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DELIVERABLE 2.4

Branding and Media Planning Guidelines

Zenith Poland

28 / 11 / 2025



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***This work is dedicated to the memory of Justina Baršytė,
our project coordinator,
whose vision and commitment were invaluable to this project.***

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1. HOW DEVELOPED THESE GUIDELINES?

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Purpose of these guidelines

The purpose of these Branding and Media Planning Guidelines is to translate sustainability communication principles, especially those connected with packaging design, regulatory trends, and consumer behaviour, into actionable branding and media planning rules. While the previous part provides creative, conceptual, and behavioural insights, these guidelines focus on **how to plan media in such a way that sustainability messages are seen, understood, and acted upon.**

These guidelines help answer the following question: *How should brands invest, prioritise, and deploy branding, packaging and media so that sustainability messages are both effective and compliant?*

1.1.2 Why now

Sustainability has moved from “nice to have” to “must have.” Communication is shifting from emotional “eco-style” to **responsibility, driven by regulatorion and consumer expectations.** Regulations like the EU Green Claims Directive and the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR) increasingly require **precise, verifiable, and non-misleading claims.**

Simultaneously, consumers across Europe express growing interest in sustainable food choices - but rarely read detailed labels or long packaging texts. They act under time pressure (“3 seconds at the shelf”), making clarity, visibility, and hierarchy essential.

Brands must therefore support this reality by elevating simple, action-oriented messages that help people make better choices.

1.1.3 Scope

These guidelines are designed for:

- Brand managers & strategists
- Media planners & buyers
- Creative teams
- Packaging & sustainability teams
- Retail partners
- Everyone interested in this topic.

They cover four Central and Eastern European markets analysed in the media report, two international focus groups and knowledge of experts and practitioners in the field of branding, media and marketing.

2. BRANDING GUIDELINES WITH SPECIAL CONSIDERATION FOR PACKAGING BRANDING

2.1 Foreword

“Even if the world stopped burning fossil fuels tomorrow, the way we produce and consume food would still heat the planet beyond 1.5°C.”¹

This is not a problem that sits with someone else - the final outcome rests on the purchase decisions made by roughly 360 million people across the European Union². Purchasing decisions taken at the shelf, in haste and with little reflection. It is there, at the shelf, where the future of the world we know is ultimately shaped. It's right there, “in front of the shelf”, where the future of the world as we know it is being decided.

“It is estimated that over 80% of the environmental impact caused by products and services is a result of decisions made at the design stage.”

European Commission Research Unit: Sustainable Product Policy 2018

2.2 Introduction – why, for whom, and why now?

Purpose: These guidelines have been created to help brands design packaging that communicates environmental and social responsibility in a way that feels friendly and even attractive for people. Our goal is to convince those who are responsible for designing that to achieve environmental change, we do not need information only. Instead, we need persuasive communication that is:

- easy to notice,
- simple to understand,
- interesting enough to draw consumers' attention.

Only such communication will allow us to achieve our ultimate goal: real and lasting changes in consumer habits and behaviour.

That is why we are changing the language of rules and standards, turning them into clear and practical guidelines.

In the real world, a consumer gives only a fleeting moment to an at-shelf decision³. Research shows that FMCG purchase decisions are usually made within a few to a dozen seconds, with the crucial first impression formed in the first 3–7 seconds of encountering the packaging.

¹ <https://www.fakt.pl/wydarzenia/systemy-zywnosciowe-a-klimat-czy-jedzenie-moze-uratowac-planete/sr5w9k1>

² Source: the calculation refers to adults, based on Eurostat data as at 1 January 2024, with those under 19 accounting for 20% of the total EU population estimated at 449.3 million <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/demography-2025#population-structure> and https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Population_structure_and_ageing

³ Source: <https://www.globenewswire.com/news-release/2024/11/06/2975877/0/en/In-Front-of-the-Supermarket-Shelves-no-More-Than-20-Seconds.html>

The time a shopper spends engaging with a product at the shelf varies by category and depends on brand familiarity, but we are about talking seconds, not minutes, regardless of the scenario.

That is why we focus on a clear hierarchy of information, fewer symbols, appropriate font sizes, high contrast, simple pictograms and short, actionable microcopy next to the symbols. Anything more detailed or likely to change over time should be provided via a QR code linking to additional information.

Who is this document intended for: food producers and brand owners, packaging designers, strategists, consultants, copywriters, packaging engineers, R&D teams, sustainability departments, as well as legal, compliance and regulatory specialists – in short, for everyone who creates or influences information placed on food packaging.

Scope of these guidelines: we focus exclusively on food packaging.

This is not a legal manual.

It is a set of evergreen principles that are consistent with both current regulations and good market practices, while remaining open to continuous updates.

2.3 Why it matters?

In the case of food, packaging is the first and most frequent point of contact with the brand. Just a few seconds of contact are decisive for someone understanding what brands do for the planet and for people. Consumers should not have any doubts – they should instantly see and understand how a brand supports the sustainable development goals, why it deserves their trust, and what they can do themselves to mitigate any negative impacts.

From “Eco as a Style” to “Responsibility as a Requirement”

There was a time when being “eco” set only a handful of brands apart. Today, in the midst of the climate crisis, it has become an increasingly frequent expectation consumers place on brands. One manufacturers are actively trying to meet.

For this to hold true, both the product and its packaging need to demonstrate their responsibility and sustainable approach in a comprehensive and consistent manner.

Growing Regulatory Pressure

The EU is tightening regulations designed to protect consumers from broad claims that are not backed by evidence (Directive 2024/825 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 February 2024 amending Directives 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU as regards empowering consumers for the green transition through better protection against unfair practices and through better information⁴). And by 2030, EU policy will require packaging to be designed for reuse or effective recycling (PPWR / CEAP).

This means moving from “nice promises” to precise and verifiable communication.

Competitive Advantage

Responsibility and transparency are not just obligations – they are tools for outperforming the competition. Clear, visible information shortens the decision-making lead time and builds credibility. The brand that stands out more strongly at the shelf will win, even when others offer the same.

⁴ Source: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=OJ:L_202400825

That is why now is the time for brands to build their own, unique languages of responsibility that rely on a standard set of symbols.

This is what we call responsible branding.

2.4 Design manifesto

1. **Purposeful design, not a collection of icons** – effective branding and design are intended to help people understand, believe and, most importantly, act: choose brand and product, sort waste, reuse or return the packaging.
2. **3–5 truths in 3 seconds** – we select up to five key messages that a user can notice and memorise within roughly 3 seconds.
3. **Hierarchy matters** – by default, we use a consistent symbol area but attempt to establish an internal hierarchy reflected by size and sequence.
4. **One key message – headline** – the most distinctive claim, especially if it distinguishes us from the competition, should be placed on the front panel, as the primary message. Packaging is a high-reach medium – make the most of it.
5. **Develop your own visual language** – we avoid the “mish-mash” effect; even standard graphic symbols should be harmonised with the brand’s visual identity to make them easier to read.
6. **Be precise** – whenever possible, include specific figures and indicate which parts of the packaging they refer to, e.g. 50% rPET (recycled PET) applies to the bottle after removing the label.
7. **Not everything belongs on the pack – we use** a QR code → proof hub to provide more information about the methodology, certificates and to educate consumers.
8. **0.5-metre test** – show your packaging to 10 people from a distance of half a metre. If four out of ten cannot grasp the meaning within a few seconds, simplify or change your information hierarchy.

2.5 Eight simple steps to designing

Step 1: Collect facts about the product and its packaging – identify what is true for the product (e.g. ingredients/sourcing, EU Organic/Fairtrade certificates, origin, production conditions) and what is true for the packaging (materials, laminates, PCR, dyes, adhesives, non-recyclable elements).

