

# The meaning of cover in the Knowledge Society

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*Abstract:* This article shows the meaning of covering for customer. In the first part it defines some packaging materials, and another part refers to the primary research of perception of the non-alcoholic beverages's covers. The conclusion displays new development trends in the wrapping technics.

*Keywords-* covers, plastic covers, paper carton, glass, research

## INTRODUCTION

In the knowledge society, there comes to a changeover from the traditional domination of the producer to a permanent domination of customers and consumers. **That is displayed in exacting requirements and demands of them.** The retail sale currently prevails in the way of buying, so the cover is an indivisible part of the marketing mix, that can influence consumer's process of decision-making. The cover must function as a silent salesman and attract the customer's attention, offer tips for usage, and show customers a way to choose from a large sortiment selection. The design of the cover can also be a source of competitive advantage, because it can increase the value of the product.

## 1. PERCEPTION OF THE COVER

The marketing workers must understand the customers's behavior and the effects influencing it. A complicated net of outer tools /tools of marketing mix/ and inner variables (for. ex. motivation, perception, attitude, memory, lifestyle, personality and group effect) have an impact on the buying behavior. [11] It is necessary to catch the customer's attention even before he starts to perceive the product itself by attractive and interesting cover. The cover can attract attention, take effect on emotions, and contribute to the racional judgement whether to buy or not by it's informative value. In present theories, the cover is shown as one of the forms of the marketing communication, because the strong competition and the overfilled shelves of retail stores mean that the influence of the cover can cause the buy itself. The cover has to make use of correct design – shape, graphic components, variety of color, and structure to present the values of the product and the brand and to differentiate on the overfilled market. [7] Whenever the product holds consumer's interest, he starts to connect the relation between the cover, the wares, the brand, the quality, and the price. He recalls the advertisement, he identifies the producer. [2]

## 2. THE MEANING OF COVERS

The cover performs many functions. It's purpose is to protect the product, which is a technical and technological matter. The cover must be functional, provide an image of the product and must correspond to the content. The expectations cover is bringing should conform to the reality, that means to the quality and function of the product. [3] The product and the cover psychologically create a unity. The objective is to attract the customer and to convince him of buying. The ideal cover follows the requirements corresponding to maximal protection of the content and easy handling, shown mostly by properties such as health arrangements and low weight.

The cover design has except the primary motivation of the consumer also an impact on the material consumption, packaging technology, and mechanical and functional properties of the product. It should allow simple, safe, and ecological dosage and closing and respect the ergonomic criteria. The cover protects the product, gives information, educates, warns the customer, but most of all attracts and offers. It has started to perfectly complement the classic advertisement and it has great informational strength. The information on the cover are conforming the Consumer Protection Act no.634/1992 Collection of Laws. The cover should provide intelligible name labeling, labelling of the producer or importer, information about weight, quantity or size. The information must be in the Czech language.

Many rules of law relate to the covers, regulating the relation to the environment, protection and advertisement. A new act no.447/2001 Collection of Laws came to function since the 1.1.2002 answering the European Community requirements. The main object is the environment protection. [9]

## 3. TYPES OF COVERS

The wrapping consists of primary product cover, secondary cover, and a transport package necessary for easier storing, identification, and expedition of the product.

Covers can be sorted by mechanical properties:

- *Soft:* papers, plastic, metal or fabric foils, or combinations (bags)
- *Half-tough:* pasteboards, tough metal or plastic foils (production of bowls and dishes)
- *Tough:* glass, metals, pasteboards and wood (bottles, glasses, cans, cartons)

The most common materials for packaging grocery and beverages are: plastics, tetra pak, sheet metal, glass, paper and plastic or metal foil [12]. The wrapping material determines if the cover can involve with the eatables or if a protective layer is necessary. It also determines whether it fulfills particular requirements of covering such as heat or cold resistance.

