroughly understand this, we will look at the four packaging elements that help shape consumer decision making which are graphics, information, technology, and size/shape and will be discussed in detail later on. As we will show, these elements are decisive in consumer experience. Packaging will be discussed further in this chapter and will be developed into our research question at the end of this section.

### ***Sustainable Packaging***

There is an ever growing conscience to create sustainable product packaging in order to protect the ecosystems we live in. For our research, sustainable packaging can best be defined as packaging that supports a sustainable product (Sonneveld et al, 2005). Making sure packaging is safe, environmentally friendly, recyclable, and cyclic in its process, helps tackle issues that are being talked about more and more today. As the population

develops we consume more and it is important to look at sustainable packaging to help combat consumption and make it more environmentally friendly. It cannot be only food that is sustainable, but rather the product as a whole. In order to promote true sustainability, the two must work in unison. With this in mind, sustainable food and the material they are packaged in are greatly important, as is relaying a positive message to the consumer that the whole product is sustainable. Angellier-Coussy et al (2013) argue how sustainable packaging has a large role to play in marketing and consumption, as it can improve food preservation, which helps to reduce food losses, reduce the environmental impact of packaging and the product, and bring together the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable food. Fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) companies are our primary focus when it comes to producers of packaging, as their products are bought by a large majority of the population on a regular basis, and therefore have a large influence on what consumers buy.

### ***Packaging and Organic Bread***

This helps lead us to the role of packaging to increase the consumption of organic bread. In this study, we decided to discuss the implications of organic bread, which is related to the environmental aspect of sustainability. Although sustainable products can benefit both social and environmental aspects, we focused on organic bread, and thereby, environmental sustainability. Organic bread is in many regards better than conventional or natural baked bread. It is healthier and more nutritious and contains on average 49% whole food ingredients, while conventional bread contains only 12% (Smith et al, 2012). It also contains on average 20% less preservative and additive ingredients (Smith et al, 2012). Furthermore, organic bread emits 17 to 45% less CO<sub>2</sub> than conventional bread (Lindenthal et al, 2009). When taking into account that bread is consumed by 95% of the English population yearly (Mintel, 2011) and the Swedish are ingesting an average of about 86

grams of bread daily (Sandvik et al, 2014), it goes without saying that increasing the consumption of organic bread is of the utmost importance in a world endangered by pollution and waste.

In order to do that, marketers need to understand how consumers experience organic bread packaging at the point of sale. Consequently, we propose this study to deepen the reader's understanding of the elements of sustainable bread packaging that highlight consumer experience. As packaging is implicated in the purchase decision of most consumers and has a strong influence over them, it is desirable to improve our understanding of the key elements of sustainable packaging that are likely to influence consumers.

Packaging is an influential marketing tool that is able to aid in consumer experience. Companies large and small across the World use packaging in order to influence a potential consumer to buy certain products. With packaging being a powerful medium to influence consumer buying habits it poses the question of how we can better understand consumers by looking at bread packaging. As shoppers enter the store, they are exposed to countless products and despite the numerous messages that they receive, they are most influenced by their past experience and current motives. Meaning, that a successful purchase is strongly dependent on what shoppers expect to see in the store and what their needs, wants, interests, and values are (Nancarrow et al, 1998; Azzi et al, 2012). Marketers must undoubtedly take this into consideration when designing their packaging, by studying the needs and wants of the consumer and analyze competitors' packagings in order to understand the rules of the category (Nancarrow et al, 1998; Azzi et al, 2012). For example, organic products are often related to green and have a clear and refined design. In Addition, elements of packaging such as color, background images, packaging material etc. help shape the consumer perception of what the

product is. Additionally, with consumers using self-service more frequently and changing consumer lifestyles, companies are using packaging as a promotion, sales tool, or stimulus to create impulse buying behavior more frequently (Mitul & Bhavesh, 2012).

In this article we will explore sustainable bread packaging and see how it is experienced by the consumer. Literature in packaging and sustainable packaging is highly important and this coupled with our focus group research, will enable us to gather a deeper understanding of how consumer experiences are shaped.

### ***Aim and Research Question***

From the themes that we have introduced above our objective is to explore, "*How is sustainable bread packaging experienced by the consumer?*". Based on this question we want to know how the consumer experiences sustainable bread packaging based on its key elements, which are Technology, Information, Graphics, and Size/Shape. These four elements make up the model established by Silayoi and Speece (2004) and it represents the key aspects in packaging that influence a consumer's experience to purchase a product. Technology encompasses packaging innovation and design through packaging materials. For example, how or what packaging is made out of. Information involves every aspect of packaging susceptible to inform the consumer about the product, giving them an insight to what the product entails. It can include label information, ingredients, nutrition and so on. Graphics is highly visual and everything from color on the packaging to pictures is what represents this element. It is usually a central element of packaging, as it can attract the consumer and build preference. Lastly, size/shape is literally the size and shape of the packaging, it plays a role in consumer experience when looking at different consumer types. We will be using relevant literature and focus groups to help determine consumer experiences towards sustainable packaging and bread. By doing so, we will be able to decipher the aforementioned key elements and find out

how the consumer experiences sustainable bread packaging. This article will be structured as follows: the first section will be literature that has been assembled together in order to gain a clearer comprehension of packaging, sustainable packaging, consumer experiences and bread. Next will be the methodology section, in which we will extract information via two focus groups. Validity of this segment and reasoning behind choosing a focus group will be presented. Moving forward, the results will be discussed and analyzed in order to find out rational reasoning behind consumer experiences. To finalize, contributions to the study will be discussed and managerial implications will be suggested.

### ***Limitations***

We have to recognize that there are limitations to this study such as we have not taken into account factors that don't relate to the analytical model - presented below in this study. For example, participants have different family upbringings and therefore will have different perceptions and habits on how they purchase. We have also not taken into account social factors, cultural factors or noted any current trends in the research, which may affect our results. Furthermore, this research is a qualitative study whereas the majority of studies within this field has been quantitative. We will justify our reasons for this in the methodology section.

### ***Literature Review***

From our research question and the purpose of our study, it seems natural to opt for a literature review that englobes the different aspects of our study including packaging, sustainable packaging, consumer experience, and bread. Therefore, the following section will begin by defining the different elements of packaging so as to understand more accurately what composes packaging and how it can affect the consumer. It will then introduce sustainable packaging and exhibit how it differs from

conventional packaging. After what, the known consumer experiences towards packaging will be brought in so as to further understand how the consumer experience packaging in the supermarket. Lastly, since we are looking at the bread industry, it is important to explore the potential particularities of consumer experience towards bread. By doing so, our literature review will examine the different fields of study that could contribute to the construction of our analytical model, which aims at identifying the key elements of sustainable bread packaging through which the consumer experiences organic bread.

### ***Packaging Elements***

Packaging fulfills two main functions, one logistical and one marketing function (Prendergast & Pitt, 1996; Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). Both functions are imperative as the logistical function is to protect the packaging during movements and the marketing function is to convey communication messages towards the consumer at the point of sale (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007; Well et al, 2007; Butkevicienė et al, 2008; Liao et al, 2015). Therefore, these two functions are indivisible as they serve the product by attracting the consumer and containing, protecting and utilizing the product. The marketing function of packaging cannot be ignored, since it is the key attribute that influences the consumer towards a product. FMCG, for which the consumer receives enormous amounts of information in-store, are heavily relying on packaging to lead the consumer to purchase. As packaging plays such a prominent role in this context, it is important for marketing purposes to be aware of the different elements of packaging and how they are likely to influence the consumer (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007; Liao et al, 2015). Silayoi and Speece (2004, 2007) have developed a model that breaks packaging into four element categories.

Packaging technology is the level of innovation incorporated in a product that responds to technological demands of the target market. The degree of efficiency of production, the shelf life

duration of the product, the extent to which the product meets food safety requirements, the conservation of nutritional value and the environmental impact of the product are some of the many aspects that packaging technology acts on either positively, or negatively (McIlveen, 1994; Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007; Butkevicienė et al, 2008).

Product information is especially relevant concerning products that require a higher level of involvement (Kupiec & Revell, 2001; Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). The information of the package can be of great help for the consumer when making a choice (Orth et al, 2010; Simms & Trott, 2010), nonetheless it can sometimes mislead the consumer to purchase a product that does not represent their exact expectations. This is because product information on the package can sometimes be inaccurate or confusing (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). In reaction to this, an UK survey data has shown that almost two-third of consumers read food labels, and one-third estimates that labeling should be clearer (IGD, 2003). However, even though not all consumers are reading food labels or trying to get more information about the product, it has been recognized that product information is actually increasingly important and paid attention to (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). Still, it is important to remark that most packaged food products are considered as low-involvement products for consumers (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007).

Packaging size and shape is another aspect that influences the consumer in the purchase decision process. For example, consumers usually perceive lengthened packages to be more voluminous, while the real volumes are not. This implies that small discrepancies in volumes don't alter the consumer's perception of the package, even on the long-term (Raghubir & Krishna, 1999; Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). Various sizes also attract various consumers who have different types of involvement, as products with differing values are packaged differently (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007).

