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Consumer Affairs

'Greenwashing' the market

While Israeli manufacturers have been slow to catch on to the trend to make products eco-friendly, many have introduced token 'ecological' items in an effort to spruce up their image

By *Rina Rozenberg*

The green trend has gone mainstream, even if the only real change is a switch from plastic to cloth packaging. "Ecological items" are all the rage, but they tend to be tokens in the industry: Crocker's winter collection, for example, featured a limited edition of denim pants made from organically grown cotton.

"I don't think there are any big manufacturers in Israel that are seriously promoting the green trend," says Ofer Zik, an industrial

designer who heads the Department of Industrial Design at the Holon Institute of Technology. "Some companies are, but the whole process is still in its infancy."

However there are manufacturers whose entire production line is based on environmentally friendly components.

"If you don't believe such change is possible, remember that a few years ago it was very difficult to find organic vegetables, but now they are available all over," says Avi Yacove,

who owns Baby Organic, a local company that markets organic products for babies.

Despite the tendency to

their catalog of standard products.

"Green thinking can save a company money," says David Specter, a lecturer at

'Companies are becoming more aware of the marketing bonus inherent in saying they are green,' says industrial designer Ofer Zik.

assume green products are more expensive, it isn't always the case. Sometimes companies subsidize the cost of an organic product, if it is a single item in

Shenkar School of Engineering and Design and owner of the C4 design studio.

"Correct planning and design can sometimes result in a cheaper and sim-

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pler manufacturing process or a product that is easier to recycle.

"Environmentally friendly products also create a better branding image, and the company benefits from positive publicity and increased sales. In the long run, this means profits," he concludes.

In Israel, products that are defined as less harmful to the environment are eligible for a green seal of approval from the Environmental Protection Ministry and the Israel Standards Institute, which promotes

green consumerism.

The green seal also affords factories a good image and a marketing advantage by opening the way to international markets that have strict environmental standards that not all Israeli manufacturers are able to meet.

"Some companies try to 'greenwash' their products, claiming that they are environmentally friendly even if this is not true, because they figure 'green' is good for marketing and they have to do something, but they're not sure what," says Specter.

"When companies start manufacturing 'ecological' products," says Zik, "they don't always check if the entire process is environmentally friendly, but rather only the final product. I'm not saying that there are no truly ecological products, but companies are becoming more aware of the marketing bonus inherent in saying they are green and keeping up with the trend."

No standard

Unlike European countries, Israel has no manufacturing standard for

environmentally friendly products that obligates companies to use or avoid certain manufacturing methods.

In fact, each company does as it sees fit.

There may not be many ecological products on the market, but they do stand out, and there's hardly a product category without some ecological or natural alternative.

TheMarker collected a few examples and checked the price difference between these products and standard ones.

Fashion

Diesel jeans

What makes them green? They're made of organic cotton, manufactured using an environmentally friendly process. The pants have even been washed naturally, without chemicals. The tags on the jeans are made of paper and the buttons are coconut shell.

Available at: Diesel, Ramat Aviv

Price: NIS 1,100

Price of a similar, standard product: Identical Diesel jeans made of non-organic cotton also cost NIS 1,100



Nordic Point Columbia coat

What makes it green? Made of recycled polyester – from plastic beverage bottles (PET chips) – spun into fibers and used to make the materials and fabrics for green clothing. Available at: The Columbia concept store in the Mamila compound in Jerusalem and at camping stores.

Price: NIS 350

Price of a similar, standard product: A Steens Mountain polyester Columbia coat costs NIS 260.

Teko socks from Masaot

What makes them green? Organically produced wool that has not been processed with chlorine. Packaged in recycled paper.

Available at: Masaot stores

Prices: NIS 59-129

Price of a similar, standard product: Thorlo walking socks, from Australia, made of synthetic fibers that absorb perspiration cost NIS 80.



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Kitchen accessories

Sandwich bags

What makes them green? Unlike standard plastic bags, which biodegrade in 700-1,000 years and cause tremendous environmental damage, Nikol brand bags disintegrate in 12-18 months, biodegrading into non-harmful components. There is no difference in the strength or capacity of these bags, compared to other brands.

Available at: Supermarkets
Price: NIS 7.90 for 150 bags
Price of a similar, standard product: Sano Sushi sandwich bags: NIS 17 for 300 bags.