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### 3.1 Plastic covers

There is a large scale of plastic matters. Plastic substances can be used for production of complete packings like cartons, bags, lids, dishes, bottles etc. The most widely known plastic material, PET (polyethylene terephthalate), is a modern and very frequently used covering material. It is used mostly for drink-bottles and bowls for eatables heated up together with the cover. The PET bottles are used today also for packaging alcoholic beverages and liquors. Undoubtful advantages of PET packages are infrangibility, very low weight, high stiffness, good isolation abilities, and 100% recyclability. The reason is a very low content of substances able to be extracted. [4]

### 3.2 Paper and beverage cartons

Before the onset of plastics has paper been the only accessible material, so it belongs to the **traditional covering materials**. Paper is omnipresent, it appears in different sorts of papers, wrappings, boxes, pasteboards – smooth and corrugated. Beverage cartons are the most used covers for liquid eatables. They are firm, infrangible, impermeable and they protect the content from microorganisms and light. They are composed 75-80% of cellulose coming from wood, so it's a renewable resource.

### 3.3 Glass

Glass is the oldest traditional covering material (bottles, glasses) easy to recycle. It is biologically and chemically inactive material easy to wash and keep hygienically clean. It is firm, but also frangible. It doesn't transmit UV radiation and is transparent, so it provides any level of content control, but also corresponds to the hygienical requirements. It also provides absolute sterilization of the content due to its chemical and physical properties. Glass is clear, with no taste or odour, resistant against chemicals and extreme temperatures. A suitable colored glass can protect the content from light effects, increase the eye-appeal or decrease the visibility of less attractive products. Advantages of the glass covering include repeatable usage, availability of resources, recyclability. Frangibility, heaviness, poor temperature tolerance, or energy intensity belong between the disadvantages. [10]

### 3.4 Metals

The most common metal covers are for example cans, aluminium lids from yoghurts, tin-cans and aluminium foils. Steel and aluminium belong between the most commonly used metals. [8]

*Cans* have many advantages: they protect the content from light, air, dirt and foreign substances and odours. They are firm and able to undergo rough manipulation. They have suitable shape simplifying the manipulation when labelling, loading, and storing empty or full containers. They are

suitable for quick filling on the automatic line and can be automatically closed.

## 4. PRIMARY RESEARCH

The goal of the primary research was to ascertain what covers and materials are preferred by the consumers of non-alcoholic beverages and the motives of such preferences. The total number of respondents was 201. The questioning was done during April 2009 in the Liberec region as a questionnaire within the graduation theses. The sample consisted of 55% male and 45% female respondents. [1]

### 4.1 The importance of cover

More than a half of respondents (74%) indicated cover as an important part of the product. The cover is unimportant for 36% of respondents. The results are displayed on fig1. An interesting result has shown that males find the cover more important than female.

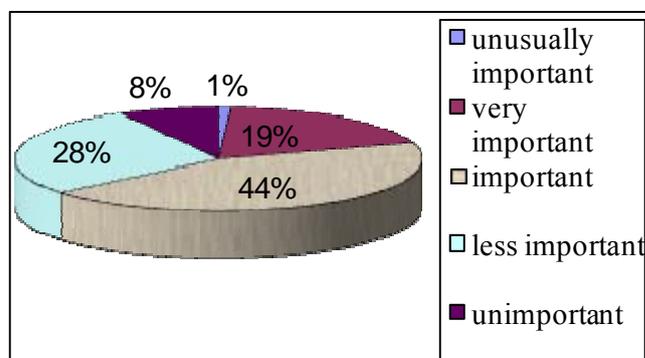


Fig1 The importance of cover

Source: Personal work

For most of the respondents (88%) is the PET bottle most valued. No one picks a can as a packing for drink. One tenth of respondents prefers rather glass. The preference of covers is shown on fig 2. Almost a half of asked presents low weight as a reason for buying PET bottles. Another important factor is the infrangibility, other reasons of preference are easy storage, waste sorting availability, and other uses, simple closing, and easy manipulation. Also the extension capacity, shaping of the cover, and the possibility of buying any amount at once. For the consumer's disadvantage, there is usually no other choice but PET bottle when buying for example mineral water. When respondents prefer glass, it is so because it's ecological, returnable, the drink stays cool longer, keeps the original taste, and no chemicals can pass through the glass.

Because the PET bottles are dominant over all other materials, they are most popular among all age-groups. Women 2% more than men. Men prefer the glass bottles more than women, what could be caused by the content of the drink.

