

Plastic Packaging:

What are the possibilities for reducing waste when buying clothes?



Before being displayed, garments have already been repackaged up to five times – a process which is concealed from the consumers.

In many cases, consumers are unaware of the large amount of (plastic) packaging that accumulates along the value chain of clothing. A T-shirt is repackaged up to five times before it reaches the store. Since the packaging is usually not visible there, consumers are barely conscious of or able to influence the amount of packaging when they purchase clothes.

Clothing: Where does the packaging come from?

Garment makers receive supplier products such as yarns and fabrics that are protected by polybags and stretch film. They then send the finished garments, usually wrapped in polybag and stretch film, to the finishing companies. During most refining steps along the value chain (e.g. ironing, dyeing, waterproofing), the garments are unpacked, processed and repackaged. Often, new packaging is necessary because the thin material of the polybag tears during unpacking and can no longer guarantee a continuous protective function. For the transport from the finishing facility to the wholesalers' distribution centers, plastic packaging is usually needed again, which is then removed at the point of sale (PoS).

Avoiding garment packaging: the contribution of consumers and industry

For stationary shopping, plastic packaging that accumulates prior to the PoS must be reduced or avoided. Companies can achieve this, for example, through nearshoring (relocation of production to nearby countries), shorter transport routes and process optimization. For online shopping, consumers can contribute to reducing packaging waste by bundling orders, reducing returns and using reusable solutions.

Upon delivery, each garment is individually protected by polybag and/or stretch film



Photo: © Thomas Decker 2018

„Companies can save packaging in upstream stages of the value chain. Consumers only have options to avoid packaging when buying online.“

Dr. Thomas Decker; City of Straubing

Research on the emergence & avoidance of plastic packaging for clothing.

In the project „Consumer Behavior Related to Plastic and its Avoidance at the Point of Sale [VerPlaPos]“, interviews were conducted with various players in the textile value chain to determine the volume of packaging.

Furthermore, surveys were conducted to investigate how consumers can save on packaging when buying textiles. Recommendations for companies and consumers will be formulated and disseminated based on these results.

The protection and transport functions of the packaging limit the possibilities of prevention.

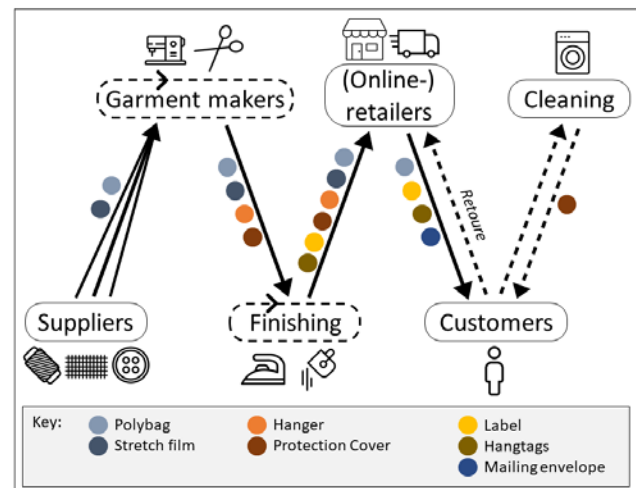
The demand for flawless clothing imposes high demands on its protection. This complicates the reduction of plastic packaging in the textile supply chain. Avoiding the use of such packaging cannot result in textiles becoming dirty or unwearable.

Even garments displayed on hangers are delivered to the store individually packaged.



Photo: © Thomas Decker 2018

Packaging along the textile supply chain - four polybags for one product are not uncommon.



Source: © FATM 2019

IMPRINT

Authors

Decker, Thomas; Lippl, Maria; Frommeyer, Britta; Koch, Julia; von Gehlen, Kristina; Tornow, Maren; Habermehl, Tabea; Niedermeier, Andreas

Institution

City of Straubing; General and Textile Industry Research Institute, University of Muenster; Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences

Contact

thomas.decker@straubing.de

Design

Lena Aebli, Ecologic Institute

Status

February 2021

www.bmbf-plastik.de/en

 @plastik_environment

This fact sheet was prepared as part of the research focus „Plastics in the Environment“ (duration 2017–2022), funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The authors are solely responsible for the contents of the fact sheet. They do not reflect the official opinion of the BMBF.

Decker, Thomas; Lippl, Maria; Frommeyer, Britta; Koch, Julia; von Gehlen, Kristina; Tornow, Maren; Habermehl, Tabea; Niedermeier, Andreas (2021): Plastic Packaging: What are the possibilities for reducing waste when buying clothes? Fact sheet 1 of the BMBF research focus „Plastics in the Environment“.