Graphics and color represent the overall image of the product as it appears on the package through the combination of layout,

color, typography and product photography or design (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007; Butkevicienė et al, 2008). This element of packaging is known to be very influential for low-involvement products as the consumer judges the product on its appearance rather than on other elements like information or technology (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). To the consumer, the packaging is the product and that is why packaging's graphics and color play a critical role in order to communicate with and attract the consumer. The consumer bases a big part of their decision on physical attributes, which graphics and design take part in (Venter et al, 2011). Even more critical, visual attributes are recognized to catch the consumer's attention in-store (Venter et al, 2011). This is further consolidated by Mitul and Bhavesh (2012) who explains that packages attract the attention of the consumer through their imagery, color coding and appearance. Color itself can be a strong determinant to build liking as a correct color coding can help attract the consumer to the product and modify price expectation too (Becker et al, 2011). Furthermore, as stated by Hausman (2000), products in the supermarket are often purchased without prior planning and can thereby be understood as a type of impulse buying. Consequently, a packaging's aesthetic attributes are key contributors to the final decision of the in-store consumer and their success depends heavily on details such as the positioning of the product, photography, or the differentiation of the product packaging as compared with its competitors (Herrington & Capella, 1995; Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). This has to be done while staying in-line with the rules of the product category, which can include specific color associations, or graphic types for instance (Grossman & Wisenblit, 1999; Sonneveld et al, 2005).

*As we have shown in the previous section, packaging is composed by four main elements that affect how the consumer experiences packaging, namely packaging technology, product information, packaging size and shape, and graphics and size. Nevertheless, one might*

*assume that sustainable packaging might differ from conventional packaging and, thereby, our study should take into account other aspects of packaging as modified by sustainable design. The following section will explore this issue by presenting sustainable packaging and what potentially varies between sustainable and conventional packaging.*

### **Sustainable Packaging**

According to Sonneveld et al (2005), sustainable packaging can be defined by four principles, which are necessary to successfully support sustainable development through packaging. Sonneveld et al (2005; Nordin & Selke, 2010) state that sustainable packaging must be safe. They develop this thought by explaining that packaging components should not pose any risks to human health or ecosystems. Additionally, sustainable packaging must be cyclic, which can be understood as the minimization of material degradation and upgrading additives through natural or industrial technical systems (Sonneveld et al, 2005; Nordin & Selke, 2010). Sustainable packaging should also be more efficient by using materials and energy in an adequate manner at every stage of the product lifecycle (Sonneveld et al, 2005; Nordin & Selke, 2010). Lastly, sustainable packaging must add value to society by protecting products during the supply chain process (Nordin & Selke, 2010) and by educating the consumer to use and dispose of the product more responsibly (Sonneveld et al, 2005). From this theory, we see that sustainable packaging demands imperative changes at four levels, component, material, system, and society. It appears that designing sustainable packaging requires more efforts and different processes than conventional packaging.

Indeed, sustainable packaging requires distinct technologies in order to ensure safety, eco-efficiency, and responsible consumption. It plays a key role socially, economically, and environmentally (Nordin & Selke, 2010), and both at macro and micro levels; contributing to prosperity and well being of the individuals and

society, minimizing waste and promoting safety (Nordin & Selke, 2010).

As a gage of sustainability, eco-labels are recognized to build trust and lower uncertainty for the consumer (Näslund & Tamm Hallström, 2014). They are control organizations that provide information via third party certifications (Näslund & Tamm Hallström, 2014). Moreover, their independence from companies' influence makes them more trustworthy for the consumer, which makes them more reliable too (Näslund & Tamm Hallström, 2014). The source of eco-labels is also very important to the consumer, especially for low-involvement products (Atkinson & Rosenthal, 2014). However, products labelling hardly changes consumption habits, it needs to be coupled with other elements of the product to increase purchase substantially (Vanclay et al, 2011). Likewise, eco-labelling has limits and Horne (2009) clearly raised the concern that eco-labels can be mistrusted by the consumer and that trust and eco-labels are difficult to use together.

Yet, an investigation of sustainable packaging wouldn't be complete without portraying the buyer of sustainable packaging. Sustainable packaging buyers are somewhat similar to buyers of sustainable products, but even so, it seems important to present their main characteristics for the future development of this study. The sustainable packaging buyer is more likely to be an individual who has an internal focus of control, who believes that there is an environmental problem, and who is positive towards ecologically conscious living (Schwepker et al, 1991; Nordin & Selke, 2010). Consequently, an existing knowledge of the environmental problem increases the likelihood of a purchase. Once the consumer is aware of the problem, they become more receptive to improved packages that minimize solid waste or are biodegradable for example (Schwepker et al, 1991). It has been shown by research that the consumer is increasingly concerned and aware of these problems and that sustainability is a significant aspect of the consumer purchase decision (Nordin & Selke, 2010). For example, an average 17% of consumers are green motivated (Nordin & Selke, 2010) and 30% of

consumers would rank packaging as the second most important sustainability aspect in a product (Nordin & Selke, 2010).

Moreover, packaging can play a key role in developing sustainable food consumption (Angellier-Coussy et al, 2013), as it can improve food preservation, which helps to reduce food losses, reduce the environmental impact of packaging and the product, and bring together the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainable food (Angellier-Coussy et al, 2013). As pointed out earlier, sustainable food buyers and sustainable packaging buyers are quite similar. Like sustainable packaging buyers, sustainable food buyers are more inclined to purchase sustainable food, depending on their level of receptivity to green issues (Verain et al, 2012). Three segments of sustainable food consumers can be identified, green segment, potential green segment and non-green segment. These gradually show the interest of the consumer in buying a sustainable food product as related to their receptivity to green issues (Verain et al, 2012).

*However, a shopper's experience towards sustainable packaging is not only modified by their sensitivity to sustainable issues but also by diverse factors that are indirectly or directly related to the consumer's experience of packaging. We will explore the different attributes that alter the consumer's experience in the following section.*

### **Consumer's Experience towards Packaging**

The consumer's experience towards packaging is extremely important for business because this is what helps shape their decision process when purchasing a product. Pilditch (1957; Azzi et al, 2012) wrote how packaging is the silent salesman and is a key influencer when helping consumers with their decision making process. With this in mind it is imperative that companies design their packaging with the consumer perception in mind (Nancarrow et al, 1998; Azzi et al, 2012), therefore aiding in the probability

that they will be more successful at targeting the consumer.

Today's consumption is highly influenced by visuals and consumers are targeted by hundreds of images everyday (Schroeder, 2005). Even if consumers do not pay attention or comprehend the message of visuals and are not aware of the role they play in their lives, they are affected and influenced by these messages daily (Schroeder, 2005). In a world of digitalization and hyper exposure to visuals, people consume with their eyes (Schroeder, 2005). Therefore, consumers are making choices and living experiences through images and visuals. They experience through the visual imagery of things, which they find in brand images, advertising images and product images (Schroeder, 2005). This reliance on visual imagery is critical when considering packaging since it represents the window to the product and is the means through which consumer experience is created.

Besides, as explained by Ampuero and Vila (2006), the product must be positioned in the consumer mind in order to influence their experience. This positioning can engage consumers in a higher cognition process, making them more involved with the packaging and therefore the product. Ampuero and Vila (2006) describe how positioning is influenced by the marketing mix (product, price, distribution and advertising) and that packaging can be tailored to reach the consumer effectively.

Moreover, packaging has been shown to be an important component of consumer experience as a brand-related stimuli, which brings about subjective, internal consumer responses that represent brand experience (Brakus et al, 2009).

Specifically regarding food packaging, Venter et al (2011) have shown that the consumer sees the recyclable, informative, and convenience aspects as very important and that visual elements are also significant in the consumer's choice. Quality, freshness and nutrition are some of the informative aspects that matter. Clearly displayed nutritional information, for example, has been shown to encourage the consumer to select healthier products and to understand more accurately what nutrition

stands for (Hersey et al, 2013). It has also been proven that consumers are seeking indications of quality like the expiration date before purchase (Verbeke & Wardb, 2006). On the contrary, nutritional labels can also be misinterpreted, which leads a share of consumers to distrust nutritional information (Zhang et al, 2015). Likewise, an overload of information is likely to degrade the consumer experience as consumers pay attention to a few items of packaging information and are more receptive to clarity of display (Kunle & Ganiyu, 2013).

The consumer experience of food product also relies on indirect indicators like the brand and product name, thus brands can be experienced in a more positive manner when using a product name that impact the target market in an effective way (Dick et al, 1997; Beneke, 2010). This is especially true when the consumer is familiar with the product or has already purchased it, increasing trust in the product (Jaafar et al, 2012).

Furthermore, as earlier stated, the convenience dimension of food packaging is quite important in consumer experience, as it helps use the product in a quicker and easier way (Guerrero et al, 2008).

From here, we now need to delve further and look at consumer experience for bread. Gellynck et al. (2009) found that bread is seen as an important part of people's diet and due to its nutritional value in grains, fibers and vitamins, is seen as a good source of energy. There are, however, some negative consumer connotations with bread, which are it can be seen as boring, un-tasty, un-trendy, and doesn't preserve. Furthermore with mass production-plant bread is seen as lower quality. Gellynck et al (2009) also found that there is a level of uncertainty with bread and statements that have come out regarding the staple. Statements such as "bread makes fat" and "brown bread is healthier than white bread" have created a level of confusion amongst consumers. This has led them to question the validity of enriched bread products that are geared towards consumer health, a prime example being omega-3 bread.

## Analytical Model

By looking at previous research, we have shown that sustainable packaging in the bread industry is a rich subject that demands the elaboration of a model to comprehend how the consumer experiences packaging. Hence, this study will be supported by an analytical model based upon the three main sections of our theoretical framework. Packaging elements will serve as the foundation of the model, it will then be modified by the particularities of sustainable packaging and consumer experience.