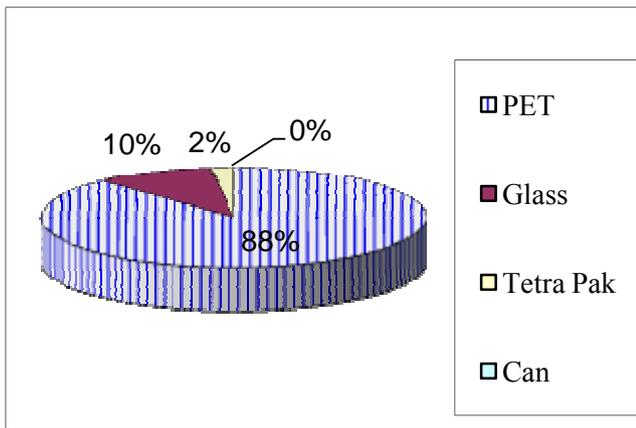


Fig 2 Types of cover  
Source: Personal work

### 4.2 Size of cover

The respondents marked three different amounts of beverages, while 1 meant the most common buy. Almost two fifths of asked (38%) prefer 1,5 liter cover. 2 liter covers (23%) ended "second" before 1 liter (21%). Smaller covers are not favoured by the consumers. The least preferred cover is the size of 250 ml (1%). Fig 3 shows the most commonly bought sizes of covers. In the category of 100 000 and more inhabitants dominates the 1,5 liter size, but not far ahead from other sizes. 1,5 liter is the most preferred size of drink in all groups.

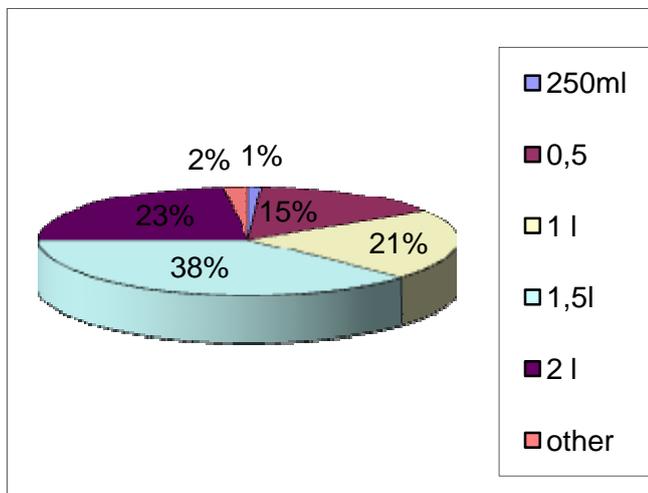


Fig 3 The size of cover  
Source: Personal work

### 4.3 The importance of particular factors when buying beverages

The shape is from two thirds (69%) not important for the respondents. Women find it more important than men. But for both it mostly seems unimportant. Cover printing isn't of any importance to two thirds (67%) of asked. The results are shown on the graph4. An extreme importance of printing appears only in 10% of asked. The most numerous asked group of young people 19-29 years of age find the printing

unimportant. Only in the category of 60 years of age and more is the printing sometimes found very important.

