

Investigating the life-span of cork products through a longitudinal approach with users – Interim results



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Title of the Paper

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Form of Presentation

- Poster
- Presentation

Short Description (maximum 2500 characters)

Product lifetime extension is recognized as an important strategy to achieve sustainable consumption, for non-energy consuming products. Several factors are acknowledged to influence longevity, ranging from intrinsic product aspects to user related and socio-cultural dimensions of use. Materials are an influencing product feature, where technical and experiential aspects interact in the formulation of replacement decisions.

Cork is a renewable resource, the bark of the cork oak tree, and can be removed without a significant alteration of the tree vitality; these forests provide multiple important functions, such as preventing soil erosion and the protection of biodiversity, and therefore its use has an interesting potential in contributing to sustainability. And since this is a slow growing material, applications enabling long life-span solutions are key for the sustainable use of the resource.

Several cork products are available in the market, but no specific information with regard to their quality, performance and durability has been identified in literature; additionally, information on experience and attachment to products also contributes to the 'construction' of life-span; to enable an enhanced understanding of this, different aspects are investigated simultaneously. Furthermore, methodological approaches aimed at investigating these issues within design are scarce.

For these purposes, an explorative empirical study is being performed, with several cork products and users; 18 different products for household and personal use were selected from several producers, and including different cork materials. Succinctly, the study is longitudinal, and information is obtained at different moments in time (Cumulative UX); interviews are performed with the users, and photographs of the products are taken to register changes through time.

This work has 2 scopes or scientific contributions: it enables to further explore

conceptually the life-span of products, and to learn more about the material(s). In this paper interim results are presented: factors or aspects affecting the life-span of the cork products are identified, and material related issues appear interrelated and with potential to influence the life-span (e.g. surface aspects); additionally, several parameters (performance, quality, durability, aesthetic appreciation, and attachment) are evaluated, and their interrelations are explored with product cases.

Related with Lifestyle topic.