



# 7 Key Insights into consumer expectation for packaging - Nordics

By DS Smith & Toluna





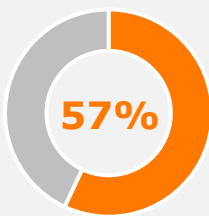
**DS Smith has conducted research to understand Nordic consumer's perceptions and expectations of packaging when shopping both in store and online, as well as what drives sustainability perceptions and how they react when they receive unsustainable packaging.**

Together with online community platform Toluna, we asked more than 2,000 consumers\* from Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland a number of questions on retail, packaging and sustainability. We are happy to share the results and learnings with our customers in this report.

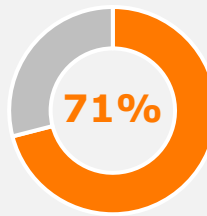
\*2,012 talking to consumers

## Sustainability retains importance in Nordics, despite current global financial uncertainty and/or cost of living pressures

Over half of all Nordic consumers have made a conscious decision to buy a product that is more sustainably packaged than others, while 7 in 10 consider it important when purchasing in general:



Have made a **conscious decision** to buy products that are more **sustainably packaged**



List factors that relate to **sustainable packaging** as **important when purchasing products** in general

Ordering products with unsustainable packing can also have a **detrimental impact on people's wellbeing**:

- **1 in 3** online buyers **feel guilty** about ordering products that are packaged unsustainably
- **57%** agree to sometimes **feeling overwhelmed** by the amount of packaging that items arrive in.

Information plays a crucial role as people look for it during all stages of product purchase



Look for information relating to packaging when buying products



This rises to **85%** in Finland, where it is most important



Look **before they even head to a store**



Look **while buying in a store**



Look **at home** either **when using** or **after using** a product



On the packaging itself is where most people (62%) expect to find information relating to sustainability, highlighting the need for **clear messaging to be incorporated into the overall design of packaging**



Sustainable packaging is still a major concern for Nordic consumers and they expect you to demonstrate your credentials on the packaging itself

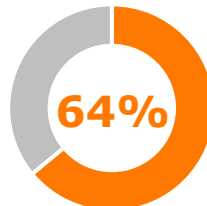
eCommerce continues to play a prominent role among Nordic consumers, who have a desire for info to address sustainability concerns

93%

Currently **buy products online**



However, most Nordic consumers have experienced issues when it comes to the sustainability of packaging they have received when buying online.



Have purchased products they believe were **packaged unsustainably**

Such is the importance of sustainable packaging within eCommerce, half (52%) of all online shoppers **would like to know about the sustainability credentials BEFORE they even buy a product online**, and it is even more important for those living in Sweden (55%) and Finland (58%).

Furthermore, almost 4 in 10 Nordic consumers **would like to know if the same packaging can be used to return items bought online**, if required.



**Information** around sustainability could now be considered just a simple hygiene factor – it is what consumers **EXPECT** from all the companies they buy from. Information relating to sustainability should be **available at point-of-purchase** online, as well as **summarised on the packaging** for later review.



## Recycling & reducing the amount of packaging and are the areas of most importance to Nordic consumers



**71%**

Say they want to buy products packaged in as **little material as possible**



**33%**

Say it is important that the products they buy come in the **minimum possible amount of packaging**

### When it comes to the actual packaging, recycling is the area of highest importance.

Recycling overall ranks above all other sustainability attributes when it comes to packaging. Consumers place greater importance on the packaging being **recyclable**, possibly driven by the emotional desire to be in control and have personal influence on the journey the pack takes. However, being **made from recycled materials** still holds significant importance.



**31%**

Say it is important that the products they buy are **packaged in recyclable materials**



**24%**

Say it is important that the products they buy are **packaged using recycled materials**



Importance of being **packaged in recyclable materials** rises to **36%** in Finland, where a range of other attributes also score higher – there is a pattern of sustainability concerns being more prominent in this market compared to other Nordic countries.