As presented in the literature review, packaging is composed of four main elements, which are technology, information, size and shape, and graphics (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). The consumer experiences packaging through these four elements. For example, a consumer's decision to purchase a product because of its low environmental impact or its convenience is linked to the level of packaging technology and information (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). If the consumer buys the product for its colorful graphics and appealing images, then it is related to graphics (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). In brief, the purchase decision of the consumer as influenced by packaging can always be related to one of these four aspects. For that reason, the four elements of packaging constitute a solid foundation to our analytical model. Nevertheless, the way the consumer experiences sustainable packaging involves other aspects that we also need to take into account in our research. As we have shown earlier, sustainable packaging has implications on the way packaging is being designed, especially about its technological and informational aspects (Nordin & Selke, 2010). Indeed, the reduction of the carbon footprint of a product goes through both the product and the packaging (Nordin & Selke, 2010). Packaging also helps to minimize food losses (Angellier-Coussy et al, 2013). And, the problem of packaging recyclability is critical to design a sustainable product (Nordin & Selke, 2010). These concerns are simply examples of how packaging helps to create a sustainable product

by using technology. This is also true for information. As packaging information can help a consumer to dispose appropriately of the product at the end of its life cycle or to inform the consumer of the product's characteristics (eco-efficiency, recyclability, organic farming and so forth), it definitely plays an important role in helping the consumer to use the product properly (Sonneveld et al, 2005). Therefore, technology and information seem to be the two most important elements of sustainable packaging as directly related to sustainability. On the contrary, we argue that size and shape, and graphics are not directly modified by the level of sustainability of the product and remain mostly modifiable. These aspects also seem more related to visuals (Venter et al, 2011) than sustainability. Thus, it is interesting to ask which is the most influential to the final consumer, sustainability aspects like technology and information or visual aspects like size/shape and graphics?

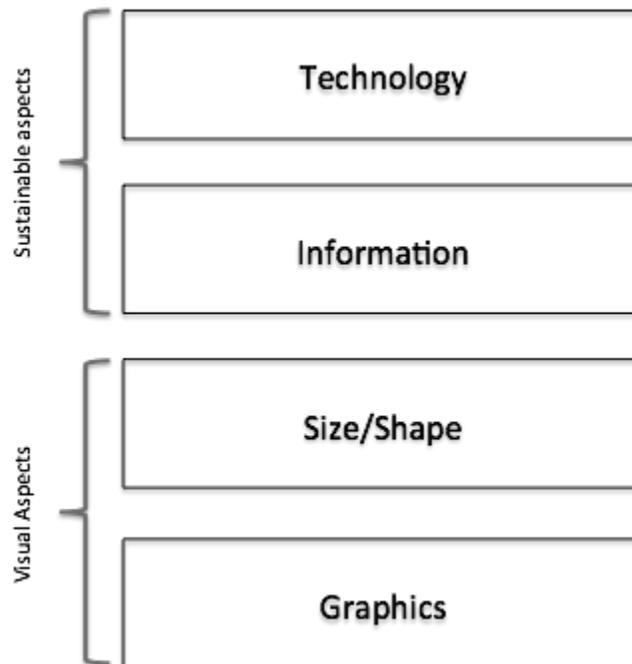
Moreover, due to the continuous flow of information about sustainability, most of the consumers have a basic knowledge of ecology and are aware of the importance of sustainability. Therefore, the consumer is more likely to be involved in a higher cognitive process when exposed to sustainable packaging and, thereby, less receptive to advertising. Since sustainable products are positioned differently than conventional products, they demand more reflection from the consumer (Ampuero & Vila, 2006). The packaging must convince the consumer with arguments that would justify a purchase. For instance, information about eco-efficiency of the product verified by eco-labels could be a way to convince the consumer. As a result, it seems that the informational element of the packaging will play a prominent role in the final decision of the consumer.

Additionally, by considering industrial bread as a product perceived with lower-quality and false claims about health (Gellynck et al, 2009), we can expect that the consumer will be careful about the provenance and origin of the product and, thereby, scrutinize the information of the product.

All of these aspects help us to draw our analytical model based on the four main elements of packaging divided into two categories. We presume that sustainable bread packaging will involve the consumer in a rather high cognitive process and that information will be key in the purchase decision, however, the technological aspect, which modifies information

directly, should also be taken into account for the final decision. Interestingly, visual aspects could also play an important role in the final decision without verifying the sustainability of the product. The following analytical model will help us determine which of these aspects are the most relevant for the consumer when buying sustainable bread.

**Graph 1. Sustainable Bread Packaging Elements Model**



## Methodology

In order to answer our research question, “*How is sustainable bread packaging experienced by the consumer?*”, we must choose an appropriate research method that will help us achieve our aim. We decided to opt for a qualitative method because it is useful for understanding a social phenomenon (Bryman, 2002). The majority of research administered within this field has been quantitative, however because we are aspiring to analyse consumer experience, we felt that a qualitative research study would help further our analysis, due to allowing us to use social interactions, dialogue, feelings, etc. to really

grasp how the consumer experiences sustainable bread packaging.

A focus group is a form of qualitative study in which a group of respondents is asked to discuss a certain topic, product, service, etc. The aim of a focus group is to gather vital and in-depth information from the respondents regarding the selected topic. It is a guiding tool that engages the respondents to talk about their perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences (Powell & Single, 1996). Adding further to this it is part of grounded theory in that it is a rigorous way to gain a more in depth conclusion on how the social phenomenon being studied operates (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

Thus, the use of focus groups is a great opportunity to explore the different opinions of the consumer towards packaging and which of the sustainable or visual aspects of sustainable packaging are most influential towards them. It is especially relevant when used jointly with our analytical model, as we will measure how the participants experience packaging through its elements. Hence, the focus group helps us to not only understand the opinions of the consumer towards sustainable packaging, but to also see how they experience sustainable packaging and how they behave when exposed to different bread packages. Since we aim at recreating the supermarket setting during our focus group, primary consumer behaviors are identifiable, as well as a close retranscription of the purchase decision process. Accordingly, we have presented different product samples to our participants so that they can judge real products and be more elaborate and explicit about their opinions. We also mentioned to them to try to picture themselves walking across the supermarket aisles in order to recreate the supermarket setting.

### ***Data Collection***

The data was collected based upon literature from studies on packaging, sustainability, and food consumption, as well as from focus groups that were conducted in two distinct locations with different participants. All the data collected during the focus groups is qualitative data. The combination of two sources of different types on the subject will help us to create a more precise framework of the topic of research by identifying more accurate patterns in the results and literature that could lead to findings (Jacobsen, 2002).

### ***Sampling technique***

The participants were selected through the use of the authors' networks by contacting connections that could refer us to potential participants. By doing so, we were able to reach more people and to select people that we

believe appropriate for the purpose of the study. This method of sampling is called snowball sampling, as connections bring more potential participants, therefore creating a snowball effect (Bryman, 2002). Considering this, we have chosen participants that we estimated would be a rich source of information regarding sustainable bread packaging. Nonetheless, we strived to recreate the market in which we operate and to gather participants from different ages, genders and backgrounds, so as to obtain a panel of data as representative of the market as possible.

The data obtained was drawn from 10 respondents in March 2015. The respondents are living in Sweden and in the United Kingdom. The age of the respondents was ranged from 23 to 57 and their educational backgrounds as well as current incomes were different in order to create a regular retail setting. This gave us a broad overview of the purchasing market and allowed us to gain a broader overview of the Northern European market.

### ***Confidentiality***

An important aspect of the focus groups is the respect of confidentiality of the participants (Thompson et al, 1989). In order to cause no harm to the participants of the focus groups, anonymity has been respected throughout the study and their identities have not been revealed. Additionally, we made sure to respect ethical considerations in the research process. Thus, the participants were given numbers in order to distinguish them and to respect their anonymity (1-10). Prior to the focus groups, the participants were informed of the research's purposes and that the focus groups will be recorded, also they were assured that their anonymity will be protected, and, lastly, their consent and permission were asked.

### ***Focus groups process***

Two focus groups were held, one in Sweden and the other in the United Kingdom. Each group had 5 respondents and 2 moderators and

the focus groups were administered in quiet secluded rooms without distractions. Each focus group lasted for about one hour. The objective of the discussion was to determine factors from our research question, "*How is sustainable bread packaging experienced by the consumer?*".

Using questions that were related to the research question enabled the moderators to guide the focus groups in a direction that would help determine key insights for the study. Therefore a focus group guide was created (Appendix 1) to help moderate the focus groups and keep them within the scope of our research. The focus group guide consists of non-leading questions about the respondent's' perception of bread packaging, both sustainable and unsustainable, and how it leads the consumer to experience packaging. The study asked the respondents to explain their reasoning for selecting certain products. In each of the focus groups samples of bread packaging, both sustainable and unsustainable, were used. This allowed the respondents to analyze real packaging and give key insights. A few main themes related to the study's purpose were highlighted so that the focus groups could develop naturally from these themes. The focus groups started with a discussion about bread packaging and then the moderators led it to a discussion about sustainable bread packaging. Throughout the focus groups the moderators have strived to gather information about the four elements of packaging, graphics, technology, information and size/shape, which constitute the foundation of the analytical model.

Even though the focus group guide is an useful tool to give shape to the focus group, the study has attempted to jump out of the limitations set by the guide by generating a conversational and private atmosphere that is open and flexible enough to allow the respondents to express their points of view. However, as with any study there is always a risk that the respondents are not answering truthfully (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Nonetheless, by administering the focus groups in a quiet environment and explaining that the respondents' views would be anonymous, we

believe that this reduced the risk of people being untruthful.