Step 2: Define your intention (3–5 truths) – decide what the consumer should remember after 3 seconds (e.g. “Recycle with paper”, “30% recycled content”, “Easy to take apart”). Always double-check the factual accuracy of each claim.

Step 3: Decide on your KEY MESSAGE – if you have one breakthrough, indisputable claim, place it on the front panel as the headline.

Step 4: Build the symbol area – define one consistent space on the label; the order and the size of symbols should reflect the information hierarchy.

Step 5: Align and unify – consider whether the visual style of the symbols can be harmonised with the brand’s unique graphic and communication language.

Step 6: Add a short microcopy – one short sentence beside each symbol explaining what it means, what action to take, or what the information refers to.

Step 7: Move the rest information to the QR code – details, definitions, methodology, results and country-specific differences should all be placed in the proof hub.

Step 8: Run a quick test and refine – perform a 0.5-metre / 3-second perception test with ten people; if four out of ten miss the intended message, simplify or adjust the hierarchy and repeat the test.

2.6 Key message on the front – when and how?

We often forget that packaging is not just a physical container for the product – today it is also a powerful communication channel, often with the widest reach and strongest persuasive power, because consumers are exposed to an ever-decreasing amount of ads.

This is why packaging should be perceived as an additional channel for communicating with consumers and as a natural extension of TV, radio or online campaigns. The on-pack message must remain concise, clear and free from unnecessary wording.

In the EU, **approximately 150 ± 30 million people** interact with retail outlet shelves **every day** (own estimate: based on an average traffic of ~200 people per hour and typical shelf-interaction behaviour).

This means that in a single store, any given package gets **nine glances per hour**.

Across 10 000 stores, that's around **90 000 views per hour** – all without any media budget. Moreover, unlike other advertising formats, this contact takes place at the decision-making moment – the very instant the consumer chooses between brand A and B.

HOW TO CALCULATE “VIEWS” PER SKU?

FORMULA:

views per hour = store footfall/h × % visiting the category × % passing/facing the shelf × % front-facing visibility

EXAMPLE:

footfall 200 people/h × 25% visiting the category × 60% passing the shelf × 30% front visibility
= **approx. 9 views per hour for one package in one store.**

SCALING: × 10 000 stores = **~90 000 views per hour and zero media budget**

Footfall definition - counts or measures the number of customers that walk into a shop or place of business. Footfall is commonly measured and analysed in retail stores.

So, if you truly have something important to say, do not hide it on the back of the packaging.
Do not settle for the standard “green leaf”. Sell your promise in a truly convincing, captivating manner.
Outclass your competition like the brands in the table below.

Act like TOMS – using its corporate agenda as a brand promise placed on shoe packaging.

<https://www.loreleib.com/toms>



Or like VELVET – where the “three-tree” pledge takes precedence on the packaging over ordinary product details such as the number of tissue layers. <https://www.office-loro.co.uk/velvet-comfort-toilet-rolls-210-sheets-2-ply-white-ref-1102048-pack-18>

OCADO – not only boldly declares compostability but also explains what the packaging is made of starch derived from potato waste (own data source).



RIBENA – to persuade consumers to remove the label and separate the components of the packaging, the brand uses an engaging storytelling approach (own data source).

HOVIS – countering the common stereotype that plastic bread bags are not environmentally friendly, they placed a bold message “This bag is 100% recyclable” prominently on the front of the packaging, in a very well visible location.

<https://www.hovis.co.uk/products/hovis-soft-white-thick-sliced>



EVIAN “naked bottle” – to mark a milestone in the brand’s history – the creation of a bottle made entirely from recycled plastic – Evian launched a naked bottle without any paper or film wrap; all information is embossed, turning the entire bottle into a message about the “purity” of the packaging.

<https://gulfbusiness.com/evian-middle-east-introduces-new-label-free-100-recycled-water-bottle/>

MERACINQUE – a private company with the ambitious goal of producing premium rice based on Agriculture 4.0 principles; both primary and secondary packaging serve as an educational space. <https://packagingoftheworld.com/2022/06/meracinque-a-unique-grain-of-rice.html>



PALMOLIVE UP – a shower gel made from waste materials. It tells the story of its origin using the entire packaging – both front and back.

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/colgate-palmolive_wearecolgate-pentawards-sustainabledesign-activity-6993859589796429825-XyAt/

THANKYOU – an Australian brand known for everyday products (e.g. soap, cleaning items, bottled water) that donates part of its profits to developing communities; it uses its packaging to say a bold “thank you.”

<https://aacs.org.au/the-distributors-partner-with-thankyou/>



Sometimes you can go even further – building the entire brand around a unique attribute of responsibility.



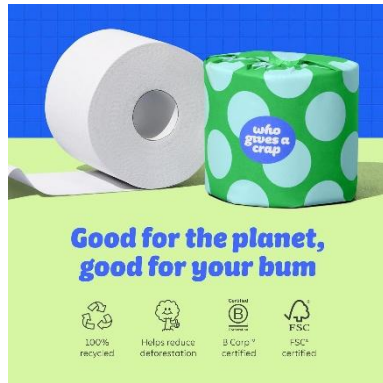
SPARE – crisps made from imperfect pears; a “second-class” product that turns this flaw into a strength – even the name (SPARE, meaning “extra” or “imperfect” fruit) reflects the idea.

<https://davidsonbranding.com.au/spare-snacks-packaging-revamp-snacks-with-a-purpose/>

BOXED WATER IS BETTER – a complete manifesto in itself! The brand name directly states its key competitive advantage and uses the packaging as a billboard. Without any compromises.

<https://thedieline.com/boxed-water-is-better-html/>





WHO GIVES A CRAP – you think that selling sustainable toilet paper cannot turn you into an iconic brand? The Australian company Who Gives a Crap proves the opposite – its witty, tongue-in-cheek name turns a taboo into a social cause.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Who-Gives-Crap-Eco-Friendly-Recycled/dp/B07MB5ZZ2Q?th=1>

LOVE BEAUTY AND PLANET – a Unilever brand that translates social responsibility into emotion: emotion + beauty + planet – a perfect responsible triad within the beauty category.



<https://mercadoeconsumo.com.br/15/04/2019/varejista/love-beauty-and-planet-chega-ao-brasil/>

“Claim as name” is a strategy that turns a brand into a clear manifesto.

Even with simpler messages, it is worth turning them into “heroes” by giving them a central place on the front of the packaging. Good examples include **CORONA EXTRA** and **PEPSICO** brands.



<https://www.choppbrahmaexpress.com.br/serveja-corona-extra-330ml-long-neck-pack-c-6/p>
<https://good-design.org/projects/frito-lay-super-bowl-lvii-compostable-bags-2023/>

IN SUMMARY

WHEN TO HIGHLIGHT CLAIMS ON THE FRONT OF THE PACKAGING?

- **When information is a true differentiator**, not just a category-specific or ecological minimum.
- **When it makes sense at the shelf** – during the consumer’s decision-making moment – rather than merely as one of many Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) checklist items in a report.
- **When the message removes a key barrier** – functional (What should I do?) or emotional (Can I trust this?) – and becomes **a reason to “buy it now”**.
- **When it can be easily proven** – a single number, a clear and easy-to-understand fact.
- **When it can be read in 3 seconds from half a metre away** – one word or one number, no jargon.
- **When it is safe and precise** – there is no risk of misunderstanding.
- **When it can become the theme of a wider campaign, e.g. on social media.**

WHEN TO HOLD BACK & AVOID PLACING CLAIMS ON THE FRONT?

- **When it distracts from the product’s key message** – a responsibility claim draws attention away from what the packaging is truly selling (e.g. variant/flavour/benefit), reducing readability and clarity of the core message.
- **When the message varies by time or country** – claims that differ across markets or time periods and risk leaving outdated fronts on shelves; in such cases, place it in a less prominent location.

