

Naturally, Paper

How Paper Cups Can Benefit Your Brand, Your Customer And The Environment

Every minute, your best marketing tool leaves your store in your customers' hands – it's your beverage cup. As C-stores add high margin beverage programs, especially hot beverages, cups are one of the best communication vehicles in your marketing arsenal. Cups carry more than beverages – they represent your brand, can be used in promotions and, most importantly, can help improve the customers' experience.

Customer expectations of foodservice packaging overall are high. C-store customers need food and beverage packaging to be safe to use in a car, easy to handle and hold while “on the go” and to protect the products inside. The material your cup is made from is just as important to your operation because it shows customers how you want them to perceive your business – from how much you care about their experience to how much you care about the environment. Plus, in some areas of the country, the choice of materials is narrowing as environmental regulations restrict the use of polystyrene foam cups.

Paper is a durable material that offers many environmentally friendly options – from renewable to recyclable to compostable. However, the myths around the recyclability of paper cups often overshadow their true benefits. Here are some facts to help dispel any doubts about using paper cups in your hot and cold beverage programs:

Myths and Facts About Paper Cups & The Environment

Myth #1 – Single-use cups are a big burden on landfills

Fact: All foodservice packaging (FSP), both paper and plastic, accounts for just 1.4 percent of the Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) discarded in landfills.* In general, single-use cups are made of plastics or paper, and they each have their separate impact on the environment. As local governments continue to regulate polystyrene foam out of some markets, businesses that rely on foam cups would be wise to start considering better options now.

Myth #2 – Paper cups are not accepted at recycling facilities

Fact: A growing number of customers can recycle paper cups through residential or in-store recycling programs. Several large municipalities, including New York City, Seattle and San Francisco accept paper cups for recycling

Paper in general is the most recycled resource in this country – by percentage, more paper is recycled than glass, aluminum cans and plastic combined! In fact, in 2014, 96 percent of the U.S. population had access to paper/paperboard recycling, and 75 percent of packaging made of paper and paperboard was recovered in 2013.**

Myth #3 – The plastic liner found in paper cups prevents recyclability

Fact: It's true that all cups have a plastic coating to prevent leaks, but this does not mean that they can't be recycled. Coated paper products can and are being recycled because some paper mills – the facilities that process the recycled materials and turn them into new products – are able to handle them. The plastic is removed, leaving valuable fiber. Access to all types of paper and paperboard recycling increased in 2014, meaning communities with existing paper and paperboard collection added new types of paper to their systems.** However, because paper cup recycling is still not wide-spread, it's smart to check with your local recycling facility to see what it accepts.

Myth # 4 – There's not much I can do to get my customers to recycle beverage cups, since they are disposing of them outside the store.

Fact: Depending on your location, paper cups can be recycled in your customers' homes, in stores or in public recycling bins. Ever heard of "reverse vending machines?" Consider installing one on-premise and reward your customers for returning theirs cups to be recycled. And, if you know your community accepts paper cups, be sure to communicate that to your customers through in-store signage and social media.

Want help implementing an in-store recycling or composting program? The Foodservice Packaging Institute (FPI) will soon be releasing step-by-step guidance for you. In the meantime, visit <http://www.fpi.org/Stewardship>.

Myth #5 — My Customers Don't Care About Greener Options

Fact: Environmental consciousness is on the minds of many C-store consumers. Fifty percent of super-heavy C-store users are in the millennial generation and they make up thirty-four percent of retail food and beverage patrons. While there is debate about recycling behavior among millennials, studies show that recycled content and recyclability are important to 25 to 33 year-olds, while 18 to 24 year olds expect trade back or trade up programs for recyclable materials. And buying green is a more important part of the millennial public image than for other groups.¹

By far, the largest group who patronize C-stores are the “boomer” generation who are known to identify themselves with the environmental movement¹ and actively engage in recycling.²

Offering paper cups – and helping consumers understand the “green” reasons you use them – can position your brand positively with your current and future consumer base.

Maximizing The Benefit Of Paper Cups

Consumers have so many options for purchasing beverages that perception of high quality and a premium experience are essential to achieving repeat purchase. Your choice in cups has a real impact on your business. To make the best choice in a paper cup:

- Look for paper cups that are sturdy, secure and user-friendly.
- Show your commitment to the environment –
 - Buy insulated paper cups – then there’s no need for cardboard sleeves.
 - Choose cups made with recycled content.
 - Select cups made from fibers sourced from sustainable forests.
 - Look for compostable options. More communities are offering composting as an alternative to adding materials to landfills.
- Stay domestic – buy cups made in the USA to reduce your store’s carbon footprint.
- Use your cups as marketing tools. The design of your cups, custom messaging, even engaging promotions can all provide the extra special experience and value consumers will remember and come back for. Print capabilities are surprisingly sophisticated these days, allowing for custom

colors, messages, even temperature-sensitive inks, and scratch-off and peel-off capabilities.

While businesses need to balance their economic concerns with environmental ones, when making a choice about cups, the future is naturally paper.

* Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: Fact Sheet 2013.

** Source: 2014 AF&PA Community Survey Executive Summary, "access to paperboard recycling", U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Advancing Sustainable Materials Management: Fact Sheet 2013.

¹Source: "Millennial generation least likely to call themselves environmentalists," Pew Research Center survey

²Source: Shelton Insights www.greenbiz.com conducted Feb. 14-23, 2014