### **Product Samples**

As mentioned before, we used real products to help the participants express their opinions about bread packaging. Four products were carefully selected for each focus group in order to recreate the supermarket setting as close to reality as possible. This was done by selecting two regular non-sustainable products, one partially sustainable product, and one product as sustainable as possible depending on the limitations of the market. Also, even though the products that were presented to the respondents of the Swedish focus group are not perfectly identical to the ones of the English focus group, we have strived to pick products that were as similar as possible while respecting the differences of the markets. This method helps gather homogeneous results and make the respondents feel more comfortable as they are presented products that they know. We will now briefly introduce these different products so as to give a clearer understanding of what products were actually used during the focus groups.

The Focus Group that took place in Sweden was supported by products A to D, while the Focus Group conducted in the UK was supported by products E to H.

- A. Frökusar - A non-sustainable product representing the Swedish market at its best. This product is widely consumed in Sweden and is among the top sellers of the market. It represents perfectly the standard bread consumed in Sweden. It is labelled by the Nordic Keyhole.
- B. Råghalvor - A partially sustainable product that has an innovative packaging. Indeed, the package is separated into two parts so that the consumer can eat the first portion without opening the second part, this technologically advanced packaging enables the bread to be kept fresh

longer. It is labelled by KRAV and European Organic Farming.

- C. Rågbröd - A sustainable product that is very simple with most of the information at the front of the packaging and a bag that is not resealable. It is labelled by KRAV, European Organic Farming, the Nordic Keyhole, Climate Compensating Transportations and Å-Mark.
- D. Proteinbröd - A non-sustainable product with a different type of graphics and information on the packaging. Like for Rågbröd, its bag wasn't resealable. The product wasn't labelled.
- E. White bread loaf - A non sustainable product that is a british classic. This type of product is widely consumed across the UK and is a top seller in supermarkets. This is a good representation of the type of bread a lot of the british public consumes.
- F. White Batch Baked Rolls - A non sustainable product that is popular to use in order to make sandwiches. This product is vegetarian approved however the bag is not resealable or recyclable.
- G. Wholemeal bread - A partially sustainable product that contains some organic ingredients. This product has risen in popularity with people becoming more health conscious. This product can be found in all major supermarkets, is vegetarian society approved and the packaging can be recycled.
- H. Organic Wholemeal Bread - This product is sustainable and is soil association approved. It meets the EU organic standards and the packaging can be recycled. This product can only be found in selected stores.

For the reader's understanding, it seems appropriate to also briefly introduce the different labels that were displayed on these products.

- The Nordic Keyhole: this is a label that is aiming to show which products are healthy. By passing certain requirements, products can obtain the Nordic Keyhole and show that they are

nutritious and healthy. This is not an eco-label.

- Climate Compensating Transportations (Klimat Kompenserade Transporter): this is not an eco-label as it was developed by the brand to indicate that the company is compensating the product's CO2 emissions during transportation.
- KRAV: the most recognized eco-label in Sweden. It was implemented in 1985. KRAV strives to set organic standards and the KRAV eco-label stands for a sound and natural environment, care for the fauna, good health, and social responsibility.
- European Organic Farming: this logo is widely spread throughout Europe and stands for an organic production. It is the most recognized eco-label in Europe.
- Å-mark: this eco-label indicates that the product is free of additives and preservatives. It aims at helping the consumer to choose natural products and to encourage producers to pay attention to what types of ingredients they use to manufacture their products.
- The Vegetarian Society: This symbol is shown to represent whether a product meets the organization standards as being vegetarian approved. This is one the UK most recognized vegetarian organizations and some requirements are there has been no cross contamination, no GMOs used, and no animal cruelty.
- Soil Association Certification: This label represents products that have been produced organically by up to 95%. In order to obtain this certification the EU regulations 834/2007 and 889/2008 must be met. Furthermore, the products must be environmentally friendly and farmed organically.
- Recycle Information: Some bakery products have information on how to recycle the plastic carrier bag the product comes in. It is usually located

where the ingredients are placed and states that if you take the film back to the supermarket it can be recycled in the plastic carrier bags recycling bin. There is sometimes the recycle logo on the side however with many products it states how the packaging can be recycled.

### **Participants**

The focus group participants were selected carefully in order to represent the Northern European Market. One common characteristic of the participants was that they were not regular ecological buyers, although they would occasionally purchase ecological products, they didn't define themselves as frequent buyers of ecological products. We believe that this was a requirement so as to explore how the consumer experiences sustainable products without already being convinced that sustainable is good.

**Table 1. Focus Groups Respondents Description**

	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Education</b>
<b>Respondent 1</b>	30	Male	Marketing Intern	Medicine Marketing
<b>Respondent 2</b>	26	Male	Social Worker	Social Sciences
<b>Respondent 3</b>	28	Male	Student	Computer Science
<b>Respondent 4</b>	23	Female	Student	Social Sciences
<b>Respondent 5</b>	35	Male	Finance Manager	Politics
<b>Respondent 6</b>	24	Male	Supply Chain Analyst	Sports Science
<b>Respondent 7</b>	23	Female	Nurse	Nursing
<b>Respondent 8</b>	57	Male	Engineering Manager	Engineering
<b>Respondent 9</b>	27	Female	Student	Psychology
<b>Respondent 10</b>	26	Male	Office Administrator	Business Management

### ***Analytical process***

The analysis of empirical data can be hard because it can be difficult to analyze and understand the evidence in a comprehensive way and to find the characteristics that will lead to reliable and relevant results (Yin, 2009). In order to produce a strong and relevant analysis Yin (2009) explains that four general strategies can be used: “relying on theoretical propositions, developing a case description, using both qualitative and quantitative data, and examining rival explanations”. For this study, using both qualitative and quantitative data is out of scope since the research relies exclusively on qualitative evidence, also examining rival explanations is limited as the research field is relatively unexplored, and lastly developing a case description is not the main purpose and would consist of a weaker strategy to yield to analytical results. Thus the analysis needs to be constructed from our analytical model. Yin (2009) calls the data collection plan, and our case is the collection of empirical data through our two focus groups and relevant literature. All of this contributes to the analysis of our research question and allows us to garner the results of consumer perception. This way of conducting research allows us to focalize its attention on certain data, which of course implies to ignore other data, so as to guide the analysis along a few main guidelines that eventually lead to relevant results (Yin, 2009).

### ***Validity***

The measurement of validity is primordial in a study as it allows assessing the goodness of fit of the results (Yin, 2009). The first point that might have caused trouble when conducting the study is the lack of theory. Indeed, even though, the study was based upon theory, no precedent studies on this exact topic was conducted in the past. In the process of creating our analytical model and putting different theories together, we might have had some false assumptions that could lead to misinterpretations. Secondly, the participants of the focus groups might not

completely represent the Northern European Market since the focus groups were conducted in only two Northern European countries. In addition, the respondents have the disadvantage of being rather young, seven out of ten respondents were in their twenties, which might not accurately represent the totality of the market. Thirdly, the participants were selected through snowball sampling, which could hamper our results by narrowing down the type of people that participated in the focus groups. Indeed, snowball sampling hampers the precision of the study by involving people that are related to the authors at a second, third or fourth degree of connection. Hence, the respondent panel may be biased by the circles of connection of the authors, and therefore, by the authors themselves. However, for developing this study, we have conducted two focus groups with a good representation of the FMCG consumer in terms of gender, background, income and consumption habits. Consequently, our study shows a good variety of participants that fit the FMCG market. This type of selection has also helped us to choose participants that we believe appropriate for an exploratory research (Saunders et al, 2007). Also, the argument that we have used focus groups in two different countries can have a positive effect on our study, as it has allowed us to collect a rich and detailed set of data and, thereby, to explore the field of study more in depth (Saunders et al, 2007). Lastly, in order for our research to be credible and reliable we must make sure that it is trustworthy. We can do this by aiming to make sure that we are consistent in our research and that whoever reads our study will come to similar conclusions that we have presented (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008).

### **Results and Discussion**

Our main headings came from our analytical model, which consisted of the four key elements, technology, information, graphics and size/shape. Thus, during our focus groups we inputted the discussion notes in the element that we thought was most applicable. For example

when a respondent spoke about the packaging's color we knew this was a visual clue that fit into the graphics section. Comments that were highly spoken of were then segmented into themes below each element. Throughout the process, we constantly looked back to see how the respondents' discussions and answers helped answer our research question: *"How is sustainable bread packaging experienced by the consumer?"*.

### **Graphics**

Graphics are important when it comes to not only packaging, but sustainable packaging. Attractive logos, brand names, pictures and color coding can help influence the consumer to purchase certain products. Venter et al, (2011) also expresses how important graphics are in attracting the consumer's attention. We found that sustainable and unsustainable packaging need to utilize the importance of graphics however marketers must make sure that it is done properly because graphics can also have a negative effect towards the consumer. Our results have shown that graphics play an important role when it comes to persuading the consumer to purchase a product. Furthermore, we have found that with a low involvement product, such as bread, this assumption holds true due to our research findings. Bakery products are low involvement items because they are low cost and frequently bought, which means graphics can play a key part in engaging the consumer to purchase. To support this, Grossman and Wisenblit (1999) and Simms and Trott (2010) emphasize the influence that graphics can have on the consumer, and argue that this key element can be more important than technology and information. When it comes to packaging graphics, our respondents emphasized how much influence graphics have on consumer experience. Being able to see the product, where the product information is, and the color of the packaging, were all graphic aspects that were discussed. The graphics are what really stands out to the consumer and the respondents gave a deeper insight of this. We

found four main themes that were discussed in the graphics section which were color, seeing the bread, graphics placement and frequency, and inappropriate graphics. This order is how they rank in terms of influence they had on the consumer in this section.