2.7 What brands talk about via the packaging? – a topical map

Before we move on to further guidelines, let us summarise what brands are actually communicating via their packaging today and which marks or claims are currently most popular. This will help us determine the right placement and form of message on the packaging in the next step.

This section offers a quick overview of what currently appears on food labels across the EU.

We divide this list into **standard marks (credibility, abbreviations)** and **brand-specific marks or messages** (customised or proprietary claims).

STANDARD MARKS (THIRD-PARTY, OFFICIAL)

1. EU Organic (“leaf”) – the logo used for **food certified as organic** under the EU system; it must be accompanied by **the code of the certifying body** and the origin of raw materials: **“EU / non-EU agriculture / country”**. It may only be used after certification is granted.
https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/farming/organic-farming/organic-logo_pl



2. **Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) / Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC)** – may only be used for products within a **certified Chain of Custody (CoC)**; packaging must display **the CoC code** of the entity owning the product at the time of packing. A **licence** and **packaging design approval** from MSC/ASC are also required.

<http://www.fis-net.com/fis/worldnews/worldnews.asp?l=e&id=77462&ndb=1>



3. **Fairtrade** – indicates that **a product or its ingredients** meet Fairtrade social and economic standards and that the producer holds **a licence**; **the design of each label** requires **prior approval**.

<https://www.fairtrade.net/en/for-business/how-to-get-involved/licensee-resources/mark-use-guidelines-.html>



4. **Rainforest Alliance (frog)** (RA) – signals that the product or its ingredients come from **farms certified** under the RA programme; usage is governed by **the Labelling & Trademarks Policy** (size, contrast and version are verified).

<https://www.rainforest-alliance.org/business/marketing-sustainability/using-our-logo-and-seal/>



5. **Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)** – indicates the share of **certified palm oil** within the supply chain; **the RSPO Label with a valid licence number** must appear on the pack; **single-line claims** are allowed where space is limited.

<https://rspo.org/as-an-organisation/our-trademark/>



6. **V-Label / Vegan Society** – these marks certify that **a product is vegan or vegetarian** (verified composition and processes, not “eco” by default); its use requires **a licence agreement** and compliance with the visual identity guidelines.

<https://www.v-label.com/style-guide/>



7. **Deposit Return Scheme (DRS)** – a message indicating the **deposit system** (return the packaging → get your deposit back); form and content vary by **country** (e.g. deposit value, pictogram, code).

Example of a deposit-refund system in Poland based on Directive (EU) 2019/904 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 June 2019 on the reduction of the impact of certain plastic products on the environment (Text with EEA relevance).

KAUCJA 1 zł means DEPOSIT 1 PLN.

<https://www.gov.pl/web/climate/deposit-refund-system-in-poland>

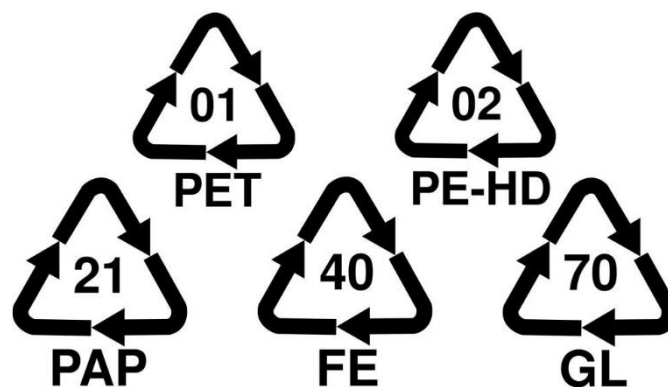


8. **Möbius loop / “recycled content” (ISO 14021)** – **three arrows** without a number indicate **recyclability**; if they contain a percentage value, it defines the **recycled content** for a specific component – **scope** and **calculation method** must be clarified.

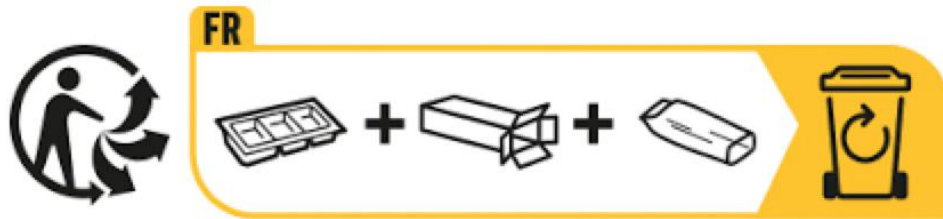
<https://www.compliancegate.com/mobius-loop-guide/>



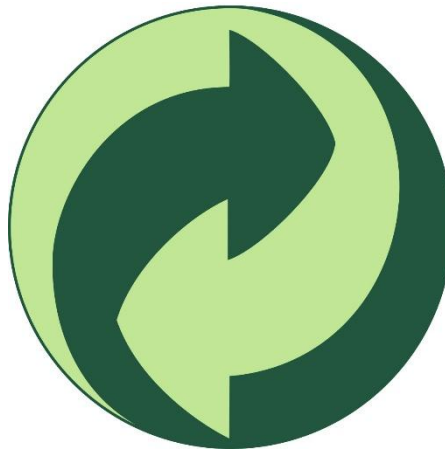
9. **Material codes 97/129/EC, such as PAP, PET and GL**, i.e. the packaging-material identification system for waste sorting. **PAP** refers to paper (20–22), **PET** to polyethylene terephthalate (01), and **GL** to glass (70). Additionally, **C/PAP** (e.g. C/PAP 81) indicates composite packaging made of paperboard with plastic or aluminium – it facilitates sorting but **does not constitute** a recycling claim. <https://www.ecosistant.eu/en/recycling-symbols-on-packaging-an-overview/>



10. **Sorting instructions / national systems** – e.g. **TRIMAN + Info-Tri** in France (design requirements and exceptions) or **environmental labelling** in Italy.
https://ecomaison.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Ecomaison_User-guide-TRIMAN_EN_Sept-2023.pdf



11. **Green Dot** – indicates that the producer **contributes financially** to a packaging recovery scheme; **it does not confirm** that the packaging itself is recycled.
<https://www.valpak.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Green-Dot-Code-of-Practice.pdf>



12. **Tidyman** – an educational “do not litter” symbol; it is a **registered trademark** and requires a licence (e.g. from Keep Britain Tidy).
<https://www.keepbritaintidy.org/sites/default/files/resource/Brand%20Guidelines%20for%20Licensees.pdf>



Although each of these marks has specific official guidelines (size, colour, clear space, licence) and must not be altered or “beautified”, **it is worth considering how to build brand communication around them, rather than treating them as mere stamps – as demonstrated by brands renowned for effective esg storytelling.**

Here are some examples.

INNOCENT: based on the Möbius loop mark, the brand created its own customised version that complies with its visual style. It is used to emphasise its leadership and high level of commitment in this area. However, when telling the story of its bottle, it does not alter the original mark – it is a matter of both standards and credibility. The symbol remains a **proof point**, while the brand's style enhances persuasiveness.

<https://www.innocentdrinks.co.uk/things-we-do-for-the-planet>



OATLY: on its packaging, Oatly uses “seals” (FSC Forest Stewardship Council, recycling, DRS – Deposit Return Scheme) in their official versions – unmodified and with protective clear space maintained.

The brand builds its narrative around these symbols through short, action-oriented phrases using its characteristic language.

For example, an icon explaining the product's role of a substitute of cow milk mimics the logic of the Möbius loop yet still remains a custom design.

<https://www.julia-rodenas.com/blog/2020/8/9/brand-im-watching-oatly>



The examples of Innocent and Oatly show how crucial overall and original brand communication is for credibility – a topic that is discussed further in this document.

