

## Easy opening of consumer packaging

People living in industrialised nations are becoming older and older. At the same time, they stay active in old age. They master their daily lives, enjoy culture, sports, travel and many other activities. Nevertheless, with increasing age, comes deterioration of vision, skill and strength.



These are factors which make it vital for companies and packaging manufacturers to tackle the issue of senior-friendly packaging head on. But which properties distinguish senior-friendly and also consumer-friendly packaging apart from other packaging? The CEN/TS 15945 (Packaging – Ease of opening – Criteria and test methods for evaluating consumer packaging) is the first standardised method that simultaneously assesses the ease of opening and consumer acceptance of packaging. For marketing and packaging development this is a valuable tool for when considering the relationship between the packaging and the consumer.

### Importance of the packaging for the purchasing decision

The packaging is essential for the consumers purchasing decision since it's normally the first product feature the consumer notices. For 45% of consumers it's the packaging that actually is the main reason to repeat purchase.

What exactly is packaging? Well, it can be defined packaging as "... the detachable, complete or partial enclosure of a good ...". First of all, it has the primary function to protect the item. Production, logistics and marketing also necessitate a variety of other functions that the packaging must have, which ultimately define the properties that the packaging must have.

In terms of customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and marketing packaging can be a powerful instrument with outstanding likeability and motivation values in the communication mix. Therefore the following questions are important for businesses: what wishes do consumers have regarding packaging? What features should a package have from the consumer's perspective? How do these differ depending on the different target groups we aim our product at?



### Consumer preferences about packaging

Consumers want products and packaging which are precisely tailored to their individual needs. This is understandable, however sometimes not so easy to successfully bring to the market. The range of wants and desires of the consumer can be very large and varied. Also different target groups emphasize different aspects that they want and desire in how the product should be packaged.

While 93% of consumers aged between 25-35 years wanted original packing, consumers aged over 60, above all wanted packaging that was easy to find and quickly recognisable.

It's not only the products emotional characteristics that separate the ideas of the younger and the older groups

apart. If we now consider the functional properties of the packaging, 76% of the 60+ group of consumers found it particularly important that the information on the packaging should be easily legible. Whereas this was the case for only 5% of consumers aged between 25 and 35. A very similar pattern between the two age groups was also seen in the case for ease of opening of the packaging. This characteristic was particularly important for 72% of 60+ consumers, but only important for 11% of younger group.

Packaging should ideally meet the needs of all target groups. Companies and packaging manufacturers have the challenge to find solutions which integrate the different requirements of various target groups. **CONTINUED**

Emotional features of packaging regarded to be of special importance



Functional characteristics of product packaging which are of special importance



## Easy opening of consumer packaging - continued

### Reversal of the age pyramid

In the past, manufacturers and packaging companies have created their range of packaging solutions mainly in line with the needs of the younger population. Due to demographic changes and therefore their considerable purchasing power, the 60+ target group has become more interesting and desirable for companies as a potential customer base to drive success, now and in the future.

Demographically, society is on average getting older mainly due to increased life expectancy and a decline in birth rates. In 1950 for example, the number of people under the age of 20 years old was about twice as high as the number of people who were 60 or older. By 2050 however, this ratio will have been reversed. Then there will be twice as many older people than younger. Even today in the European Union, the number of people over 65 years of age is already at 115 million.

It is clear therefore that people aged 60+ are a growing target group. For companies, the task is to explore requirements for senior-friendly packaging that often can be identified in product and packaging specific way. It is clear that consumers will ultimately avoid buying a particular type of packaging if it causes them substantial problems with the opening and closing process or it is simply inconvenient. But what kind of problems do seniors have with retail packaging solutions?



### The 60+ generation's problems with consumer packaging

There are a number of factors that should be considered when designing a suitable packaging solution. To ensure satisfaction of the older consumers groups, it would first of all be desirable to provide packaging solutions which come with portioning possibilities, optimal shelf life, are attractive in design and are easily recognizable, to name but just a few.