### *Color*

The color of the packaging was an element that the respondents found most influential and was what grabbed their attention first. Mitul and Bhavesh (2012) supports our research by highlighting color as one of the key factors that can help make the packaging more effective when grabbing the consumer's attention. The colors of the packaging influenced the respondents both positively and negatively. Out of the four products showcased to the UK respondents, blue and orange were popular and even though none of the products had green on them, most respondents expressed that it is a nice color to represent health, freshness, and natural ingredients. This was an impression confirmed by the Swedish respondents that all expressed, except one, that green is a color that is associated to a fresh baked bread and implies that it is sustainable, fresh and natural. It was perceived positively and the respondents associated it to ecological products, they also really liked that organic products were packaged with green. Brown, red, and white featured on one product was not received positively. The respondents thought it blended with the wholemeal bread too much and that it was boring. The red color was perceived negatively by the respondents that felt it was too aggressive and not connected to the values of bread. Color is a tool that helped increase the experience of a product. This theme within graphics is a tool to help further attract and draw the consumer towards a product, (Venter et al, 2011, Mitul and Bhavesh, 2012).

*Respondent 8: "I really like the blue with because it helps the product in the see through section of the packaging stand out more. I think they complement each other very well."*

We had discussed in the literature review how Hausman (2000) stated that low involvement products don't have much prior planning. From our research we have learned that colors, despite being an important factor, can also influence the consumers' decision making process which can be perceived as either positive or negative. We found that blue seemed to be a very positive color as most respondents thought it was attractive, however green had mixed perceptions. One respondent thought that it was a good color and related to nature whereas another thought it looked very unattractive. What this tells us is that consumers have different perception of what they think is an appealing color, however there are trends in certain colors which appeal to a wide audience. In our case blue fits this finding and was looked upon positively.

Contrasting colors that stand out against the product really help make the packaging stand out. The colors that were printed on solid were the ones that kept drawing their attention to the respondents. Furthermore, respondents preferred simplicity when it came to colors. A simple color association that would not denature the packaging was appreciated as it conveyed an impression of authenticity and simplicity. This statement is supported by Becker et al. (2011) who found that using the correct color could help enhance not only the attraction of a product, but the price expectation as well. Thus, one or two were acceptable however many different colors seemed to annoy the respondents, as they thought there was too much going on. As a matter of fact, the respondents were both confused and annoyed when there were too many colors on a package. They also argued that this didn't represent the freshness and natural aspect that bread should convey, as too many colors would render the bread somewhat less natural and give it a more mass-manufactured image.

*Respondent 7: "I don't like that there are lots of little different colors. For some reason it annoys me. I feel like they are making too much of an effort adding many different colors."*

What this showed us was color coding can be a possibility where people associate colors such as green with nature, sustainability, etc. Developing a good color coding system for the bread packaging can not only attract the consumer but convey a message as well. Using colors that are widely liked and seen as positive could help the product generate more attention and garner a certain image associated with that color.

### *Seeing the bread*

Being able to see the product through the packaging was seen as highly important as it allowed the respondents to see the quality of the bread. It was a very powerful visual cue to help persuade the consumer to purchase and ranks as high as color. The freshness, texture, and color of the bakery product can all be seen through the packaging. These see-through packages almost created a gateway into which the respondents could fully analyze the quality of the product before they buy. The fact that the respondents could see the bread was also very appreciated because the respondents wanted to be able to know what they would buy. To see the product inside the packaging allowed them to have a clear idea of what they were about to purchase. They also insisted that the product resembled freshly baked bread and stated that was critical to them when making their purchasing decision.

*Respondent 8: "I love that you can see the baked rolls, they look so fresh. You can see that they are of quality and also there is flour sprinkled on top which makes them look like they came fresh from a local bakery."*

A discussion of how much bread should be shown started after Respondent 9 in the UK focus group made the comment above. All respondents liked that there was a section of color to make the product stand out and show the brand name however they also wanted to see the bread. This theme of seeing the bread was also shared by the Swedish respondents.

So all the respondents thought that there should be roughly equal exposure of bread to color. This allowed them to see the product but also be attracted to the colors, graphics and brand of the bakery packaging. Being able to see the bread gave a sneak peak, almost as though they were able to try the product before buying.

*Respondent 10: "I think they need to show the bread but there also needs to be a color with the brand name to help it stand out on the shelf...If I saw a loaf of bread on the shelf in a completely see through plastic packaging I feel it may blend in with the other products. I don't know what color but it needs to stand out."*

#### *Graphics Placement and Frequency*

When it comes to the packaging of the bread, the different graphics showing information, pictures, writing, etc. can really affect how the consumer experiences a product. Mitul and Bhavesh (2012) supported this by writing how imagery in packaging is a tool used to help attract the consumer towards a product, however respondents did not react positively to too many graphics, as they thought they were being bombarded. Furthermore, they thought that the positioning of the graphics should not detract the attention of the consumer away from the product. Suggestions of one or two were acceptable, however anything else should be hidden so that it doesn't cause confusion. One product also repeated a graphic twice which created an annoyance amongst the respondents as they questioned why it needed to be on there more than once. The respondents also stated that they would appreciate if some graphics had better placement so that they could actually enjoy looking at the product and have a real interaction with it rather than its graphics.

*Respondent 9: "I don't get why there needs to be two pictures of hearts and two of the same quote on this packaging. It looks like they have just placed them anywhere."*

Keeping the layout simple and placing the graphics on the back was a suggestion put forward by both focus groups and this is supported by Kunle and Ganiyu (2013) who found that when there is too much going on the packaging, an overload of information appears and confuses the consumer. The product is what you should see first and the graphics should not get in the way of this. From here this led into the finding that some graphics were seen as inappropriate. One was a graphic where a quote was displayed in a box on the front of the packaging and then placed again on the other side of the packaging. The respondents thought this was a pointless graphic that had no value to them. The fact that it was displayed twice seemed to annoy the respondents, which shows us that graphics can be inappropriate. Adding further to this another respondent thought that a graphic of a happy face was annoying and that it came across as though the company was trying too hard to show the positive aspects of the bread.

#### *Inappropriate Graphics*

Some information was judged inappropriate by the respondents because it felt too pushy. This reduced the authenticity of the product for the respondents, and from there, lost their trust. For example, a happy face on the package or a slogan about the taste would be seen as untrue and not fitting the brand. The respondents desired to avoid such products that seem too fake to be healthy or tasty. One brand had a quote from the company's CEO on it twice. This created an annoyance with the respondents as they wondered why the same quote needed to be on twice. This information was also in a font that was fairly hard to read which meant the respondents had to really concentrate and this created a minor frustration. These reactions exhibit how imperative it is that the consumer is not overloaded with graphics or inappropriate information as this could cause a hindrance on their experience (Kunle & Ganiyu, 2013). These inappropriate graphics were seen as cluttering the packaging and also as a waste of space.

*Respondent 4: "Also nothing that shows me what I should put on the bread. I really dislike Product 4. The message is too healthy like.. it does send a message about you being really really really healthy and that's too much. Also they have pointed out, vad gott! It just feels like it's ridiculous."*

### **Information**

In line with the literature and our analytical model, the results have shown that information is a key element in the experience of sustainable bread packaging. As argued by Silayoi and Speece (2004 & 2007), packaging information is taken into consideration when purchasing a product and this is true for sustainable bread packaging as well. However, packaging information may not be the first element that is experienced by the consumer when they walk in the aisles of the supermarket, other aspects like graphics and colors being more eye-catching. Considering this, packaging information is still a critical part of bread packaging (Orth et al, 2010; Simms & Trott, 2010). It is especially critical when the consumer interacts with the product.

### *Eco-labelling*

It seems that the consumer does pay more attention to information when in contact with a sustainable bread packaging than a regular bread packaging as some special information catches the consumer's attention. This kind of information that is very specific to sustainable packaging is eco-labelling. An eco-label makes a statement about the durability of the product, thereby it gives information that differentiates the product. However, the claim made by Näslund and Tamm Hallström (2014) that eco-labelling reduces uncertainty and builds trust with the consumer has not been entirely verified by our results. In fact, the respondents had different opinions about eco-labelling and, while eco-labelling was mostly experienced positively, not all respondents felt that it was an element of trust.

On the one hand, most of the respondents felt that eco-labels ensure quality and environmental efficiency. For them, it was definitely an important part of the purchase decision. Even if sometimes they didn't recall the name of a label, it would be perceived positively. Eco-labels were perceived as reliable information points. Therefore, eco-labelling was experienced as a very positive aspect of the packaging that builds trust with the consumer. In this sense, the results support Näslund and Tamm Hallström (2014). It also lessens the need to have other information since eco-labelling demonstrates the goodness of the product. It seems that the consumer is drawn towards products that are eco-labelled because they can be trusted.

*Respondent 5: "You can see that it's KRAV, you can see that there is another symbol but I don't remember the name. So it's ecological. Probably I would go for it. I would tend to go for KRAV because I know that technically it's quite reliable."*

Although, the respondents experienced eco-labels positively, their opinions illustrate that a product with many eco-labels won't necessarily be the most sold product. Other factors of the packaging surely affect the purchase decision and the respondents wouldn't base their purchase decision solely on eco-labelling. This ties in with the study of Vanclay et al (2011) that indicates that labelling makes only small purchasing pattern changes on its own and need to be coupled with another element of the product to leverage sales.