MESSAGES WITHOUT EXISTING STANDARD MARKS - EXAMPLES OF BRAND-SPECIFIC TOPICS

Not every environmental or social initiative comes with its own licensed symbol. That does not mean they are insignificant – or “too small” to talk about. On the contrary – **every meaningful step**, even a small one, **can leave a positive mark and help someone make a better decision at the shelf.**

Below are examples of themes a brand can communicate to demonstrate that it takes environmental responsibility seriously.

REDUCING FOOD WASTE

From small gestures, like reminding consumers to close the packaging, to clear storage instructions or more advanced tips – every little effort helping reduce food waste supports a more sustainable food system.

What can you do?

- **Always suggest proper storage methods that help reduce food waste.**
- **Say:** “Reseal to keep fresh. A tight seal helps reduce waste”, rather than just saying “open/close.”
- **Why?** It is better to show the benefit of closing and storing the product properly rather than give an instruction whose purpose the consumer may not grasp.
- **Example:** “Reseal & keep fresh” works better than “peel & seal”.

<https://maltaelitesupps.com/product/applied-nutrition-micellar-casein-protein-900g/>



Go further?

“Refrigerate after opening. Can be also frozen in portions”. Add a QR code and provide more tips online – e.g. portion freezing and recommended storage temperatures.

Hellmann’s went even further, making food saving the heart of its campaign – “A reason to use: Make taste, not waste”.

<https://www.contagious.com/iq/article/secret-sauce>

<https://www.hellmanns.com/uk/meal-reveal-more-information.html>



HIGHLIGHT SHORT SUPPLY CHAINS AND LOCAL SOURCING

It helps reduce the carbon footprint.

- **How to say it?** “Harvested within 150 km of our factory” or “Straight from our own field” rather than simply “100% Italian Tomatoes”.
- **Why it works?** A specific distance makes the scale easy to imagine, and “our field” evokes not only trust but also a sense of closeness.

<https://dawtona.pl/produkt/cale-bez-skorki/>

<https://mutti-parma.com/products/passata/>



If local sourcing is not possible, consider ingredient traceability – build trust by showing supplier maps and demonstrating optimisation of logistic operations.

<https://mowi.com/products/traceability/>



Your MOWI is born

Sandvika, Norway

Your MOWI is rich in omega-3 fatty acids and vitamins. Our salmon thrives in cold, clear blue waters and are cared for to ensure their well-being and best possible conditions for growth.



Your fresh MOWI was handled with care and cut to perfection

Sandvika, Norway



MOWI leaves the fresh water home for the sea

Sandvika, Norway

At the sea site, your MOWI lives and moves freely in large enclosures. These pens contain 98% water and 2% fish. The cold water currents of the fjords and open waters create the perfect space for MOWI salmon to thrive and grow. We carefully monitor their well-being and make sure they are well fed and happy.

Sea temp. 9°C

Favorite food PURE N 2500 AUTUMN

Try this!



DINNER

Quick MOWI Salmon pasta with fresh tomatoes

IF THE PRODUCT ITSELF IS ORGANIC

Think about how to tell that story creatively – using both words and visuals:

- **How to say it?** “Rubies in Rubbles. Condiments, but gooder. Make good things gooder”.
- **Why it works?** Using the metaphor of “rubbish turned into rubies” raises the value of both the product and the act of transformation itself.

<https://rubiesintherubble.com/>

<https://britishshop.pl/pl/p/Rubies-in-the-Rubble-Tomato-Ketchup-300g/6591>

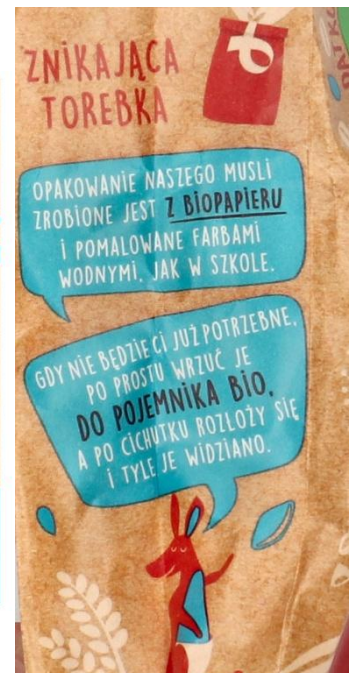


IF THE PACKAGING IS EXCEPTIONALLY RESPONSIBLE

Consider telling a longer story – for example, if it is a disappearing bag, it deserves a bit more explanation.

- **How to say it?** Through storytelling – “The Disappearing Bag: our muesli pouch is made of bio-paper and is printed with water-based inks – just like at school. When you are done with it, simply throw it into the bio bin; it will quietly decompose and vanish”.
- **Why it works?** Because people respond to engaging, well-told stories.

<https://www.dragonrouge.com/work/inna-bajka/>



You can even build A STORY AROUND DISPOSAL – sometimes a story told by a human to a human creates greater impact than technical instructions.

<https://www.masterfoods.com.au/our-stories/recyclable-squeeze-on>



You can also use THE ABSENCE OF PACKAGING – emboss information directly on the product, as one organic avocado producer did.



https://www.linkedin.com/posts/julianlhnew_branding-marketing-sustainability-activity-7388477187080814592-ij9Y/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_ios&rcm=ACoAAAD8aAUBajsaBF4DSjKOCsHhMhysW5gZEhY

2.8 From the shelf to QR codes – how to use different touchpoints effectively?

If your goal goes beyond simply “adding standard marks to the back of the packaging” – if you aim to **build trust, convince people to choose your brand and change their habits** – consider **the entire journey of the consumer who interacts with the product** - right from the packaging design stage: from the first shelf encounter, through use at home, to the moment when the consumer must take action (follow instructions, return a deposit, sort waste, or repurchase the product), or when they can learn something new about food and acting in an environmentally responsible manner.

It is not about a single message, but an ongoing relationship that unfolds over time.

In this relationship, different areas of and around the packaging play distinct roles at different paces: **the front** attracts attention and gives a reason to buy – it wins at the shelf; **the side** provides a step-by-step explanation or a short story about the process, ingredients or values; **the back** organises facts, while **the QR code** delivers **proof** and extended **storytelling** through the proof hub (definitions, methods, figures, behind-the-scenes content). Point of Sale (POS) materials **strengthen the shelf presence** at the decision-making moment. **E-commerce and social media** help engage and answer questions when the user has more time.

You can consider **the whole process as building a relationship step by step:**

- **First encounter at the shelf (seconds):** noticing is choosing. One main argument – perhaps a single number or key proposition – to capture attention and outperform the competition.
- **Holding it in hand (seconds):** additional purchase encouragement – explain why what the brand does matters and why this product is worth choosing.
- **Living with the product at home (minutes / days):**
 - **on the side or back** – instructions and reminders: steps, pictograms, calls to action; short stories told about *how* and *why* the product is more environmentally responsible.
 - **the QR code → proof hub** provides evidence **and longer narratives** (processes, suppliers, seasons, maps, storage tips, portioning advice, end-of-life guidance for the packaging).
- **Moment of action (seconds):** disassembly or sorting, deposit return – clear step-by-step guidance that makes the action easy.
- **Return to the shelf, repeat purchase:** what worked is retained through a consistent content layout and tone of the message.

Only with such a map can we meaningfully assign roles – planning communication and relationship-building across different objectives, from purchase to post-use sorting. Including long-term goals such as raising awareness and shaping desired consumer habits.