### However, zero plastic is still an important area for some Nordic consumers, as it can aid them in their mission to recycle more waste:



**16%**

Say it is important that the products they purchase are **not packaged in plastic**

Meanwhile, the messaging '**Zero plastic**' tested as the 4<sup>th</sup> (Finland & Denmark) or 5<sup>th</sup> (Norway & Sweden) **most compelling sustainable message** tested on example packages, out of a total of 27 messages.



Reducing packaging waste should always be your number 1 priority, while all packaging you send to customers should demonstrate the ability to be recycled

Furthermore, zero/less plastic is the area where most people are likely to follow their convictions and take action – the smallest say/do gap



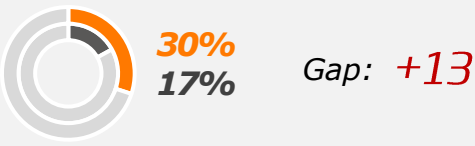
Say it is important



Make conscious decision to buy

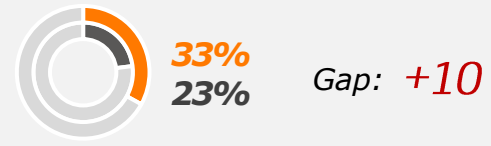
**Packaged using hygienic packaging:**

*Packaging is produced and sealed in a clean environment using materials and methods that preserve the purity and safety of the product*



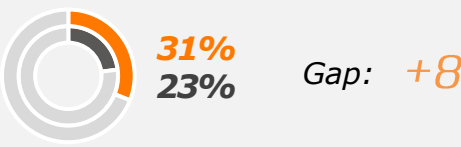
**Minimum possible amount of packaging:**