On the other hand, eco-labelling was perceived as suspicious, some of the respondents believed that labels are only marketing tools that serve a communication purpose. These respondents were, thereby, not positively influenced by eco-labels and would choose a product without considering its labelling. In this situation, eco-labelling wasn't helping the respondents to choose a product and could even negatively affect their perception of the product. As

expressed by Horne (2009), eco-labels cannot always be associated to trust due to the difference of perception of different institutions like retail, government, third party organization, and so forth. In some cases, eco-labels tend to lead consumers to mistrust.

*Respondent 3: "The thing that they write on the labels it's a lot of marketing stuffs. I don't really read that much. I don't believe in eco labels they try to say it's the best bread in the world or whatever."*

Indeed, some consumers are wary of eco-labels because they do not believe that it is based on a reliable system. Therefore, they tend to perceive it as a marketing tool that aims at increasing sales and persuading the consumer that eco-labelled products are better than others. The consumer can therefore feel that labelled products are trying to force consumption, which negatively affects their perception of the product.

#### *Nutritional Information*

Nutritional information was highly sought for in both focus groups. Nutritional labeling and information seemed to reassure the respondents that the product was of good quality. The need to know how nutritious a product is was very popular. In line with the study of Hersey et al (2013), which points out that well-displayed nutritional information helps the consumer understand the product and can even encourage a purchase, the respondents liked packaging that would give them an insight on how much sugar, salt, fat, etc was in the product, as they felt this gave them the ability to gauge how healthy the product was.

*Respondent 9: "I like that you know how much fat, salt, and carbs are in the product. It allows me to work out how healthy it is."*

Nevertheless, the respondents of the Swedish focus group were skeptical about nutritional labeling. They argued that it does not say much about how the bread has been produced and

what is its real nutritional value. While eco-labels were mostly perceived positively, nutritional labelling was doubted by most of the respondents. They did not believe that the requirements necessary to get a nutritional label were solidly established. This finding could be related to the study of Zhang et al (2015) and used to complement their conclusion that nutritional information can be misinterpreted, leading some consumers to distrust. In this case, the respondents distrusted nutritional labels, however, not due to misinterpretation, but rather to conviction.

*Respondent 5: "I know for example the Nordic keyhole is pointless because the requirement for it is nothing. Every second product in Sweden is a keyhole. It's a requirement to sell."*

For the consumer, health and nutrition are paramount. Therefore, packages that give hints about nutritional aspects of the product are perceived positively.

Nonetheless, the consumer, as with eco-labels, can be wary of nutritional labels and consider that these make false claims. Thus, the consumer can sometimes perceive it as inappropriate or aggressive. In this case, information is confusing the consumer and lead them to think that information is inaccurate and out of place (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007). It seems that labelling is a complicated science and that making the difference between appropriate and inappropriate labelling can be difficult as the consumer perceives labelling information in different ways. However, labelling is a way to transmit information to the consumer in a rapid and simple manner. As the consumer is looking for some essential information, labelling can help the consumer to quickly find the right information in the supermarket setting.

#### *Quality and Freshness*

Quality and freshness was a type of information that was critical for all the respondents, they needed to know whether the product was fresh and of good quality. Their opinion regarding the

expiration date is very explicit of this as they insisted on the importance of seeing the expiration date on the package. This is in accordance with the claim made by Verbeke and Wardb (2006) that consumers look for indications of quality, the expiration date being one prominent aspect of this. According to the respondents, they should not have to look for the expiration date but should see it as soon as they look at the packaging. It seemed to be one of the most important informational aspects of the packaging. Freshness to respondents meant quality, they thought that the expiration date was the best way to understand this.

*Respondent 8: "I like being able to see the expiration date at the front of the packaging as it tells me how fresh the product is. This product has it clearly laid out in yellow on the front of the packaging, so I know exactly what date it goes off."*

Therefore, the packages that were clearly displaying the expiration date were chosen over the ones that didn't. This fact highlights the importance of seeing the right information at the right time. Products with the expiration date in evidence were perceived positively, regardless of the expiration date.

*Respondent 2: "When you see a shelf with sixteen different breads, this is what's going to catch your eye. If I'm buying bread I need to see the expiration date."*

Bread, a product with a short term shelf life, has to be consumed quite quickly, which is why displaying the right information about bread quality, freshness, and preservation on the packaging is a small detail that can make a big difference for the consumer. The expiration date is a great example of how crucial information can attract the consumer and substantially enhance consumer experience. This fact is especially interesting because it means that a simpler and more agreeable consumer experience can be connected to likelihood of purchase.

### *Information Display*

In line with the thought of Kunle and Ganiyu (2013) who explain that an overload of information is likely to degrade the consumer experience because the consumer only looks at a few elements of packaging information, the results of this study show that information display and clarity is an aspect that influences consumer experience greatly. It serves as the first contact point between the product and the consumer when the consumer seeks basic product information. The consumer prefers packaging that does not display too much or inappropriate information. Thus, accurate information enhances the consumer experience while inappropriate information degrades it. Indeed, the respondents stated that they would rather not have too much information on the packages. According to the respondents, a package with less information gets clearer. Moreover, a package that doesn't display too much information was perceived to build trust for the respondents who didn't believe that more information would mean accurate information.

*Respondent 3: "I think the less it is, the more it's believable."*

Moreover, the respondents of both focus groups had a positive feeling about product information when it was clear and displayed in one place. The opposite was true for products that had information scattered over the packaging and that didn't seem to be organized clearly. This is because the respondents felt that the product was giving them all the information they needed at the same place, thereby increasing the convenience of the product, as well as its reliability. It helped the respondents to perceive the product as genuine. Therefore, it is beneficial to identify which elements are indispensable to consumer experience and can affect the consumer purchase decision (Kunle & Ganiyu, 2013).

*Respondent 5: "Rågbröd is a functional item, you have all the information that you need to*

*know on top so it's super clear, it tells you brand, labels etc... on Råghalvor they do a mistake because they put one label here, one label here, you don't see them."*

The importance of clarity is highlighted by the fact that the consumer wants information to be in phase with other elements of the packaging like graphics. The liking of the packaging was emphasized when the information matched the graphics and colors, creating a sentiment of harmony for the respondents. As we mentioned before, the place of the information and the way it is displayed were essential, but the respondents were even more positive about a product that would link display and harmony between information and colors.

*Respondent 1: "I think the green color makes it sound like it's ecological, it's healthy, it's good for you. It's something that I could buy. And with the labeling and KRAV mark they go hand in hand, it fits together."*

#### *Product Name*

Lastly, the consumer is also sensitive to the name of the product. Authentic, well-known names have a better connotation to the consumer because it says a lot about how healthy the bread is, what type of bread it is and its quality. Some products are seen as healthier than others only because of their name.

As explained in the literature review, consumer experience can be enhanced when the product name addresses sensitive patterns in the target group (Dick et al, 1997; Beneke, 2010). In this study, the name of the product was connected to the perceived authenticity of the product. The respondents felt that traditional bread was better than new or uncommon bread because they perceived the consumption of traditionally baked bread more appealing than mass-manufactured. The name of the bread was very explicit of this and, consequently, the respondents paid attention to the name and to the connotation that it could have.

*Respondent 4: "I feel like protein bread won't taste like bread. I know how rye bread, sourdough and standard bread taste like. But protein bread doesn't sound as appealing as the rest. It doesn't sound like it's bread."*

#### **Technology**

The results have shown that the consumer is sensitive to the level of technology of a package as this one helps to use the product in a way that matches consumer expectations. This holds true for sustainable packaging technology, which is experienced positively by the consumer. Packaging technology, as a means to improve products in their use and consumption, modifies the product and thereby consumer experience as well. It seems that in accordance with Silayoi and Speece (2004, 2007), packaging technology is indeed developed in order to match the expectations of the target market since the consumer has a positive attitude towards new technologies and changes. Products that are ground-breaking in their packaging technology are preferred over products that have unrefined packaging technology. Some desires of the consumer are matched by packaging technology. The consumer wants to consume the product in a more convenient manner, while not having to worry about its constraints. By making this possible, packaging technology responds to the demands of the target market and enhances consumer experience. However, the power of packaging technology can be undermined if it doesn't reach the consumer on trust and authenticity aspects. It can be argued that the best experienced sustainable bread packaging technology is packaging technology that takes into account the target market demands, but also pays attention to the original image of the product category by preserving an authentic image and building trust with the consumer.

#### *Practicality and Preservation*

Practicality of the packaging was the most important technology aspect found during the

focus groups. As the consumer uses the product, they want to get the most practical experience, preferring products that are convenient to use and that can preserve the bread longer. Practicality was an important factor of choice for the respondents of both focus groups; for example, the possibility to reseal the package after the first utilization was something that the respondents appreciated because it made the package more convenient to use and kept the bread fresh. The importance of convenience as affirmed in this study supports the argument made by Guerrero et al (2008) that food packaging experience is substantially improved by convenience as it helps the consumer to get the best out of the product. Råghalvor was the most striking example of this. Its sustainable packaging technology helped consume one bun at a time and made possible to reseal and conserve the buns in separate packages. It was experienced as the most practical and pleasant package to use. Another aspect that was pointed out during the UK focus group was that a package that protects the product enhances the shopper experience. White Batch Baked Rolls were thought of highly when it came to protecting the product. Respondents thought that this packaging was able to protect the product better because there was an air cushion inside to stop the bread from being squashed.

On the contrary, the respondents quickly disregarded packages that were not practical. For example, in the Swedish focus group, Rågbröd and Proteinbröd that were not re-sealable and needed another package to put the bread in after the first use, were disliked. The consumer being reticent to find other ways to store bread is not attracted by products that cannot be kept in their own packages.