2.9 Map of touchpoints and their roles throughout the entire process

SHELF / POSM (Point of Sale Materials) – **draws attention to the brand, its message and value proposition**

- headline / slogan
- key visual
- space for value proposition and RTB (Reason to Believe)

FRONT OF PACK informs + engages

- key message (1 hero) e.g. “Cup made with 50% rPET”
- tone: short, brand-specific, jargon-free – may be bold or playful

SIDE / BACK OF PACK educates + provides a CTA (Call to Action) for the consumer

- 3 disassembly steps, shown iconically: e.g. “1. Remove sleeve 2. Rinse cup 3. Return separately”
- Call to Action: “Do it now – it only takes 10 seconds”

BACK OF PACK informs + organises

- sustainability strip in a single line e.g. ♻️ “50% recycled cup only” ♻️ “Recycle with plastics”
① “Label: paper”
- mini hero (if front already used), e.g. “designed to be separated”

LID – reminder about the bin to be disposed in

QR CODE / CODES → PROOF HUB (proof points + storytelling)

- what: proof points and storytelling that build engagement
- **tone:** inspiring, immersive

SOCIAL MEDIA engages + educates

- short 10–15 sec. video: “unwrapping” the label + “why it helps”
- link: to the proof hub (same page as from the QR code)

MOMENT OF DISPOSAL – reminds and encourages to take final important decisions

- message: e.g. “Remove the label → help recover a clean PET bottle”
- goal: to remind the consumer what to do – precisely at the decision-making moment

2.10 How to talk to people to engage them? Why style matters?

People often admit they care about what a given brand does in terms of environmental responsibility. Yet, when they are actually standing at the shelf, sustainability ends up competing with factors such as price, quality, brand preference or convenience – and, unfortunately, it usually loses out⁵.

Furthermore, when faced with too many messages, icons and symbols, consumers are simply unable to assess every piece of information across an entire category before choosing a product and placing it in their basket.

This is precisely why, when designing packaging for a sustainable product, we need to:

- intentionally limit the amount of information and focus solely on what truly matters,
- ensure our message is visible, easy to spot, engaging and persuasive for our target audience.

Packaging is not a decorative extra – it determines whether the message cuts through or disappears in the clutter of competing information. Simply adding a set of standard icons on the back of pack will never be enough.

So how do we create packaging that makes our message as effective as possible?

There is no single formula – just as there is no universal recipe for effective advertising communication. We do have a few recommendations.

On-pack sustainability works only when:

1. it addresses **the main issue** of your packaging or product category – for example, plastic and recycling in the case of bottled water;
2. it addresses **what matters to the consumer** – e.g. using resources more responsibly and sustainably, while also ensuring better product quality;
3. **it is credible and honest** — supported by evidence, transparently presented, without greenwashing or hiding inconvenient facts.

Yet, even when all three criteria are met, **the style and tone of voice – the overall communication strategy – still make all the difference.**

Below are several approaches for you to consider – five engaging, persuasive communication styles.

⁵ Source: <https://www.food.gov.uk/node/10151>

STYLE 1

SIMPLE STEPS – clear, concrete messages and iconography that help the consumer quickly understand and make their choice.

When to use? when hesitation – “what should I do?” is a barrier, or when the product is bought impulsively.

Tone and look – clear, functional, concise, instructional, but jargon-free.

On pack – 1–3 steps with pictograms + a short call to action.

Sample copy: “Look Good, Do Better”, “Please Recycle Me”.



STYLE 2

NO HIDING – THE POWER OF PURE INGREDIENTS

When to use? when a short and transparent list of ingredients or packaging components is an advantage.

Tone and look – clean and clear; calm, sincere tone; no gimmicks – transparent, honest and straightforward.

On pack – transparent, easy-to-understand facts about ingredients – those we are proud of, or those we have eliminated (packaging facts may be used as well).

Sample copy: “Worry Free Ingredients”, “Eat Plants. Love Life”.



STYLE 3

LET'S START A REVOLUTION – HERE AND NOW

When to use: when the brand genuinely wants and is able to drive change in the category – or even globally – calling for action and showing a new way forward.

Tone and look – bold, revolutionary, original, passionate – mobilising and forward-looking.

On pack – calls to action, manifestos, commitments, rally-style headlines on the front.

Sample copy: “Join the Plant-Based Revolution”, “Hey bottle, we see you in the yellow bin”, “WOW NO COW!”



STYLE 4

SECOND LIFE – RECOVERED FROM SCRAPS

When to use? when raw materials come from “rescued leftovers or waste” – referring to either the product or its packaging.

Tone and look – raw, honest, collage-like, handcrafted – slightly imperfect, without factory-like perfectionism.

On pack: clearly show the ingredients – visually or textually.

Sample copy: “Putting the Squeeze on Food Waste”, “Once I used to be...”



STYLE 5

BACK TO HUMAN SCALE

When to use? when strengths include short supply chains, craftsmanship, or a return to traditional methods.

Tone and look – modest, traditional, understated yet warm – reminiscent of the pre-industrial era.

On pack – information about local sourcing and products made by people, not machines.

Sample copy: “We want you to eat raw, local and better”.



2.11 To conclude – an invitation

What we say on the packaging only makes sense **when** real change **follows – in the product, in the packaging itself, and in people's everyday habits**. We would like to leave you with a few questions worth asking yourself now – and once again in six months' time.

Product!

Can our product be **genuinely simpler** (fewer ingredients, less water and less energy used), **more local** (shorter supply chain), or **more durable** (stays fresh longer, easier to divide into portions)? What can you really do to make the product you offer more sustainable?

Packaging!

If we cannot avoid using raw materials that create environmental challenges, what can we simplify in our packaging to help people sort or reuse it correctly? Can we turn standard “symbols” **into clear, meaningful messages – stories that encourage people to act or change their behaviour?**

Habits and Routines!

What **small rituals** can we suggest to consumers that are genuinely helpful?

For example: reseal → stays fresh longer, freeze in portions → reduces waste.

How can we make it feel **instinctive** and **enjoyable**, instead of being burdensome? How can it become part of an attractive lifestyle – even a form of a daily game?

We do not need more slogans, icons, symbols and marks.

We need **better choices – at the shelf and at home**.

Choices facilitated by brands every single day – through clear, engaging communication and information.

Preceded by information and education campaigns for citizens – consumers – on sustainable food and sustainable choices.

If, after reading these guidelines, you ask yourself one simple question – “**what can I simplify today so that the consumer can act tomorrow?**” – that's already a good change.

3. MEDIA PLANNING GUIDELINES

3.1 Media landscape: what the data tells us (2022–2024)

The Media Planning Report provides a foundational picture of sustainability communication across the food sector in four European markets. The patterns observed are critical for guiding strategic decisions.

3.1.1 Sustainability messaging is still underspent

Across all markets, sustainability communication represents **only 0.5–1%** of total food-category media spending.

- Poland: ~0.7–1%
- Estonia: ~0.9%
- Lithuania & Romania: ~0.5%

This shows sustainability has *high rhetoric but low media weight*.

Implication for media planning:

→ *Brands that invest even moderately in sustainability messaging can quickly overtake their category's share of voice.*

3.1.2 TV still dominates sustainability communication

TV accounts for **75–97%** of offline sustainability-related media spend. This is due to the need for credibility, reach, and trust-building - qualities TV excels at.

Implications:

- TV should carry the **primary educational message**.
- Digital advertising should carry **deeper knowledge, proof, and interaction**.
- Out-Of-Home (OOH) advertising should **reinforce one key instruction or claim**.
- Radio is most effective when used to **strengthen recall, repeat key claims**.

3.1.3 Digital is growing but still underutilised

Estonia leads in digital adoption, followed by Lithuania. Poland and Romania remain heavily TV-centric.

Digital channels are used mostly for:

- Social media storytelling.
- Packaging claim reinforcement.
- Behind-the-scenes production content.

But they are rarely used for **deep consumer education**, which is a missed opportunity.

3.2 Strategic principles for effective sustainability media planning

These principles merge insights from Media Planning Report, two focus groups, carried out for the needs of these guidelines, as well as the media and branding expertise of the practitioners involved in the project.

