

Analyzing Industry Perceptions of Biobased Plastic Packaging Products

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Fossil-based plastic packaging has been related to issues such as high carbon footprint, human and animal health and safety issues, pollution related to waste management. Due to these issues and the public and political pressure, innovative alternatives for packaging such as the bio-based plastic packaging are being produced and promoted. Even though bio-based plastic packaging products have some advantages over conventional plastic packaging and seen as sustainable alternative products, they also create economic, environmental and social sustainability issues. There is a growing literature on these sustainability issues and the criticism towards biobased plastic packaging increases. How the sustainability professionals or managers working in the industry manage these issues depending on how they perceive them. The aim of this study is to firstly analyze industry stakeholders' knowledge of the sustainability issues of biobased plastic packaging that are being discussed in the literature, secondly to analyze how they make sense of the sustainability of their products and thirdly to explore their archetypical responses to these issues. Semi-structured interviews are conducted to 14 international companies working in the biobased plastic packaging sector in different supply chain stages and interview transcripts are analyzed through discourse analysis. The paper builds on a comprehensive critical sense-making analysis of the interview data supported by the secondary data sources such as company websites. The results of the study show that most of the interviewees are aware of the sustainability issues that are being discussed in the literature. The results also indicate that there are great variations on how interviewees perceive these sustainability issues and how they make sense of the sustainability of their products as well as how they take actions to tackle these issues. 3 archetypical responses are found in the main classifications of how they make sense of their products: defensive, pragmatic and strategic. 6 main responses were found on how they manage these sustainability issues.