*Respondent 2: "Very, very important. If you open Rågbröd or Proteinbröd, I feel like you need a different package to put them in. Because if it's opened you cannot seal it with anything. So you need to have some kind of packaging at home to use. (...) So when I look at the practicality of the packaging I would definitely go for Råghalvor because you can take just one bread portion.*

*The practicality of Rågbröd and Proteinbröd is not as good, Råghalvor is much more practical to use so I would go for that one."*

Therefore, packaging technology that contributed to use only one package and to preserve the bread longer was seen as practical and beneficial for the consumer. This type of packaging technology can be related to sustainability as it contributes to reduce waste and limit pollution.

#### *Trust and Authenticity*

An interesting element was brought up about the White bread loaf packaging. This product, despite being mass-produced, is one of the UK's most purchased bakery products and is packaged in a wax paper. Despite respondents 6-10 all reacting negatively to this packaging by stating it cannot be resealed, recycled, it doesn't keep the bread fresh for as long, and it tears easily, it was still seen as an attractive product because the packaging technology was traditional and created an element of trust with the consumer. The same viewpoint was brought up during the Swedish focus group. Respondent 3 explained that, although he perceived packaging technology positively, he didn't think that packaging technology would build preference because the consumer doesn't know the product and is not used to the new technology. In his opinion, the experience is related to the level of familiarity and trust with the product, therefore a new packaging technology could be difficult to use due to a lack of familiarity. For this reason, a more common packaging that is known and has been experienced in the past would be preferred, thereby tying in with the statement made by Jaafar et al (2012) that consumers are likely to trust a product when they are familiar with it or when they have purchased it in the past.

*Respondent 10: "I see the wax paper packaging as traditional and this relays quality to me. It also stands out on a shelf because all other products*

*are made out of see through plastic and this isn't. It hasn't changed and I like that."*

Packages that were not modified by new packaging technology were regarded as authentic products that actually build trust with the consumer. The white bread loaf packaging, even though an old packaging technology that can be seen as outdated and unsustainable, emanates a good brand image to the consumer who perceives it as an authentic product, which can be recognized as a typical bread packaging and is immediately linked to positive feelings for the consumer.

#### *Unnecessary Technology*

The re-sealable element of packaging was seen to be a positive and efficient way to keep the bread together and fresh, however respondents of both focus groups thought that there could be another way to improve how the bag is re-sealed. The clip/plastic strip, which is used to reseal the bag, was seen as annoying to use and was easily lost. This led people to twisting the bag and tucking the end under the bag to seal it.

*Respondent 4: " This is just plastic but that one as some small metal thing to close it. I would never reuse that one. I would just do it myself. I wouldn't recycle this metal part either."*

The consumer negatively perceives some elements of packaging technology when it doesn't match their demands or their lifestyle (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007; Butkeviciene et al, 2008). The clip strip that is used to reseal the bag showed that, as it was not perceived as an efficient way of using the package. It pinpoints that some elements of packaging technology are unnecessary and unsustainable. Therefore, in accordance with Nordin & Selke (2010) reducing waste is paramount for the sustainability of packaging technology. Although, this is not a top of mind element for the consumer, it definitely influences the experience of the product.

#### **Size/shape**

When looking at size and shape of the packaging, the respondents pointed out that size could be a factor that would influence the consumer, however it seemed to be the element with the least influencing power. What we found from respondents is that different sizes may attract different consumers. So for example a family of four may be more attracted to purchasing a large loaf of bread whereas a single working professional would be looking for a smaller loaf as it would be considered a waste to purchase so much bread. This is important because the size can inadvertently place the product into a segment. Therefore, it is important to know who would be the best demographic to target with certain products before deciding on the product and packaging size. Respondents did make the suggestion that bread can be frozen and on some packages there is labeling expressing this possibility. However, this thought was not at the top of most people's minds as they don't think that far ahead.

Considering the size of the household seems especially important when talking about size of the packaging and the product, something that the respondents pointed out by explaining their personal preferences for their own households and by pinpointing the differences in different sized households. Without surprise, smaller packages were preferred for smaller households, whereas larger packages were preferred for larger households. Respondents from single households would mostly be drawn towards packages that are small, light, and convenient. Authors such as Silayoi and Speece (2004, 2007) and Wansink (1996) have expressed that size is related to usage and brand managers must take this into account when targeting consumers.

*Respondent 4: "This seems much more size friendly for a person who lives alone I think I would like that. (...) This one is most preferable for me because I live alone. And I don't eat bread everyday. This one seems good to buy for me, it's not heavy, it's not big."*

Nevertheless, some respondents felt that the more bread was the better. As they consume a lot of bread they didn't bother that a packaging could be too big because for them the more bread a package contains, the better it is. Even if the household was small, some respondents preferred bigger packages because of their high consumption of bread.

The respondents also felt that large bread packages could be purchased and then frozen. Therefore, the larger packages were not as limited to an audience of smaller households as one might initially think. This ties in with Silayoi and Speece, (2004, 2007) who writes on how consumers can be sustainable with their food by making sure there is minimum wastage or loss. Indeed, the respondents expressed that they could purchase a larger package and then freeze it. Even though they recognized that this wouldn't be the most convenient way of consuming the bread, some of them asserted that this wouldn't be an absolute barrier to their purchase and that they might still consider to buy a larger package of bread. Nonetheless, most of the respondents agreed that freezing fresh bread isn't the first thing you have in mind when buying bread and that it is definitely a limitation. Thus, many of them would turn to a smaller package that offers less bread, an offer that would suit them more. Silayoi & Speece,

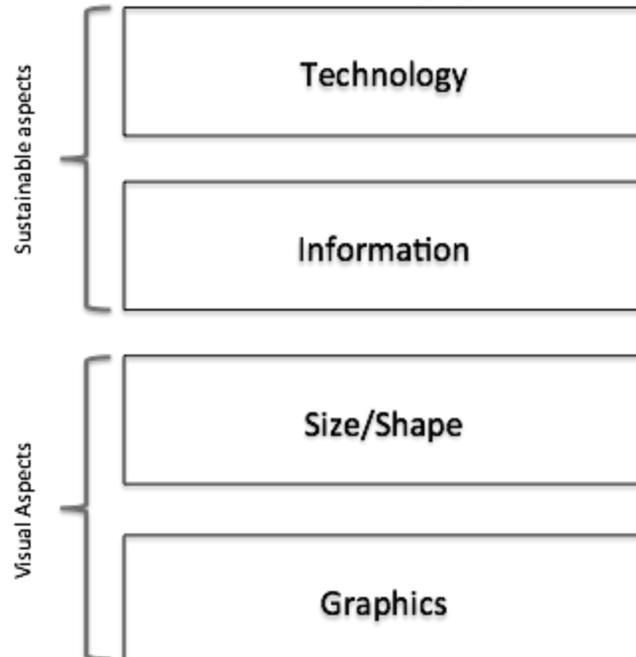
(2004, 2007) support that various sizes of packaging attracts different types of consumers because people have different needs and uses towards a product.

Respondent 2: *"If you look at Frökusar it six packages and it's a rather large amount of bread. So one bun would be maybe too much. So if I buy Frökusar maybe I would be thinking about freezing in a couple of breads and that's not a fresh start because you're going to buy fresh bread, you don't want to think about freezing them. So maybe I would go more for Råghalvor because four of them might be one week and maybe I don't want to have bread every day of the week."*

### **Conclusion**

Based on our analysis and results we are able to garner some key insights to our study. The figure below shows us the original model put forward from our analytical model section. Nevertheless, from our findings we have been able to make some contributions towards this model that we think will help analyze consumer experience towards sustainable bread packaging more clearly.

**Graph 1. Sustainable Bread Packaging Elements Model**



Based on the results and the literature, this study shows that consumers experience sustainable bread packaging through four elements. However, contrarily to the impact of the different packaging elements on consumer experience for packaging in general, each of the four elements of sustainable bread packaging has a different influence on consumer experience. We have shown in the results and the analysis that each element has a different weight on consumer experience, in particular since the consumer is engaged on a common pathway. As a matter of fact, the consumer is first attracted by graphics and colors of the packaging, this is shown not only by our results, but also by the literature since both Venter et al (2011) and Mitul and Bhavesh (2012) recognize the power of packaging graphics in attracting the consumer attention. Graphics is the element that catches the eye of the consumer in the supermarket aisles and leads them to approach and interact with the product. After that, the consumer starts to pay attention to the other elements of sustainable bread packaging. We argue that the consumer is more likely to consider the informational element first, as it has shown to be more important than technology and size/shape by both the literature and the results. Then, the consumer pays attention to the rest of the elements: technology, and size and shape. Depending on the specificities of the consumer, they experience these elements differently and pay attention to the one that is most relevant to them first. Hence, we argue that the four elements of packaging have a very different influence on the consumer and are experienced differently when it comes to bread.

Graphics are the primary aspect to the consumer because it is what draws them towards the product. Grabbing their eye/attention by using colors, pictures, etc. means that the consumer is persuaded to interact with that product over all others within the bakery section. With graphics being visual, using pleasant aesthetics to attract the consumer with attractive graphics and designs is key (Rundh, 2009). When a consumer buys a product or is persuaded to look at it further due to appealing imagery and color then this falls

under the graphics element (Silayoi & Speece, 2004, 2007; Mitul & Bhavesh, 2012). This is important because once consumers are drawn to the product they can be engaged further with other elements, starting with information.