Principle 1 — 3–5 truths in 3 seconds

Consumers at the shelf spend seconds deciding. This applies equally to media: your audience must understand the sustainability benefit instantly. Use simple, focused claims -no jargon, no long wording.

Principle 2 — Hierarchy drives behaviour

Just as packaging requires a “zone of signs,” media requires a **clear primary message** supported by no more than 1–2 secondary ones.

Principle 3 — Use TV & OOH to win attention, use digital to explain

TV and OOH are for simple, bold messages, due to low attention and quick exposure. Digital is for nurturing, teaching, and proving.

Principle 4 — Match the message to the touchpoint

Front of pack = headline

TV and Video online = credibility & reach

OOH = one instruction

Display = reminder & reinforcement

Social = context & emotion

Website / QR = proof & depth

The branding guidelines states that packaging should lead people to a QR code for detailed explanations. Media should mirror this logic: drive from bold claims → into depth.

Principle 5 — Always anchor sustainability claims in evidence

This is essential for regulatory compliance and trust. All media must reflect:

- Specific numbers (e.g., “30% rPET”).
- Specific actions (e.g., “Remove sleeve before recycling”).
- Specific scopes (e.g., “applies to bottle only”).

Principle 6 — Consistency builds trust

Media and packaging must speak the same language - same icons, copy style, tone, and call-to-action.

3.3 Building the media strategy

3.3.1 Define your key message (“Hero Claim”)

Branding guidelines recommends identifying **one breakthrough fact** and elevating it to the front of the packaging.

Media must amplify the same fact.

Examples:

- ✓ “Bottle made with 50% recycled plastic”
- ✓ “From farms within 150 km”
- ✓ “100% recyclable packaging”

What not to use:

- X “Eco-friendly”
- X “Green”
- X “Better for the planet”

Greenwashing is prohibited. Environmental claims must be clear, specific, and verifiable. Vague statements like “eco-friendly” or “green” can be considered misleading under EU consumer law.

This is regulated under EU law, including in particular:

- Unfair Commercial Practices Directive (UCPD) – 2005/29/EC
- Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition Directive – (EU) 2024/825
- Proposed Green Claims Directive (forthcoming EU law).

Insight from focus groups aligns with EU regulation: **Consumers distrust generic green claims and expect proof.**

3.3.2 Translate the key message into a media architecture

TV: Give the headline and emotional context

Use TV for:

- One strong sustainability benefit.
- Emotional narrative.
- Role of brand purpose.

Poland & Romania are especially TV-driven markets.

Radio: Recall, Repetition, and Behavioural Cues

- repeating the main claim established on TV,
- strengthening memory through sound cues and clear phrasing,
- providing behavioural instructions (e.g., “Look for the green leaf logo”),

- driving listeners to digital platforms for more details.

OOH: Reinforce one instruction

OOH must carry *action statements*, e.g.:

“Remove sleeve before recycling.”
“Return bottle. Get deposit back.”

High visibility → low complexity.

Digital: Build understanding, proof, and engagement

Use digital for:

- Long-form explanations.
- TikTok/Instagram reels on how-to actions.
- Testimonials.
- Farmer stories.
- Production transparency.

3.3.3 Understand your target and implications for media planning

To better understand the target audience, the analysis included a review of consumer segments with an active interest in sustainability, based on data from GWI. GWI (GlobalWebIndex) is a leading international research provider offering comprehensive, continuously updated data on online consumer behaviours across more than 50 global markets. Its insights are based on large, representative research panels and recurring survey waves, enabling robust cross-market comparability and in-depth profiling of audience attitudes, motivations and media consumption.

The persons interested in sustainability represent the most aware, engaged, and information-seeking consumer group within environmental topics. Although they make up a relatively small share of the population (typically 10–20% depending on the market), their influence on trends, public debate, and brand perception is significantly larger than their size.

Within the food sector, sustainability-interested consumers often act as “opinion shapers.” They are the first to adopt new environmentally friendly solutions (e.g., deposit return, refill systems, compostable packaging), and their behaviours frequently diffuse into the mainstream over time. Therefore, their needs and media attitudes stand out.

Content must be educational and evidence-based

These audiences value explanations, not slogans.
They engage with content that deepens understanding.

Stronger focus on Digital + Video on Demand (VOD) + YouTube

These channels best support:

- Long-form content.
- Detailed explanations.
- Storytelling with data.

OOH should drive specific actions

Examples of high-impact behavioural cues:

- “Separate the lid before disposal”
- “Return the bottle – reclaim your deposit”
- “Press and recycle”
- “Rinse before recycling”

Higher frequency expectations

Sustainability-interested consumers:

- Detect inconsistencies quickly.
- Remember factual details.
- Require **10–14 monthly contacts** for message consolidation.

Retail media is a critical touchpoint

This audience:

- Reads labels.
- Compares products.
- Scans QR codes.
- Expects clear guidance at the shelf.

Retail should reinforce the message introduced in upper-funnel media and clarify the action required.

3.3.4 Align Media with consumer behaviour phases

Table 1: Media Activation by Journey Stage

Stage	Consumer mind-set	Best channels	Example message
Meet (Attention)	“Should I consider this brand?”	TV, OOH, Radio, front-of-pack	“100% Recyclable Bag.”
Confirm (Evaluation)	“Is this real?”	TV, Radio, Digital Video	“Here’s how we source locally.”
Use	“How do I use it responsibly?”	Social, Influencers	“Seal after use - keeps food fresh longer.”

Act (Sorting / Return)	"What do I do with packaging?"	OOH near POI, QR content	"Remove the label, recycle bottle."
Repeat	"Should I buy again?"	CRM, Digital, Retail media	"Same great product. Now 30% rPET."

Source: Own Study

3.4 Creative guidelines for media assets

These guidelines complement the branding rules for packaging design.

3.4.1 Style and tone

Brands can choose from five sustainability communication styles identified in the branding guidelines, each suited for different media behaviours.

Recommended for media:

- **Simple steps**
Perfect for OOH & digital performance formats.
"1. Slide. 2. Rinse. 3. Recycle."
- **Transparent & Honest**
Works well on TV & brand films.
"Nothing to hide. Just clean ingredients and clean packaging."
- **Revolutionary**
Ideal for social-first campaigns.
"Join the plant-based revolution."
- **Second life / Upcycled**
Good for storytelling formats (digital long-form).
"Once I used to be a bottle. Now I'm your snack pack."
- **Human scale / Local**
Works universally across all media.
"Harvested within 150 km from our factory."

3.4.2 Copy requirements

- Always quantify: **"30% rPET"** NOT **"More eco."**
- Always add scope: **"applies to bottle only."**
- Always add condition if applicable: **"Remove label first."**

3.4.3 Use branded icons

The brandbook encourages turning sustainability action into brand language, not just legal symbols. In media, this means:

- Using simplified branded pictograms.
- Repeating them across channels.

- Ensuring packaging and advertising share the same visual system.

3.5 Channel-by-Channel media guidelines

Effective sustainability communication requires distinct media planning principles that reflect the informational, instructional and credibility-based nature of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)-related messaging. Unlike traditional product communication, sustainability claims must be repeated, explained and reinforced across multiple channels to ensure comprehension, trust and behaviour change. The following guidelines establish a coherent operational framework for all sustainability campaigns.

3.5.1 Television (TV & VOD)

Television remains the most powerful medium for building **credibility**, **visibility**, and **emotional framing** for sustainability communication. TV serves as the anchor of the message, establishing the main claim and providing the context that other channels later reinforce or explain.

Reach and frequency requirements

Reach refers to the percentage of the target population exposed to a campaign at least once within a defined period; for example, *reach 1+* means at least one exposure, while *reach 3+* indicates that an individual has seen the message three or more times. A *flight* is a concentrated advertising period—typically one or several consecutive weeks—during which campaign activity is intentionally intensified.