According to a study by the Federal Association of Senior Citizen Organizations (BAGSO), the main issue for older consumers when it comes to packaging is the information on the packaging and its opening mechanism. Over half of the respondents said that the font was too small and illegible. As a consequence, information about the expiration date, the product's ingredients and information on how to prepare it was difficult to read. 75.4% of respondents expressed that the packaging's opening mechanism

did not work effectively. More than 50% indicated that the tab or the tear strip couldn't be found, and 46% said that a lot of force was needed. In cases of a negative assessment of the packaging or negative experiences, the majority of consumers react in the straight forward way that the products with packaging problems either aren't purchased at all or are not purchased again.



### CEN/TS 15945:2011

What can be done so that packaging can easily be opened by the majority of consumers? Well CEN/TS 15945:2011 provides a method by which both the packaging's ease of opening and consumer satisfaction attributes can be assessed. It takes into account that with age, not only visual acuity and motor skills diminish, but also that the power of the hands starts to decrease. Easy opening is defined here as ... "ease of handling during the opening process which is supported by the product packaging to give the consumer the chance to reach his or her key objective (s)". The main objectives are effectiveness and efficiency while handling and the degree of consumer satisfaction with the handling process. Packaging is considered as easy to open if the majority of adult consumers describe it as effective, efficient and satisfactory according to the above criteria.

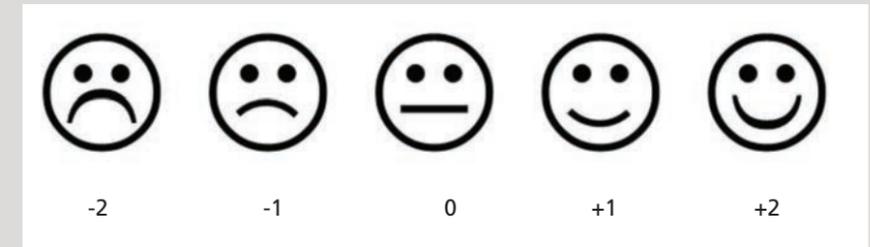
### Target group test procedures according to CEN/TS 15945:2011

There is a test procedure according to CEN/TS 15945:2011. It describes a test with a group of 100 randomly selected male and female participants aged 65 to 80, in accordance to the criteria table below.

Age group (Years)	Male %	Female %	Total %
65 to 69	10	25	35
70 to 74	10	25	35
75 to 80	10	20	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100</b>

Participants are handed a sample pack that corresponds in its presentation to the package that will be commercially offered later on. The main objectives to be achieved by the consumers when opening the package are tested in three stages. They are as follows: "Testing effectiveness while opening" followed by "Checking efficiency while opening" and "Testing satisfaction with opening process". A test is considered successful if in the first stage the opening procedure is evaluated by the participants as effective within five minutes. Then the opening procedure is repeated by the participants and is described to be efficient if they can open the package again in less than one minute. Satisfaction with the opening process can finally be expressed on a symbolic scale of "Smilies", that each carries a numeric value.

### See the graphics below:



Firstly if more than 6 out of 100 people are unable to open the package it is considered a failure. If less than 6 are unable to open the package, a satisfaction level 0 or higher on average has to be reached on the symbolic scale for the package to be described as satisfactory. "Ease of opening" of the package can then be confirmed by a test report. The testing is carried out by accredited institutions (e.g. [www.ivm-childsafe.com](http://www.ivm-childsafe.com)).

### Working together

For the market success of a product, the packaging plays an important role as it directly affects consumer satisfaction. But how is this to be achieved in individual cases? CEN/TS 15945:2011 is a suitable instrument. During packaging development it is possible to monitor consumer acceptance through targeted panel testing. In this way mistakes can be avoided and improvements discovered. In order to ensure that this process is successful and to fulfill the requirements of CEN/TS 15945:2011 a competent partner is needed. Accredited service providers

(e.g. [ivm-childsafe.com](http://www.ivm-childsafe.com)) provide qualified support, be it in the assistance of the choice of packaging or in providing the panel group testing according to CEN/TS 15945. Such collaboration ensures that the packaging meets the requirements of the producer, the product, consumers and society.

**Dr. Rolf Abelmann**  
**Tel: +49 531 28509245**  
**[www.ivm-childsafe.com](http://www.ivm-childsafe.com)**