

POLLUTING BRANDS

An article in *Science Advances* entitled “Global producer responsibility for plastic pollution” <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.adj8275> says that “Brand names can be used to hold plastic companies accountable for their items found polluting the environment. The top five brands globally were The Coca-Cola Company (11%), PepsiCo (5%), Nestlé (3%), Danone (3%), and Altria (2%), accounting for 24% of the total branded count, and 56 companies accounted for more than 50%. There was a clear and strong log-log linear relationship production (%) = pollution (%) between companies’ annual production of plastic and their branded plastic pollution, with food and beverage companies being disproportionately large polluters.”

However, the only solution the authors can think of is “Phasing out single-use and short-lived plastic products by the largest polluters would greatly reduce global plastic pollution.”

This is a rather simplistic approach, because products have to be packaged in order to be delivered to the consumer and to be safely kept and used by the consumer. There may be some scope for reducing the amount of packaging, but supermarkets are already very cost-conscious and will not pay for excessive packaging. Some brand-owners have responded to pressure by moving away from plastic to other packaging materials such as paper or glass which have a worse Life-cycle Assessment. See <https://www.biodeg.org/subjects-of-interest/life-cycle-assessments/> and <https://www.biodeg.org/subjects-of-interest/paper-bags/>

Brand-owners are no more responsible for the irresponsible behaviour of their consumers who cause litter than are car manufacturers for bad driving. However, the car manufacturers can and do mitigate the effects of bad driving by incorporating safety features such as air-bags into their cars.

Brand-owners do not need to read the article in *Science Advances* to know that their consumers are causing litter on a massive scale but they take no effective action. If their promotion of recycling would solve the problem it would have been solved by now but it has not.

Brand-owners ought to know that there is a **simple solution called d2w** made by Symphony Environmental Technologies Plc, which they could incorporate as a masterbatch into many of their plastic products tomorrow, at little or no extra cost. This would mean that after their useful life the products would safely biodegrade without leaving microplastics, instead of lying or floating around in the environment for decades. If the Brand-owners have any doubts about this they should contact Symphony (www.d2w.net), whose scientists will provide them with all the assistance they need.