

Beverage Packaging Trends - US - 2021

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This report looks at the following areas:

- The impact of COVID-19 on beverage packaging
- How an unequal economic recovery creates opportunities for new packaging sizes
- Consumers' views toward sustainable packaging
- Strides made by the beverage industry to increase the availability of recycled plastics

While there is a growing backlash against plastic bottles, consumers' views toward sustainable packaging are nuanced. 78% of consumers say food and drink companies should limit their use of plastic packaging, yet a majority of consumers say sustainability plays a moderate to no role in their food/beverage purchase decision-making process. Brands must balance consumers' desire for sustainability and low prices and frame the sustainable benefits of certain packaging types in terms consumers can understand.

The pandemic altered how consumers work, live and dine; packaging innovations can solve the needs of consumers in a post-pandemic world. A recovering economy will boost the sales of larger pack sizes as consumers spend more for products that provide a better value. However, unemployment has not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels, and financially stressed consumers will be drawn to small, inexpensive pack sizes. Other pandemic-related factors will push consumers to either larger or smaller beverage pack sizes.

Beverage packaging must adapt to consumers' shifting attitudes and behaviors; for instance, the growth in the use of refillable water bottles challenges the future of packaged water, and an increased demand for sustainability could result in sustainably conscious consumers extending the plastic backlash to other beverage categories.



"Packaging can play an integral role in addressing consumers' beverage needs in a post-pandemic America. The rise of remote work coupled with a recovering economy suggests growing consumer interest in large pack sizes, while brands must also promote small pack sizes to financially stressed consumers."

– Caleb Bryant, Associate Director of Food and Drink Reports

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Fortunately, consumers are largely positive toward the beverage industry's embrace of rPET plastic bottles, as rPET garners the highest appeal of any plastic alternative beverage packaging type. Forward-thinking brands can experiment with bold sustainable packaging solutions and on-pack claims such as carbon footprint labels, as there is a strong overlap between eco-conscious consumers and food/drink trendsetters.



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