*Packaging is made so that there amount of materials is as less as possible*



**Packaged in recyclable materials:**

*Packaging is made of materials which can be recycled after using*



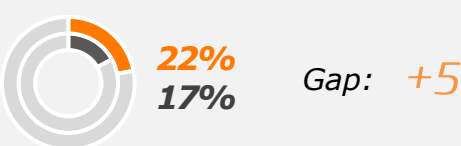
**Packaged using recycled materials:**

*Packaging is made of materials which are already recycled*



**Made using sustainably sourced materials:**

*Packaging is made of materials which are sourced in sustainable way*



**Not packaged in plastic:**

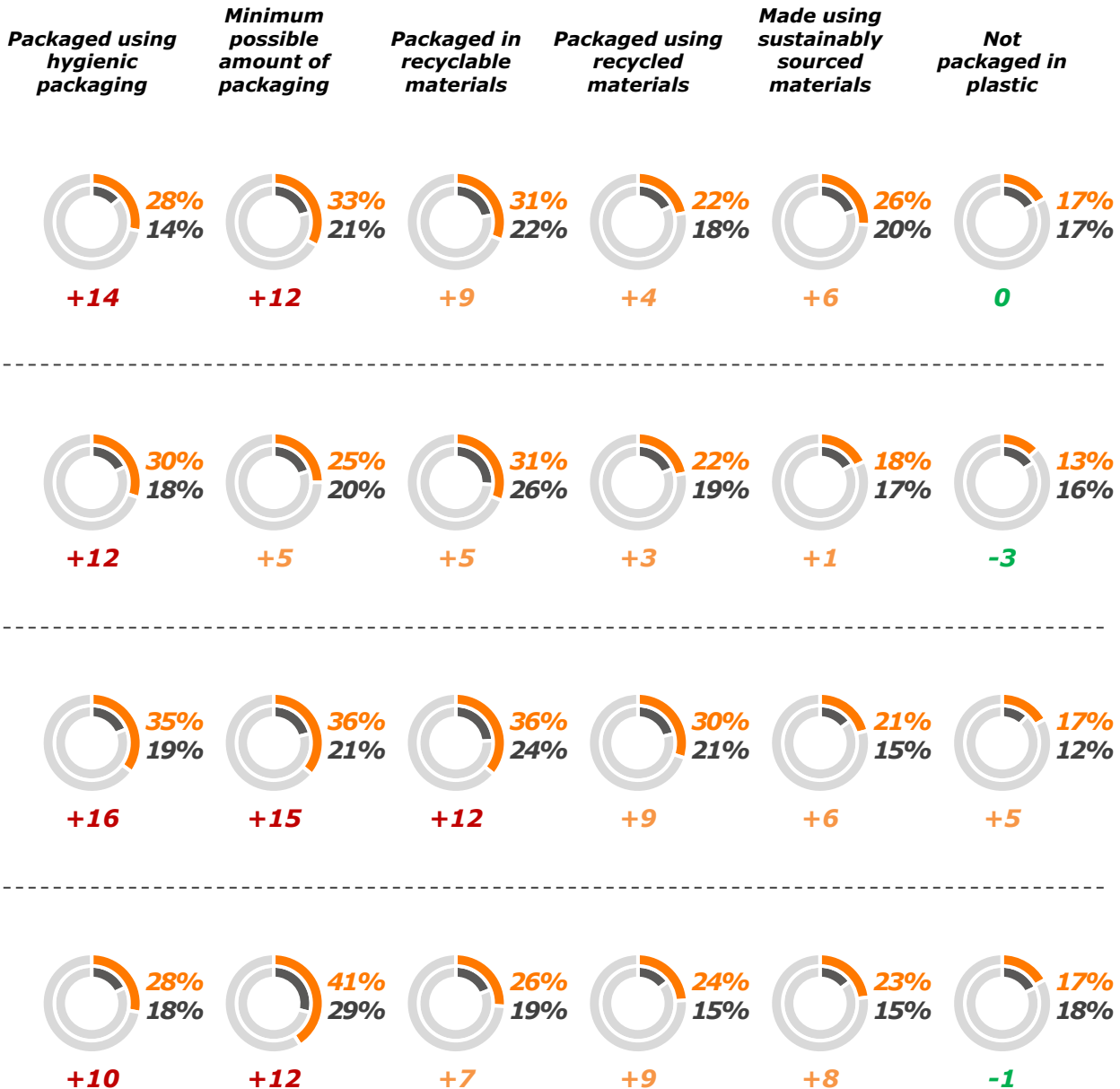
*Package is made of materials which has not plastics*



Where possible, reduction of plastic will resonate with those shoppers who are most likely to boycott companies that use it unnecessarily.

Of all Nordic markets, Finland generally has the highest say-do gap , particularly when it comes to plastics.

 Say it is important     Make conscious decision to buy



While Finish consumers are more likely to say sustainable features are important, the smaller say-do gap shows there is potentially a lack of opportunity for them to follow their convictions



When people receive packaging they do not consider to be sustainable, they are prepared to reduce spending, or even stop buying, from shops



**1 in 5**

have **stopped buying from a website or company** online as a result of unsustainable packaging

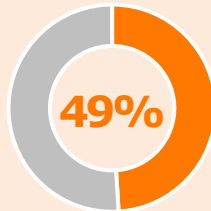
While...



**1 in 3**

have consciously **bought less** from a company as a result of unsustainable packaging

As a result...



of Nordic consumers claim they would be willing to **change where they shop** if it meant they contributed towards **less packaging** being used.

Furthermore, people are also taking action verbally...



**16%**

have **made a complaint** directly to a company when they received unsustainable packaging

**14%**

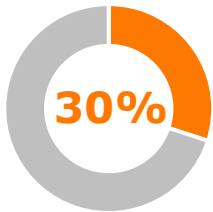
have made a **posted a negative review** when they received unsustainable packaging

Reputation starts to become key, as we observe 1 in 4 (27%) saying they currently avoid ordering from websites they know to have too much, or unsustainable packaging – avoiding negative reviews or bad word of mouth when it comes to sustainable packaging could make all the difference when looking to gain new customers.



The term 'Circular' packaging is not as familiar to Nordic consumers as 'Reusable', however both descriptions are interpreted similarly

### Understanding of circular packaging is lowest in Denmark



of Nordic consumers have heard of, seen or read about **Circular packaging**:



Finland

39%



Norway

34%



Sweden

30%



Denmark

16%

While awareness of circular packaging is highest in Finland, so too is awareness of all other types of sustainable packaging, further highlighting greater knowledge and understanding in this market. Meanwhile in Denmark, the low awareness is behind all other packaging types.