- **Minimum 90% reach 1+ per flight** – ensures that the message reaches the mass audience.
- **At least 70% reach 3+ per flight** – the threshold required for message visibility and early memorability.
- **Minimum effective frequency: 3** – sustainability claims require more exposures than traditional brand messages.

Minimum weekly weights

GRP (Gross Rating Points) is a standard measure of advertising pressure: it combines reach and frequency into one indicator ($\text{Reach} \times \text{Frequency}$) and reflects the total volume of exposure delivered to the audience. For context, 120 GRPs per week means that the campaign delivers the equivalent of 1.2 exposures to 100% of the audience, or 3 exposures to 40% of the audience, and so on.

- **Minimum 120 GRP per week**
This aligns with category benchmarks in Poland, however, should be adapted to the situation on other markets and ensures sufficient presence to compete with other Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) campaigns.

Copy length & Creative approach

Copy length refers to the duration of a TV commercial, which determines how much information can realistically be conveyed.

- **Longer copy performs better** – sustainability requires justification, context and proof.

- Minimum recommended mix: **30" + 15"**
 - **30"** → full narrative, explanation, proof point.
 - **15"** → reinforcement, instruction, reminder.

Dayparting

In television planning, *Prime Time (PT)* refers to the time of day with the highest audience concentration, usually evening hours, when viewers are most attentive and receptive. It is typically the most credible and impactful part of the schedule. *Off Prime Time (Off-PT)* includes all remaining broadcast hours and is used to build scale and frequency efficiently, at a lower cost per GRP than PT. Balancing PT with Off-PT ensures that the campaign achieves both visibility and reach.

- **50% Prime Time (PT) / 50% Off Prime Time (Off-PT)**
 - PT enhances visibility and credibility.
 - Off-PT builds scale and frequency efficiently.

Strategic considerations

- **Avoid sponsorship formats** – they lack space to clarify ESG claims and are not suitable for instructional messaging.
- TV must contain the **hero sustainability claim** and the **primary proof point**.

3.5.2 Radio

Radio plays a complementary role in sustainability communication, strengthening message recall and increasing the frequency of exposure throughout the day. As an audio-only medium, it is best suited for simple, memorable claims, behavioural cues, and reminders that reinforce the main sustainability narrative introduced on television and digital platforms. Radio is particularly effective during commuting hours, when listener attention is high and routine behaviours—such as recycling, conscious purchasing, or label recognition—can be reinforced.

Reach and frequency requirements

Because radio messages rely on repetition and auditory recognition, maintaining sufficient presence over time is essential.

- **High (3+) weekly frequency** is recommended to ensure message retention and support behavioural reinforcement.
- **Shorter flights** may be used, but they must be intensified with consistent weekly pressure to avoid message decay.
- Radio should not be used as the primary educational medium; instead, it amplifies and stabilises what audiences have already learned from TV and digital.

Creative approach

Radio's effectiveness comes from clarity, rhythm, and recognisable sound cues.

- Messaging should focus on **one clear sustainability benefit** or action (“Look for the green leaf logo”).
- Use of **mnemonics, consistent voiceovers, and simple phrasing** helps build memory quickly.
- Spots should be concise, typically 15–20 seconds, ensuring immediate comprehension without requiring visual context.

3.5.3 Out-of-Home (OOH) and Digital-Out-of-Home (DOOH)

OOH is essential for **reinforcement, behavioural cues**, and **constant visibility** in the real-world environment. It should be visually aligned with packaging and digital assets, delivering a simple, unmistakable message.

Formats and visibility requirements

- Preferred formats:
 - **6mx3m billboards** – high visibility.
 - **Citylight Panels (CLP)** – strong urban presence in meaningful volume.
- OOH must operate at *noticeable scale*; isolated formats do not create sufficient recall.

Digital-Out-of-Home (DOOH)

- For DOOH, **high frequency is mandatory**, due to short exposure time.
- Ideal for short, actionable messaging:
 - “Press and recycle”
 - “Separate the lid”
 - “Return the bottle – reclaim your deposit”

Mandatory creative element

- **Sustainability symbolism must be clearly highlighted** (recycling icons, circularity cues, environmental colour palette, packaging elements).

The design must be simple, uncluttered, and instantly recognisable.

3.5.4 Retail media

Retail media is the most important activation channel, bridging the brand message with the actual moment of purchase and providing instructions related to product use or disposal.

Exposure requirements

- **Minimum 1 exposure per store visit**
– consumers need a reminder at the point of decision.

Role and best practices

Retail media should:

- Reinforce key sustainability actions (sorting, returning, recycling).
- Extend the message introduced in TV and OOH.

- Provide clear and actionable instructions.

Highly effective formats include:

- Digital shelf screens.
- Instructional wobblers.
- QR codes linking to educational videos.
- Product clustering for sustainability-themed shelves.

3.5.5 Digital media

Digital is the **explanatory and educational** layer of the sustainability message. It provides room for proof, context, certifications and storytelling that TV and OOH cannot accommodate in full.

Placement and format recommendations

- **Premium placements** (first screen, homepage takeovers, above-the-fold display positions)
- **High-impact formats** (large display units, interstitial, scroll-stoppers).
- **Video prerolls** – ideal for short instructional messages.

Content and creative behaviour

Digital should be used to:

- Explain the sustainability claim.
- Present certifications and proof points.
- Show behind-the-scenes processes.
- Engage sustainability-interested audiences through detailed content.

Social media – Attention dynamics

- Sustainability content must capture attention in **2 seconds or less**.
- Required elements:
 - Strong opening visual.
 - Clear environmental symbolism.
 - Highly simplified messaging.
 - Movement or animation.

3.5.6 Summary of key media guidelines

TV:

- 90% reach 1+, 70% reach 3+.
- Minimum effective frequency 3.
- 120 GRP/week minimum.

- Copy mix 30" + 15".
- 50% PT / 50% Off-PT.
- Avoid sponsorships.

OOH:

- High-visibility formats (6x3, CLP).
- DOOH = high frequency.
- Mandatory sustainability symbolism.

Radio:

- Minimum 50% reach 3+
- Minimum effective frequency 3
- Copy mix 20" and 15"

Retail media:

- One exposure per store visit.
- Instructional, action-focused design.

Digital:

- Premium placements, high-impact formats.
- Preroll for instructional content.
- Social media must capture attention in 2 seconds.

3.6 Planning the media mix

Based on the structure of sustainability spending in the markets studied:

Recommended budget mix for a typical campaign:

- **45–55% TV** (build reach & credibility).
- **15–25% OOH** (make the key action visible).
- **25–35% Digital** (depth, education, social engagement).
- **5–10% Retail media** (conversion & reinforcement).

Market-specific notes:

- **Poland** → Maintain strong TV + add retail media for education.
- **Estonia** → Increase digital-heavy storytelling.

- **Lithuania** → Use digital to meet the rising regulatory awareness (Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive - CSRD).
- **Romania** → Keep sustainability simple, natural and quality-driven.

These insights come directly from market differences observed in the Media Planning Report.

3.7 Vulnerable target groups

Vulnerable audiences based on GWI research represent a critical but often overlooked segment in sustainability communication. These groups include individuals who, due to socio-economic, educational or physical barriers, face challenges in accessing media, understanding messages or acting upon environmental instructions.

Vulnerable consumers include:

- **People living in rural areas.**
- **Low-income households.**
- **People with low levels of education.**
- **Persons with disabilities.**
- **People who are experiencing or are at risk of social exclusion.**

Although diverse, they share a common challenge: **limited access to mainstream information and structural barriers that complicate participation in sustainability initiatives** (e.g., sorting, returning, recycling, accessing deposit systems, or understanding packaging instructions).

