

Paper receipts remain the choice of shoppers following the EU BPA ban

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Following an EU-wide ban on the use of bisphenol A (BPA) in thermal paper, which came into force last month, the substance cannot be legally produced or sold on the market in thermal paper in a concentration equal to or greater than 0.02% by weight. For thermal paper manufacturers, this is a welcomed move.

“Long before the BPA ban, paper manufacturers have been developing alternatives that continue to offer retailers and shoppers the same security, convenience and peace of mind that comes with thermal paper receipts,” says Greg Selfe, spokesperson for Choose Paper, a global campaign to raise awareness of the practical benefits and sustainable features of paper receipts.

“There are an increasing number of phenol-free receipt papers available to retailers. The most interesting development is a thermal paper without a chemical reaction. These innovative papers use an opaque top layer that turns transparent when heat from a conventional thermal printer is applied, causing the black layer beneath to be revealed – a purely physical reaction. Not only are these papers highly sustainable, but they also provide high quality, longer lasting image life, as well as being approved for direct contact with food.”

Choose Paper fully supports the removal of BPA in thermal paper and the continued development of thermal paper technology. Choose Paper believes that shoppers have a right to receive paper receipts and that misconceptions are contributing to the increased use of digital receipts, without considering consumer preferences for paper and digital privacy concerns.

The campaign is backed by research* which found most consumers prefer paper receipts over digital alternatives. The research revealed 54% of European consumers prefer paper receipts (27% stated no preference) and 59% believe paper receipts are more practical for returning goods or obtaining refunds.

Paper receipts are the preferred choice, but many shoppers are concerned about paper's impact on the environment and underestimate the impact of digital receipts. A total of 61% of Europeans surveyed believe that digital receipts are better for the environment than paper receipts and 43% believe that sending emails has no environmental impact. In fact, annual emissions generated by worldwide emails is estimated to be 300 million tonnes of CO₂ a year – equivalent to the annual emissions of 63 million cars.

“The environmental performance of paper manufacturers has improved significantly in recent decades,” says Selfe, “including continued investment into sustainable forestry practices. European forests, which provide 90% of the virgin wood fibre used by the European paper industry, have been growing by an area equivalent to over 1,500 football pitches every day.”

It isn't just the environmental facts that the Choose Paper campaign wants to highlight. There is another important issue to raise awareness of – that of trust and data protection.

Around 47% of consumers would be unhappy if stores no longer offered paper receipts and 40% would not trust a retailer that did not offer paper receipts. Furthermore, 54% of European respondents are

concerned that their transaction history stored electronically may be used by organisations for unsolicited marketing purposes.

“Consumers prefer and trust paper and there is the very real worry about data security that needs to be considered.” adds Selfe. “Choose Paper calls upon retailers to respect their customers’ preferences and consider all the environmental facts before adopting digital-only solutions.”

To find out more, go to www.choosepaper.org or follow the campaign on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Photography

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About Choose Paper

Choose Paper advocates for the right of consumers to receive paper receipts by educating the public about their numerous benefits, sustainability and safety.

Choose Paper was established by producers of paper receipts in September 2019. The campaign is initially active in the UK, France, Germany, USA and Canada. Resources available include: consumer research, facts booklets, information sheets on key topics, videos and infographics. The campaign targets both consumer and business audiences through a combination of digital advertising, social media, PR and print advertising.

*About the research

The survey was conducted in April 2019 by the independent research company Toluna. The survey was implemented using an online panel of 8,883 consumers across Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the US. The sample sizes were statistically representative of age and gender in each of the surveyed markets. Phrases such as “consumers believe” or “consumers agree” are based on those respondents which either answered Strongly Agree or Agree to questions in the survey.

Endnotes/references

i. A 2019 survey conducted by global polling company Toluna of 6,375 consumers throughout France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Sweden and the UK

ii. Research by Two Sides North America in 2018 based on statistics by Berners-Lee, M., 2010; Radicati Group, 2015; EPA, 2018.

iii. CEPI, 2018; United Nations FAO data, 2005 – 2015