### Reusable packaging is a much more familiar concept

67%

have heard of, seen or read about **Reusable packaging**

40%

have heard of, seen or read about **Sustainably-sourced packaging**

32%

have heard of, seen or read about **Carbon-neutral packaging**

However, there is overlap when it comes to comprehension of both:



#### Circular Packaging:

52% believe it means to be **recyclable** and can be **made into something else**, while 40% believe it **uses less materials, reuses or recycles** as many times as possible and restores nature'



#### Reusable Packaging:

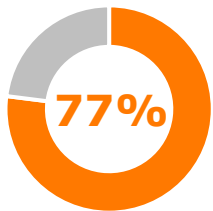
60% believe it means it **can be recycled** and **made into new packaging**.

Overall, there is a **high level of overlap** in how consumers interpret both concepts, while use of different language could be misunderstood.



Consumers need clear and concise language to explain the sustainable credentials of packaging – if they do not understand your description, it may impact their perception of you

**Beyond packaging, local production is the most important production factor in Nordic markets, especially Finland**



List factors that relate to **sustainable production** as **important** when purchasing products in general



This rises to **83%** in Finland, where it is most important

**The most important aspect is production in their own country – again, most important in Finland:**



**40%**

say it is important that products they buy are made or produced **in the country they live in**



Finland

**48%**



Sweden

**39%**



Denmark

**40%**



Norway

**34%**

**However, made using sustainable materials is also of considerable importance:**



**34%**

say it is important that products they buy are made or produced **using sustainable materials**



Finland

**42%**



Sweden

**37%**



Denmark

**28%**



Norway

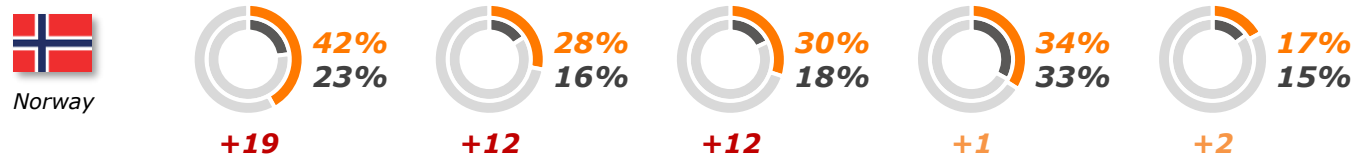
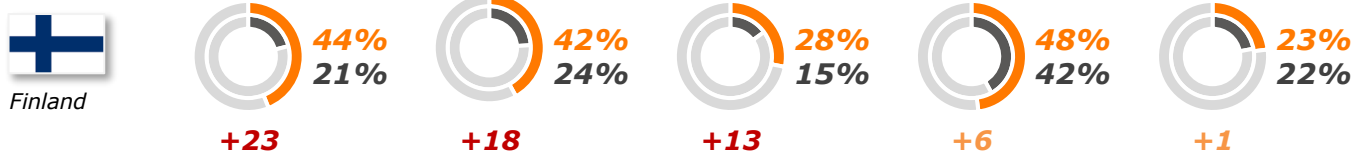
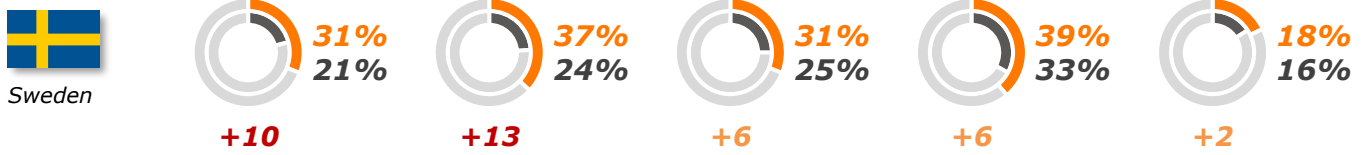
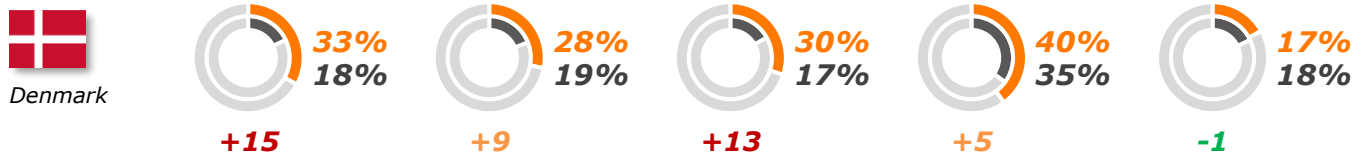
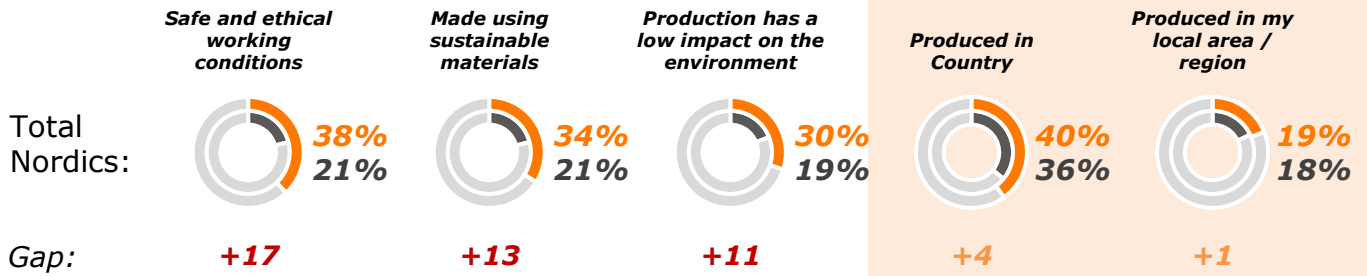
**28%**