Information is especially important for sustainable bread packaging because it proves that the product is sustainable to the consumer. It gives information about sustainability via eco-labels for instance. It is also central in the consumer experience because it provides essential information about the product that is necessary to purchase the product. Based on the claim of Gellynck et al (2009) that bread is a product that raises confusion due to statements such as "bread makes fat" and the results of this study, we can assert that information influences the consumer experience positively when the consumer finds the right information. Quality, freshness and nutrition are fine examples of how important information is to the consumer (Hersey et al, 2013; Verbeke & Wardb, 2006). Moreover, we verify the statement of Ampuero and Vila (2006) that positioning plays a role in consumer experience, as information helps to position the product in the mind of the consumer.

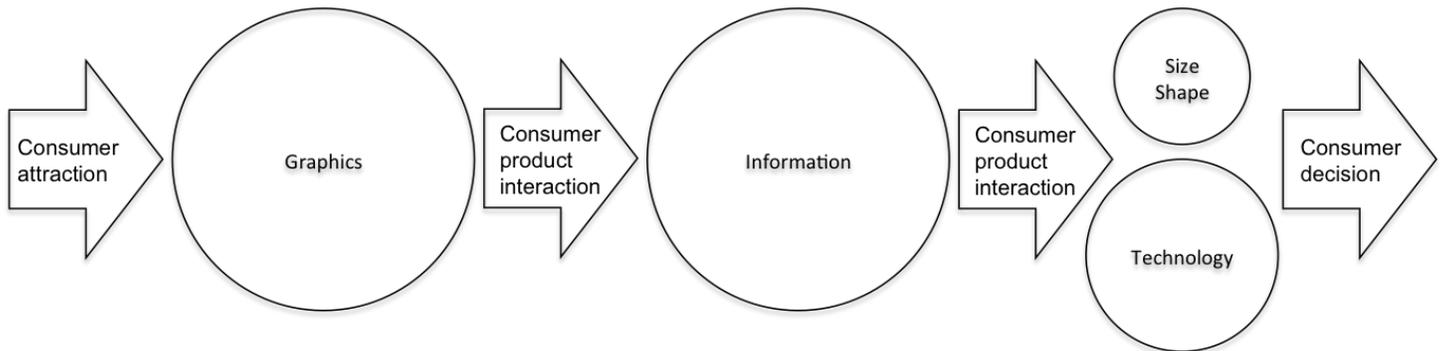
Technology is considered by the consumer to a lower extent than graphics and information. However, it can also influence the consumer experience positively or negatively. Indeed, packaging technology is considered in terms of practicality and preservation by the consumer Guerrero et al (2008), but is a tool that can build trust and authenticity too. As a matter of fact, this paper supports the argument of Venter et al (2011), according to which the consumer pays a lot of attention to convenience of food products.

Size/shape has the least amount of weight when influencing a consumer however it is important to remember that consumers have different needs. So for example a single male is not going to purchase a family size bread loaf because he would not be able to consume such a large amount. Venter et al (2011) supports this in their research by writing about how convenience of product can be a factor that attracts a consumer. Knowing the target market allows the marketer to decide on what size or

shape the packaging should be, which is supported by Silayoi and Speece, (2004, 2007) who state that various sizes of packaging attracts different types of consumers.

Consequently, the results and analysis have considerably modified the analytical model that we presented at the beginning of the study. Below is the model modified by our findings.

**Graph 2. Sustainable Bread Packaging Consumer Pathway**



Nonetheless, as previous research shows, consumer experience is affected by other factors besides the four elements of packaging. When it comes to sustainable bread packaging, the level of sustainability of the consumer is an aspect that modifies the way consumers experience the product (Schwepker et al, 1991; Nordin & Selke, 2010; Verain et al, 2012). In this study, we had privileged respondents who belonged to the potential green segment, which means that the consumer is likely to be receptive to sustainable issues and products without being an advocate of sustainability. Moreover, each consumer is different and their sensitivity to visuals (Schroeder, 2005) might change when looked upon case by case. This is further consolidated by the fact that packaging brings about subjective and internal consumer responses (Brakus et al, 2009), thus any aspect of sustainable bread packaging might be experienced differently depending on the consumer's responses. Lastly, bread is a product that is tormented by a certain level of uncertainty that comes from statements like "bread makes fat" and "brown bread is healthier than white bread", which leads the consumer to question the validity of enriched bread products that are geared towards consumer health

(Gellynck et al., 2009). All of these factors might alter the way the consumer experiences sustainable bread packaging beyond the four elements that we have worked with during this study. They must be considered when designing sustainable bread packaging by knowing the target market and its peculiarities.

### **Managerial Implications**

Using the altered analytical model, which was presented previously, allowed us to see what influential weight the four key elements have on a consumer. By following the consumer pathway, the reader will be directed from start to finish on how the consumer's experience is influenced by sustainable packaging.

From our research we have found that graphics are the primary element that grab the consumer's attention and draws them to the product, so it is important to utilize this element to attract the consumer's attention. There are many other products within the bakery section of a supermarket, by focusing on graphics first, marketers will be able to bring the consumer to their product. Within this key element, color was the most spoken theme, however marketers may choose a color that represents the product

positively and is aesthetically pleasing. Seeing the bread through the packaging, as well as the placement and frequency of the graphics are also important themes. Pictures, quotes, slogans etc. can be perceived as cheesy, irrelevant or annoying and can have a negative effect on the consumer. Space is limited and therefore cheap gimmicks and too much content can negatively affect the consumer. Therefore, it would not be recommended to overload the packaging with graphics as the research has shown that this tactic can be perceived quite tacky and is likely to represent low quality brands. Furthermore, graphics are the start of the consumer pathway so it is highly important to pull the attention of the consumer towards the product.

Information becomes highly important once the consumer has approached the product. Relaying the information in an aesthetically pleasing manner, keeping it simple, as well as concise will keep the consumer engaged for longer. This is where marketers may be able to effectively engage the consumer and inform them about how sustainable the product is. Using eco labels will help support this further because they show a sign of quality and approval. They tell the consumer that the product has been regulated and approved by an organization that strives to promote sustainability. Eco labeling is mostly perceived positively but can be perceived negatively by some consumers. Thus, it is important to verify that the consumer will receive labeling constructively, by investigating the target market. Nutritional information is important and should be laid out in a simple format that makes it easy to read and interpret. Lastly, the expiration date should be placed clearly on the packaging in order to be seen right away by the consumer. This shows a sign of how fresh the product is. Within our research we found that freshness relates to healthy products, which

have a positive connotation. People who are not actively sustainable consumers are open to sustainable products and are aware that they pose many benefits. However, the product may not be attracting their attention and the information may be confusing. This can hamper their experience with a sustainable product. With this in mind, it is important to be clear and concise when placing information on the packaging.

Technology and size/shape do not carry as much influence when it comes to the consumer experience however they still affect the consumer's decision process.

With technology, making the packaging convenient and useful for the consumer is important. Nevertheless, marketers should use the correct technology when appropriate. The ability to reseal the bag was seen as very positive. However, the traditional clip to reseal the bag was seen as an annoyance because of its flimsiness which consumers can easily lose, therefore some technology aspects might need to be reconsidered.

Size/Shape play a key role when deciding what target market is aimed for. For example, a family size loaf of bread will naturally appeal towards families. Therefore, marketers should spend time to get to know their audience to determine the optimal size and shape of the package.

In conclusion, having a sustainable product and packaging enables companies to position themselves as a forerunner for being associated with becoming more sustainable. Sustainability's unique selling point (USP) and the ability to use this growing trend to companies' advantage is key. By taking into account the implications of the presented analytical model and reviewing the research findings of this study, marketers may be able to position their sustainable bakery product more adequately.

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## **Appendix 1**

Hi everybody, my name is Johann/Tom and this is Tom/Johann. We are writing our master thesis about marketing and we would like to thank you all for coming. We really appreciate it!

Maybe you could shortly introduce yourself, tell us what's your name and what you are doing?

We are going to talk about bread packaging and when you are in the store and are about to buy bread. So during the focus group imagine that you are in the bread aisle of the supermarket and you are looking at all the packages. For this exercise, think about which bread you would choose based on what you see, it's not about the taste or the price.

My role is not to be active, I am going to ask you a few questions and you are the ones who are going to discuss and be active. Don't hesitate to discuss with each other and to tell us your opinions.

It will take about one hour and your names won't be mentioned in the study, also think about that you should not be influenced by others during the discussion, try to express your own opinions as much as possible.

### **Opening questions:**

- Pick a product and describe it to the person next to you. What do you see? Please everybody, take two minutes to talk about it. Respondent X, can you tell us how Respondent Y described this product?

**Briefly introduce bread packaging in general and among have examples of sustainable packaging.**

### **Key questions:**

- What do you like and dislike about bread packaging?
- What kind of packaging makes you want to buy bread? Is the size important? Colors? Pictures? Conveniency? Information?
- What would you like to change about bread packaging?
- What is important in sustainable packaging for you? Because it contains an organic product? Recyclable? Supported by eco labels?
- Could you please pick a package/product that you like, take a minute to look at it? Could you please explain why you chose this package/product?
- Now that you have picked it and looked at it, would you consider buying it? If yes, please explain for what reasons you would buy it. If no, please explain for what reasons you wouldn't buy it.

### **Ending question:**

- Let's say that you could be involved in the design of these packages. If you were in measure to improve anything about one of the packages, what would it be? What would be particularly relevant to you if improved?

We would like to thank you all for taking the time to participate today. We really appreciate it.

Have a great day!