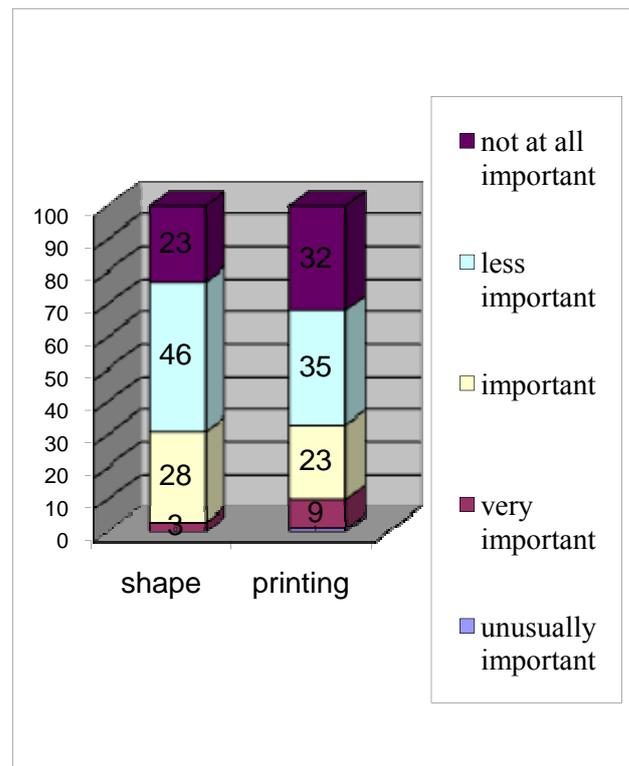


Fig 4 The importance of shape and cover printing  
Source: Personal work

### Information on the cover

More than a half of the respondents (56%) doesn't care about the information on the cover. Older people over 60 years of age care about the information more likely. Among other age groups dominates a lack of interest about the information on the cover. Academically educated and skilled people most likely don't look for information, same as the most part of people with primary school. College and high school-educated people look for the information more likely. The most demanded data is the drink composition showing fat, sugar, vitamins, protein and minerals content. The consumer is also very interested in the date of consumption and preservatives content. Another much-sought-for data is the energy value, flavour, and the beverage contents. The producer information, prize competitions or children suitability are required seldom.

### Requirement of specific cover properties

Exactly three quarters of respondents do not demand specific properties. If they do, than they call for toughness, low weight, and good ergonomic shape. For example narrowing the bottle in the middle for better grip, or suitable neck for easy drinking. Among the other required qualities are lids easy to close, cover able to endure carrying, easy to store, recyclable, harmless. Older people mentioned good readability. Additionally, the respondents wished the date of consumption, contents (sugar), and the producer to be shown.

#### 4.4 Cover handling

The purpose of this question was to find out how do the respondents work with the cover after use. More than four fifths (81%) of asked recycle the used cover. Mixed waste or refilling is used in the same amount around 10%. A large number of respondents sorting (recycling) the waste doesn't reveal any differences among the age groups. The recycling leads in all five. The graph is shown on pic5. It is clear that recycling dominates also among all groups sorted by education level.

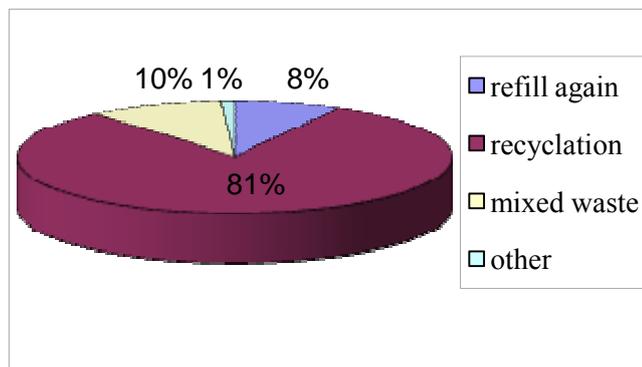


Fig 5 Cover handling  
Source: Personal work

#### CONCLUSION

The research showed that consumers are not uninterested in covering, eventhough it may seem the other way. They perceive the cover subconsciously and find it important. Most of the consumers try to act ecologically and sort the waste. Almost one fourth of consumers could imagine some sort of cover improvement or adjustment to their needs. They seldom call for other material than the PET bottle.

The packaging should be practical and allow the consumer easy handling. Modern technologies enable production of such covers that make the usage of products simple (carving, preparation, simplifying), are easy to unpack, and protect the content. The cover functions as a competitive advantage. [5]

It is necessary to set the correct conception of cover including adequate size, shape, material, color, text, and symbols. „**Well-packed half-sold**“ works here.

A change of cover function will become real with the onset and development of the electronic commerce. An emphasis will be placed upon the trademark identity and the cover will no more serve to convince the customer to buy, but rather to assure him of his good choice. [6] It will serve to create a reliance and to reserve future purchases. The goal of cover will be greater deepening of the trademark-customer relationship.

Current trend of covering technique is attractive, but cheap cover, with perfect protection properties and harmless to the environment. The cover is not only an ordinary part of the product. It has an important role in the customer's deciding process. It is assumed that the cover and the content are of same importance eventhough most of the consumers do not perceive such notion, and therefore they don't admit it.

A significant trend in the covering technique are „intelligent covers“. They connect informative technologies and new materials (for instance chips inside a thin foil). Covers of the third millenium indicate for.ex. freshness of food, integrity of packaging etc. An important factor of covering is product safety and environment protection.

Covers mean a great opportunity for innovation, could bring great use to the consumer and also large profit to the producer.

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