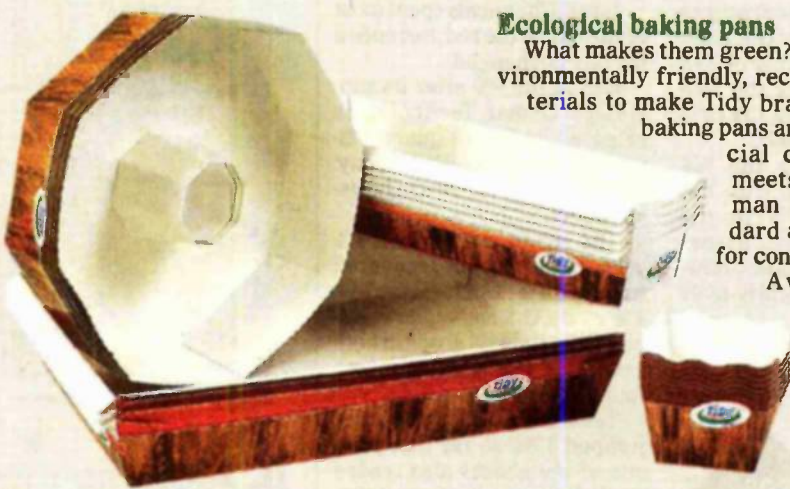
Ecological baking pans

What makes them green? Adama uses environmentally friendly, recyclable raw materials to make Tidy brand pans. These baking pans are made of a special cardboard that meets the strict German I.S.E.G.A. standard and is approved for contact with food.

Available at:
Health food stores

Price: NIS 19.90 - NIS 22.90 for 3 rectangular pans

Price of a similar, standard product: Similar rectangular aluminum foil pans: NIS 11 for 5 pans at Super-Sol.



Disposable dishes

What makes them green? Made from sustainable materials, such as sugar cane, whose production requires less energy, is non-toxic, approved for contact with food and quickly biodegrades in compost, significantly reducing the volume of garbage.

Available at: www.tinokyrok.co.il
Price: NIS 50 for 50 biodegradable plates; NIS 21 for 20 hot/cold beverage cups

Price of a similar, standard product: Disposable Super-Sol brand plastic dishes: NIS 11 for 50 large plates; NIS 10 for 20 hot/cold beverage cups.



Baby products

'Green' toys

What makes them green? Made from natural materials: lamb's wool, bamboo, organic cotton - with no chemical processing, lead, chlorine or mercury, which is sometimes found in plastic toys. Some of the toys are coated with beeswax, when necessary, instead of the conventional lacquer, and are painted in the primary colors using special non-toxic, lead-free paint. Parts that are glued together use non-toxic, natural adhesives.

Available at: www.babyteva.co.il
Prices: Handmade mobiles: from NIS 190; toy blocks, made and stuffed with 100% organic fabric: NIS 60; dolls stuffed with sand and lavender flowers: NIS 65.

Price of a similar, standard product - mobiles: from NIS 130; hand puppet dolls: NIS 30-60; miniature Disney character dolls: NIS 70



Baby clothes

What makes them green? Made from organically grown crops and fibers.

The cotton is organically fertilized and unsprayed and is not processed using chemicals that leave traces on the ground or on the cotton.

The fabrics are dyed with environmentally friendly dyes, so the color spectrum is limited.

Available at: Katanchik stores and www.babyorganic.co.il

Prices: Striped top: NIS 96; basic romper with hat: NIS 135; overalls: NIS 98

Price of a similar, standard product: At Fox Baby, striped top: NIS 60; basic romper: NIS 50; overall with top: NIS 90; hat NIS 40.

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Hygiene



Life nursing pads (made by Bellpap, Finland)

What makes them green? The company completely recycles leftover manufacturing materials. The pads are made of 97% biodegradable materials and 3% polyethylene fibers, which obviate the need for chemical adhesives and make the product completely biodegradable. Unlike other nursing pads, these pads are made of absorbent cellulose manufactured without chlorine, and defined as environmentally friendly.

Available at: Superpharm stores

Price: NIS 23 for 30 pads

Price of a similar product: Johnson & Johnson, 30 pads, NIS 23.

Abena disposable diapers, from Raz Progress Medical Supply

What makes them green? Manufactured without chemicals. Unlike standard disposable diapers, which take hundreds of years to biodegrade, these diapers disintegrate within a few years.

Available at: Eden Teva Market

Prices: Newborn size: NIS 40 for 28; Junior: NIS 76 for 42.

Price of a similar, standard product: Pampers size 1: NIS 29 for 27; Active Baby: NIS 68 for 62 size 3 diapers or 54 size 4 diapers.



Ecological, organic tampons by Natracare

What makes them green? Made from 100% organic, unbleached cotton, without rayon, glue, plastic, thinners, latex or fragrances. These tampons are made of biodegradable materials.

Available at: www.eco-gaya.co.il

Price: NIS 30 for 20 tampons.

Price of a similar, standard product: Tampax, with applicator, NIS 33 for 30; without applicator: NIS 30 for 20.