As well as these production attributes being important to people in Nordic markets, many follow this up by claiming they have made a **conscious decision to buy products that are produced locally**, or in a more sustainable way than others



As well as being considerably important, local production (both country and local region) is also the area people are more likely to act upon

Say it is important    Make conscious decision to buy



Wherever possible, always showcase any parts of the production process which will contribute towards the feeling of customers supporting their local economy

# Key takeouts

1. **Sustainability retains importance** in Nordics, despite current global financial uncertainty and/or cost of living pressures



Sustainable packaging is still a major concern for Nordic consumers and they expect you to demonstrate your credentials on the packaging itself

2. eCommerce continues to play a prominent role among Nordic consumers, who have a **desire for info** to address sustainability concerns



Not clearly communicating the sustainability of your packaging online could affect your conversion to purchase

3. **Recycling & reducing the amount of packaging** and are the areas of most importance to Nordic consumers



Reducing waste should always be your number 1 priority, while all packaging you send to customers should demonstrate the ability to be recycled

4. However, **zero plastic** is still an important area for some Nordic consumers, and has the **smallest say-do gap** of all pack related areas



Where possible, reduction of plastic will resonate with those shoppers who are most likely to boycott companies that use it unnecessarily

5. When people receive packaging they do not consider to be sustainable, they are prepared to **reduce spend**, or even **stop buying**, from shops



Your reputation is at stake when it comes to packaging – if you don't meet consumers needs you could lose both current and future customers

6. The term 'Circular' packaging is not as familiar to Nordic consumers as 'Reusable', however **both descriptions are interpreted similarly**



Consumers need clear and concise language to explain the sustainable credentials of packaging – lack of understanding could impact their perception

7. Beyond packaging, **local production** is the most important production factor in Nordic markets, and most likely to consciously influence purchase



Packaging alone is not enough to satisfy everyone – there is a need to ensure & communicate that all parts of the production journey meet consumer needs

For more information on how DS Smith can help you meet customers needs within innovative and sustainable packaging, please contact: +45 72 14 91 00 or visit our website: [www.dssmith.com/da](http://www.dssmith.com/da)