

Glass holds its own in major new European consumer study

A new Europe-wide survey by the independent research consultancy InSites on behalf of FEVE (European Container Glass Federation), shows that despite the growth of other packaging materials, glass remains the consumers' preference for food and drinks. The study, conducted in December 2010 across 17 countries, revealed three key reasons given by Europeans for this preference: glass packaging preserves the taste of its contents; it is considered to be healthy and safe; and it is environmentally friendly.

The comprehensive InSites study polled more than 8,000 consumers across Europe about their perception of packaging materials. In addition to confirming that glass is the preferred choice for Europeans, the poll also highlighted differences between the top three 'drivers of choice' in different countries.

In the UK, the top three reasons for choosing glass were that it preserves the taste best (38%); food and drink stays fresh longer (30%) and 29% of consumers cited that their favourite brands were in glass packaging, highlighting the enduring appeal of glass by iconic brands of sauces, preserves and drinks.

The survey's findings reflect the current trend for living a more healthy and sustainable lifestyle amongst European consumers. Glass embodies qualities associated with the growing desire for responsible consumption and resource efficiency – qualities that are believed to be vital in achieving a sustainable future across Europe. Recent developments such as increases in glass recycling rates and the European Commission's recommendation for parents to use glass baby bottles, further underline glass's unique recyclability and health credentials.

"This latest research emphasises the enduring appeal of glass and why, when given the choice, so many consumers feel it most closely fits with their aspirations for a healthier, greener lifestyle" comments Dave Dalton, CEO of UK trade body British Glass.

Consumers also enjoy glass when they let their hair down too, with 66% (57% UK) preferring glass for spirits and 60% (38% UK) for beer. When it comes to dairy products, 35% of European respondents who eat yogurt at home would prefer to buy it in glass, although only 17% of UK consumers felt the same way. There were signs that milk bottles could perhaps make a comeback too, with a quarter (26%) of respondents in the UK and 39% of Europeans preferring milk in glass bottles.

When it comes to cost, the results show that overall there is a substantial proportion of European consumers who would be willing to pay extra for glass containers, especially for milk (25%), yogurts (21%), juices (22%) and wine (22%). However, while there is perhaps a perception that glass is more expensive, the reality is that glass is often cheaper than other types of packaging. For example, British Glass points out that in the UK, buying the same weight mustard, honey or ketchup can cost up to 40% more in plastic than in glass.

This latest European survey, which is a follow-up to a previous study by Insites held in 2008, demonstrates that the continent's growing demand for healthier and locally sourced food appears to have had a knock-on influence on consumers' preferred packaging materials.

Taste

65% of European consumers choose glass because it best preserves the taste of the food or beverage it contains. Taste is the most popular reason why UK consumers choose glass with 38% agreeing with the statement. Taste is also one of the main reasons why, for example, wine producers pack their vintages in glass bottles. The image of glass as a packaging material also tends to be associated with prestige products, for special occasions and in-home non-alcoholic consumption. 79% (64% UK) of all respondents say they choose glass for a special occasion beverage.

Health

People associate glass packaging with health benefits because it keeps the 'good things' such as vitamins in and acts as a natural barrier against bacteria. Most European consumers (66% in the UK) also believe that the packaging materials used for food and beverages may cause chemical interactions with the contents inside. In the case of glass, however, this interaction is considered to be the lowest of all packaging materials (12%). The European Commission recently published a recommendation that parents use glass baby bottles, because glass is safe for human health. 14% of the consumers questioned in the survey bought baby food in glass packaging, while other packaging materials only accounted for a maximum of 3% of baby food packaging. These results clearly illustrate glass as the preferred material for this product, compared to other materials.

Environment

Survey respondents also cited environmental reasons for why they perceived glass packaging to be a natural choice. With 8.3m tonnes of food thrown away by UK households every year, glass was rated for its ability to keep food and drink fresher for longer, with 30% of UK consumers agreeing this was a key benefit. 43% of European consumers rank glass as their number one environmentally friendly packaging product. Almost 80% said that glass is recyclable into the same or similar packaging without loss of quality. In this, glass far outperforms other packaging materials. An overwhelming majority (80%) of European consumers said that they recycled their glass.

Consumers join Friends of Glass

More and more consumers vote for glass by becoming Friends of Glass and by sharing their experience with their peers on the European consumer forum. As witnessed by their participation in the latest campaign “Glass has nothing to hide”, they are increasingly sensitive to the guarantees a packaging material can give when it comes to health and preservation of the nutritional value of food and drink.

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The survey slides and country data are available on <http://www.feve.org>

NOTES TO EDITORS

About the InSites survey

In December 2010, an online survey was conducted in 17 European countries (UK, the Netherlands, Germany, France, Poland, Austria, Czech Republic, Belgium, Hungary, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Turkey, Slovakia, Sweden, Switzerland) by the independent market research agency InSites Consulting. In each country, around 500 consumers, aged between 18 and 55, completed the questionnaire. The results are representative for the total population of each country. It is the second time this InSites survey was held among European consumers and is a follow-up of the previous one held in 2008.

About Glass

Glass is made from natural, sustainable raw materials, abundant in nature such as sand, soda ash and limestone. It is the preferred packaging for consumer health and for the environment. It is chemically inert, 100% and infinitely recyclable, refillable, and reusable. As primary packaging, glass containers ensure the preservation, safe delivery and attractive presentation of a vast array of consumer products, supplied to European and world markets. Whether used for drinks, food, cosmetics, perfumes or pharmaceuticals, glass plays a vital role in supporting European trade and commerce.

About Friends of Glass

Friends of Glass is a European consumer forum that supports and promotes the right of consumers to be able to choose food and drink products in glass packaging. It unites all those who believe glass is the clear choice for themselves, their families and for the environment. Friends of Glass was initiated in 2009 by the European Container Glass Federation (or FEVE) in response to a pan-European survey commissioned by FEVE in September 2008 by the research institute InSites, which found that 74% of European consumers prefer glass packaging for their food and drinks.

About FEVE

FEVE (The European Container Glass Federation) is the association of European manufacturers of glass packaging containers and machine-made glass tableware. The federation represents the glass container industry at the international, and especially European, level and serves as a forum for examining common questions. FEVE maintains a dialogue with the European institutions and agencies on environmental, trade and other important issues. The federation promotes glass packaging and glass recycling, complementing the activities of the glass industry at the national level.

About British Glass

The British Glass Manufacturers' Confederation represents the interests of all sectors of the glass industry in the UK. Its main activity is in representing the industry at European, national and local level on a wide range of topical legislative issues. It also conducts independent research into all aspects of glass production and technology.

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