

Throwing Money in the Bin!

The persistent growth of pollution produced from packaging of materials is a constant threat to our environment. Numerous actions have been taken by governments around the world to reduce pollution. Actually in Malta, producers of packaging are obliged to adhere with the Waste Management Regulations and recover a specified amount of waste and prove that they have met their annual obligations to recover and/or recycle packaging waste (MEPA). Especially since, 37 percent of the 8 percent municipal waste consists of packaging. In 2004, packaging waste represented approximately 3 percent of total waste generated (MEPA, 2006). However, this problem does not concern only industries. In fact, every person in the European Union has thrown out 156kg of waste which was used for packaging in 2010 (Eurostat, 2013). Thus, all of us should make conscious decisions on the choice of products use.

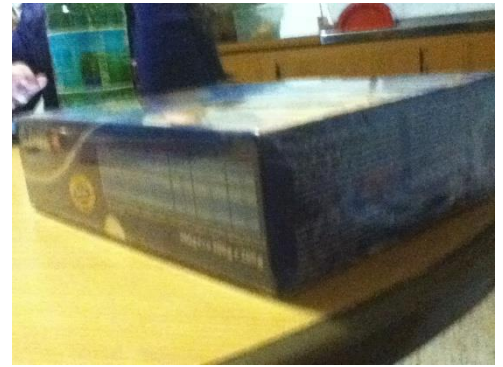
When visiting the supermarket, the last thing on our mind is to check how much packaging a product has. But, by doing this and by buying products with less packaging we would be reducing the amount of waste generated. This is very beneficial as the waste we throw has serious effects on the environment. For example, it is very often that we hear that turtles have suffocated because of plastic bags. Apart from this, the cardboard and paper used for packaging, has resulted into the cutting down of many trees. This goes to show how something as minor as the packaging of a product, is very effective towards saving our environment.

Reduction in packaging will therefore result in ecological benefits, but it will also contribute to financial advantages. As consumers, we are not only paying for the product but we are also paying for the packaging which comes with the product. In fact, the latter result in 16% of the total price (Recycling Guide, 2014). This will eventually end as rubbish. So, the more packaging a product has, the higher the cost of the total product.

Here are some products with excess packaging, which could have been avoided:

- Assorted Biscuits:

These biscuits are placed a plastic packaging and then places in the box. A better option would have been to seal the box well, in order to avoid the useless plastic wrapping.



- Canned Tuna:

7 cans of tuna are placed on a piece of cardboard and are then covered with plastic. Less packaging could have been used by placing the cans on top of each other and wrapping them up in plastic, and so eliminating the cardboard.

- Tabasco:

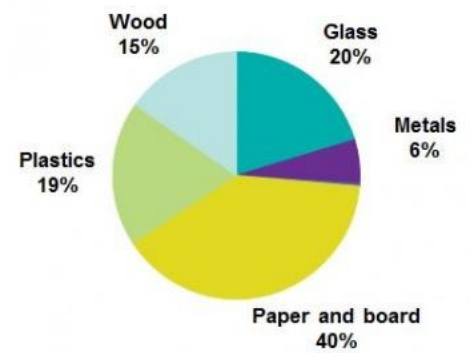
The bottle of tabasco is placed in a small cardboard box which could have been eliminated. The box had the ingredients, the manufacturer and how the tabasco is made printed on it. All of these could have been printed on a small piece of paper attached to the bottle itself.



- Cleaning Cloth:

The cloth is covered completely (except for the sides) by cardboard. A better option would have been to wrap the cloth by a smaller strip of cardboard and therefore, reducing the amount of cardboard used.

From these products one can conclude that the use of excess cardboard was the most problematic. In the UK, 12.5 million tonnes of paper and cardboard are used per year! This problem is also found in the European Union. Recycled paper would result in 73% less air pollution. Glass and plastic are also used frequently in packaging, which can also be recycled; especially since plastic takes a maximum of 500 years to decompose. In the UK, 275,000 tonnes of plastic are used annually (Eurostat, 2013)



Source: Eurostat - Data Centre on Waste

The above statistics speak for themselves. It's time to educate children, youths and adults that with just a simple matter of choice of our day to day products we can save the world. Less packaging means less pollution and moreover a cheaper product! So do not throw your money in the bin... make wiser choices.

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References:

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- (MEPA, 2006) State of the Environment Report 2005