

The Product Journey

Deciding the right action to take on environmental ethical and social issues is no easy matter. With so many issues to consider and uncertainty about the effects, choosing a course of action can be confusing. For example is it better to reduce packaging to an absolute minimum when this could lead to an increase in damage or wasted products? Or, for example, is it better to use disposable nappies, which create waste rather than towelling nappies, which require the use of energy and water during washing?

When it comes to the complex business of developing, producing and retailing the wide range of products available under the Boots brand understanding the overall impact of products and making the right choices can seem daunting.

At Boots UK we've decided to take a lead from nature. In the natural world all living creatures follow a natural life cycle from "cradle to grave". At each stage of the lifecycle nature ensures that impacts such as waste is minimised and the individual organism interacts efficiently with others in the ecosystem. We've used this approach to develop the "Product Journey" – the lifecycle of our products, from conception, through obtaining the ingredients, manufacture, retailing, use at home and final disposal. At each stage we consider the effect on the environment and ensure that impacts are minimised across the lifecycle.

How it Works

The best way to achieve environmental and ethical improvements is by fully integrating sustainable development into product development from the start of development projects. This way it becomes a natural part of the process rather than an optional extra.

At each stage of the journey all impacts including elements such as biodiversity, energy, resource use, waste, and ethics are considered.

This ensures, for example in the case of chemical policy that this concept is applied to the total product including both ingredients and packaging:

Case Study – Botanics Shampoo

We believe that using the product journey model should be seen as an opportunity to innovate new products, build brand trust and minimise risk rather than act as a brake on product development.

Running a number of linked projects across a product range enables Boots UK to drive positive changes with greater effect. The fact that Boots UK has a vertically integrated supply chain, covering development, manufacture, (including bottle production) distribution and retailing for around 60% of its own brand products, provides an ideal test bed for improvement projects. This is illustrated by the development of more sustainable packaging for its Botanics shampoo range.

The first step was to investigate the use of post-consumer recycled PET for the bottles used for shampoo products.

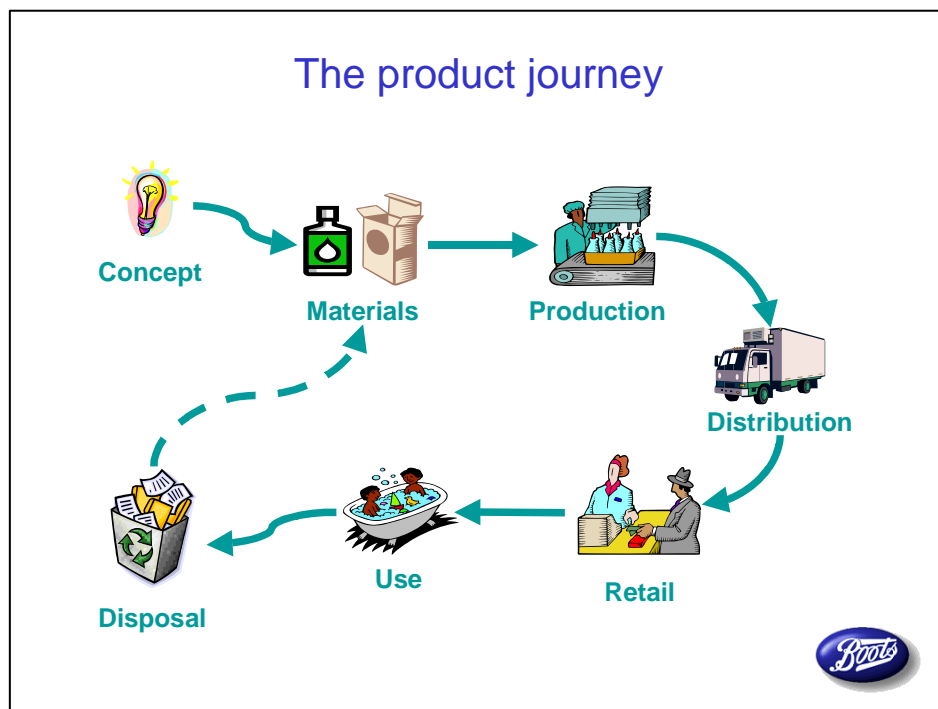
As part of a project funded by WRAP (the UK Waste & Resources Action Programme) Boots UK worked in partnership with London Remade and Closed Loop London to develop a scheme whereby plastics are collected from the waste stream, reprocessed and included in new bottles made in Boots UK's bottle-blowing facility. As part of this development the reprocessed material had to undergo rigorous migration and stability testing both at Boots UK and at the Fraunhofer Institute in Germany to ensure that there was no detrimental effect on product quality.

Another project involved the re-engineering of Boots UK's internal distribution system used to deliver products to around 2600 stores across the country. Reusable plastic containers have replaced corrugated transit packaging and the products are now delivered using a "singles to store" system, reducing stockholding levels. Further developments include the use of double deck trailers and the removal of intermediate warehousing operations.

At the same time the raw materials used in the shampoo formulation itself were being assessed for environmental impact in accordance with Boots UK's Strategy on Chemicals in Consumer Products.

Individually these projects delivered environmental benefits for the products concerned and enabled Boots UK to transfer the technologies to other product ranges. So for example the use of Recycled PET is now being developed in food products and with third party suppliers.

However it is when considered together as part of the overall Product Journey that the sustainability benefits can be best appreciated. The project we have undertaken on Carbon Footprinting with the Carbon Trust illustrates this and the initiatives we have described above have enabled us to relaunch Botanics shampoo with a 20% reduction in carbon footprint.



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