

Woolworths trials recycling vending machine in Cape Town store

In an effort to reduce packaging waste, Woolworths is piloting an integrated reverse vending machine in its flagship green store, Woolworths Palmyra in Claremont. Takeaway paper coffee cups with barcodes, glass and tin containers, Tetrapak packaging, and plastic bottles and containers up to the 2.25 litre size are all accepted by the machine for recycling.



2. Feroz Koor, Woolworths Holdings group head of sustainability, showing an interested Palmyra customer how the recycling vending machine works.

The vending machine, which identifies recyclability by scanning product bar codes, was tested out first over a six-month period at Woolworths' head office in Cape Town. Employees' recycling efforts helped refine and expand the database and the user experience of the smart machine to amass a database of recyclable packaging barcodes that includes both Woolies products and other popular brands sold elsewhere.

The trial follows the retailer's announcement in June to achieve zero packaging waste to landfill by 2022.

"It might seem like a fun innovation because it's so smart, but this is actually an important trial," says Feroz Koor, the Woolworths Holdings Group Head of Sustainability.

"Packaging plays a vital role in protecting products. The effort to reduce pollution is not just about finding the ways to minimise packaging in a responsible way; it is also about supporting consumers' in their efforts to recycle, which in turn, boosts the country's recycling industry."



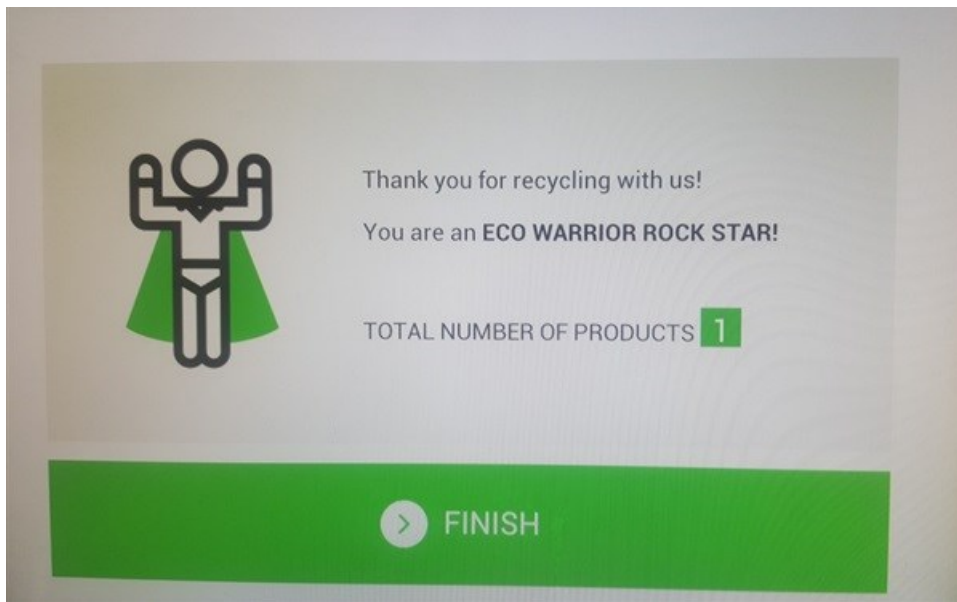
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How it works

Recycling vending machines are increasingly common internationally where consumers participate actively in daily environmentally-friendly practices. To participate in the waste reduction process, consumers log in as a user of the recycling vending machine via their mobile phones and deposit their clean, barcoded recyclable items.



As part of the scanning and sorting of recyclable items, the user immediately receives a SMS confirmation of their deposit and a congratulations on being an eco-warrior. A local recycler is alerted when the machine is reaching its capacity to collect the materials, and is an integral part of the process that ensures that recyclable packaging does not needlessly end up in landfills.



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"We are very proud to introduce our first in-store recycling vending machine. We know from customer surveys and social media conversations that there many customers concerned about reducing waste and we hope they will be keen to put the recycling vending machine through its paces so that it can be perfected and rolled out to more stores," added Koor.

"Our Palmyra store is where we have trialled the majority of our green initiatives so we are looking forward to enthusiastic customer engagement."