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Presentation Title: Which Role Does Plastic Packaging Play During Grocery Shopping? A Qualitative Consumer Study At The Point Of Sale

Abstract: Regarding global pollution, the topic of plastic packaging avoidance is becoming increasingly important. Many consumers are aware of the problem and try to avoid plastic packaging while purchasing food. This is not always easy, because in addition to plastic packaging reduction, other selection criteria such as freshness, durability and price of the product are relevant for shopping in particular of food products. The aim of this study is to find out what direct and indirect role plastic packaging has for the selection of certain products and to what extent plastic packaging avoidance can be combined with the fulfillment of other relevant purchasing criteria. For this purpose, more than fifty observations and visual recordings of the selection process for specific food products (cheese, cold cuts, tomatoes and apples) in combination with short interviews were carried out at the point of sale. The data has been evaluated using a qualitative content analysis method. Initial results show that the general purchase criteria vary depending on the product, shop and different shopping situations (self-service and fresh food counter). It also turns out that plastic packaging can have different functions and relevance for the consumers depending on the specific product group. This study extends the state of research in qualitative analysis on consumer behavior in connection with plastic packaging. The results are useful for retailers and manufacturers to make product packaging more sustainable and user-friendly.