

## 9.10: Ethical Issues in Packaging

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to

- Explain ethical issues with respect to product packaging.
- Discuss product safety and ethical packaging trends.

### The Importance of Ethics in Product Packaging

In addition to concerns about sustainability, marketing professionals must be mindful of ethical concerns regarding packaging. Remember, a consumer can see the package on the store shelf, not the product inside. The customer is seeking guidance, explanation, and assurance of a product's quality from the packaging. The package must not mislead customers about the size, quality, ingredients, or health claims. The graphics on a package must also properly represent the product inside. For example, a package might display a photo of a product that is larger or more substantial than the product inside, leading the consumer to erroneously believe that the product matches the photo.

Product packaging should be effective in protecting the product. Therefore, brands have a responsibility beyond sustainability to design packaging that ensures that the product survives transport from the manufacturer to the wholesaler, to the retailer, and finally home with the customer. Think about the last time you purchased eggs at the grocery store. The eggs are quite fragile, but they are packaged to minimize damage as the container travels from the farm to your home. It would be unethical for a brand to reduce packaging to save money and leave the consumer with a damaged product.

Additionally, product packaging informs the customer of important safety issues. For example, a package with small parts might have a warning that it is a choking hazard for children under three.

Companies must consider groups beyond their customers. Government, advocacy groups, and NGOs may influence ethical packaging. Some experts predict that ethical packaging will become a legal mandate, so brands have an incentive to think about packaging today and prepare for a more sustainable future.

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