3.7.1 Who are vulnerable consumers?

Rural populations

This indicates that rural audiences have:

- Limited access to digital infrastructure.
- Lower use of online platforms.
- Higher dependence on television for information.

They often receive information from:

- TV.
- Local radio.
- Outdoor billboards in nearby towns.
- In-store media in local grocery shops.

Low-income households

People with low income:

- Prioritise price and necessity over environmental factors.

- Have low trust in sustainability claims.
- Heavily rely on TV and radio for daily information,
- Are highly sensitive to unclear instructions or additional effort.

Low-education groups

Individuals with lower levels of education:

- Require very simple, literal communication.
- Tend to avoid text-heavy content.
- Rely on visual cues and step-by-step instructions.
- Over-index on TV and OOH as their primary information sources.

Persons with disabilities

This includes:

- People with visual impairments.
- Hearing impairments.
- Cognitive processing challenges.
- Mobility limitations.

Their media experience is affected by:

- Low accessibility of online formats.
- Insufficient contrast or too small text on OOH.
- Lack of subtitles or sign language.
- Unclear packaging instructions.

People experiencing exclusion

This category includes individuals with:

- Unstable employment.
- Limited access to education.
- Poor access to healthcare.
- Social isolation.

Their media habits rely on:

- Free-to-air TV.
- Affordable prepaid mobile data.
- Free social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, TikTok).
- Proximity media (retail).

3.7.2 Key barriers affecting vulnerable groups

- **Limited digital access**
Poor connectivity, low smartphone penetration, limited data packages.
- **Low media literacy**
Difficulty interpreting abstract sustainability terms (e.g., CO₂, “carbon footprint”, “recyclable under certain conditions”).
- **Higher cognitive load**
Complex or multi-layered claims create confusion.
- **Lower trust in environmental claims**
Especially among low-income and low-education audiences.
- **Environmental infrastructure gaps**
Rural areas often lack recycling containers, deposit-return systems or convenient waste collection.
- **Language or literacy limitations**
Basic instructions may still be misunderstood if not visually reinforced.

3.7.3 Media behaviour of vulnerable groups

Based on GWI data and insights for vulnerable groups:

- **TV is the dominant and most trusted information source** among rural and low-income households.
- **Radio** remains strong in rural regions due to habits and accessibility.
- **Facebook** is the most widely used digital platform in low-income and low-education segments.
- **YouTube** is used for entertainment but rarely for long-form educational content.
- **OOH** works particularly well when placed near essential locations (e.g., markets, local shops, bus stops).
- **Retail** is one of the few channels with predictable reach.

These insights directly shape media guidelines.

3.7.4 Media planning guidelines for vulnerable audiences

Sustainability communication must be significantly simplified, repeated, widely distributed, and reinforced through multiple exposure points.

Television

TV should be the **cornerstone** of communication for vulnerable groups.

Why TV works:

- Highest trust levels.
- Low cognitive effort required.

- Familiar format across generations.
- Consumed daily in rural and low-income households.

Guidelines:

- **Minimum 85–90% reach 1+.**
- **Minimum 60% reach 3+** (higher is recommended).
- **Simple, literal language** (e.g., “Put it in plastic”, “Return the bottle”, “Press and recycle”).
- **Avoid abstract sustainability terms.**
- Use **high-contrast colours**, large fonts, clear product visuals.
- **Voiceover must be slow and clear.**
- Subtitles should be included wherever possible.

Radio

Radio is still very strong in rural areas.

Why:

- High reach.
- Audio-focused (helpful for low literacy).
- Low-cost reinforcement channel.

Guidelines:

- Short, repetitive messages.
- Instructional language.
- Use of consistent slogans.
- Broadcast in morning and afternoon drive-times.
- Consider rural and regional stations.

OOH (Out-of-Home)

OOH is effective when placed in **everyday rural environments**.

Guidelines:

- Use **high-visibility formats** (6x3, CLP).
- Place near markets, transport nodes, local shops.
- Avoid text-heavy designs.
- **Use visual instructions** (hands showing recycling action).
- Sustainability icons must be **large and instantly recognisable**.
- Repeat the same message across locations.

Digital media

Digital must be planned **carefully**, as access varies.

Primary digital channels for vulnerable groups:

- **Facebook** (highest penetration).
- **YouTube Short Clips** (short-form only).
- **Simple banner formats.**
- **Lightweight mobile formats** (low data usage).

Guidelines:

- Ultra-simplified messaging.
- Use visuals instead of text blocks.
- 5–6 second formats perform best.
- Avoid long educational videos.
- Avoid placing critical information only online.

Retail media

Retail is the **most important activation point**, especially for low-income and low-education audiences.

Guidelines:

- **Minimum one exposure per store visit.**
- Use wobblers and shelf stickers with **very clear instructions.**
- Ideal for simple sustainability cues:
 - “Recycle this cup here”
 - “Deposit return 0.50”
- Use contrasting colours (e.g., yellow/black, white/blue).
- QR codes only if optional (not required for understanding).

Social inclusion and accessibility guidelines

Sustainability communication must be **fully accessible**:

Text accessibility

- Large fonts, high contrast.
- Avoid jargon (e.g. “circularity”, “CO₂ neutrality”).
- Use plain language (“Made from recycled plastic”).

Audio accessibility

- Clear narration.
- Moderate pacing,.
- Optional audio description in digital formats.

Visual accessibility

- Clear high-contrast colours.
- Avoid clutter.
- Icons must be simple and recognisable.

For people with hearing impairments

- Always include:
 - Captions.
 - Text overlays.
 - Visual instructions.

For cognitive accessibility:

- One action per message.
- One claim per layout.
- Repetition across channels.
- Avoid metaphorical or symbolic language.

Summary of media guidelines for vulnerable audiences

Most effective channels:

- TV
- Radio
- OOH near points of daily activity
- Retail media
- Facebook (simple formats)

Creative best practices:

- Literal, step-by-step instructions.
- High contrast, large fonts.
- One message at a time.
- Repetition across all touchpoints.
- No complex environmental terminology.

Behavioural focus

Vulnerable groups benefit most from **clear, actionable, “Do this”** messaging:

- “Separate the lid”
- “Return the bottle”
- “Press and recycle”
- “Put it in plastic”

These simple formulations dramatically increase comprehension and compliance.

3.8 Measurement framework

The KPIs must reflect both *behavioural* and *branding* impact.

3.8.1 Awareness and understanding

- Message recall.
- Understanding of claims.
- Trust in claims.
- Brand credibility uplift.

3.8.2 Behavioural KPIs

- Correct sorting / recycling behaviour.
- Scans of QR codes.
- Repeat purchase.
- Engagement with “how-to” tutorials.

3.8.3 Media efficiency KPIs

- Cost per incremental awareness point.
- Cost per engaged user.
- Retail media conversion uplifts.

3.8.4 Regulatory and compliance KPIs

- Zero misleading-claim violations.
- Consistency across channels.
- Correct use of certification logos.

3.9 Action checklist for media planners

Before campaign:

- ✓ Identify single hero sustainability claim.
- ✓ Check claim against regulatory requirements.
- ✓ Align packaging, communication, media.
- ✓ Develop branded iconography.
- ✓ Prepare both short and long-form assets.

During campaign:

- ✓ Monitor understanding, not just recall.
- ✓ Optimise digital for depth and clarity.
- ✓ Use sequential storytelling (hero → proof → action).

After campaign:

- ✓ Evaluate behaviour change.
- ✓ Map which touchpoints drove understanding.
- ✓ Update creative hierarchy if necessary.
- ✓ Share findings with packaging, marketing, analytics team.

3.10 Conclusion

For sustainability communication to succeed, brands must move beyond simple messaging and build campaigns grounded in:

- Higher frequency.
- Broad reach.
- Consistency across touchpoints.
- Behavioural reinforcement.
- Proof-based storytelling.
- Sufficient investment.