

FROM CARDBOARD TO BRAND

Massimiliano Luce

When the box stops being a cost and becomes a "brand ambassador." Here's how Botta EcoPackaging is redefining the boundaries of the sector.

In Italian manufacturing, corrugated cardboard continues to represent one of the most relevant industrial infrastructures. In 2023, Italian companies delivered approximately 7.68 billion square metres of corrugated cardboard, equivalent to over 4 million tonnes of material, confirming the centrality of the supply chain despite a physiological slowdown compared to post-pandemic peaks (EUWID, 2024). At the same time, the expansion of e-commerce is radically redefining the role of packaging. In Italy, the value of online purchases exceeded €62 billion in 2025, with over 35 million digital consumers (Netcomm – Politecnico di Milano, 2025). In this context, packaging is no longer merely a protective device: it becomes a physical interface between brand and customer. The unboxing moment has transformed into a marketing

touchpoint: the box communicates quality, values and identity even before the product is opened. It is,

to all intents and purposes, an integral part of the product itself. In this scenario, Botta EcoPackaging ([botta.it](https://www.botta.it)) has been able to anticipate the change, not merely producing boxes, but engineering solutions that protect both the product and the brand's reputation.

CIRCULARITY BY DESIGN: DESIGNING FROM THE END

This is the context in which the EcoPackaging division was born, established in 2018 within Botta EcoPackaging. The difference lies not so much in the material as in the design approach. The guiding principle is that of circularity by design: designing packaging starting from its end of life and working backwards along the entire cycle. Before designing a packaging solution, Botta EcoPackaging asks what will happen to it after opening, who will collect it, how it will be sorted, and whether it is compatible with the recycling streams actually available in the destination market. Only from that answer are decisions made on materials, structures and grammages. This approach strictly adheres to the waste hierarchy: preventing excess, reducing the use of raw materials and facilitating total recyclability. It is not simply a matter of "replacing plastic," but of engineering solutions capable of cutting superfluous volumes, optimising space in transport and drastically reducing the carbon footprint of logistics. Packaging is conceived as an integrated system with less material, but better distributed to guarantee superior protection. "The real challenge is not only to use a natural material, but to design

it in the right way," observes Lara Botta, Vice President of the company. "When packaging is designed to disappear or re-enter the production cycle without friction, it becomes a concrete resource for the entire supply chain."

1 The iQRcode transforms packaging into an interactive touchpoint for providing sustainability and logistics data

2 Digital integration transforms the box into a Brand Ambassador capable of communicating the product's identity

3 The Eco-Paper Cushioning Bag replaces plastic with a fully recyclable and protective paper solution



THE "BOX MODEL" AND THE GLOBAL PATENT HUNT

One element that distinguishes Botta EcoPackaging in the traditional market is the so-called "Box



4

Model." Rather than limiting itself to standard formats, the company acts as a global research hub. Botta EcoPackaging identifies and acquires licences and patents for corrugated cardboard packaging from around the world, making them available to its clients. This ability to "appropriate" international structural innovations allows it to offer cutting-edge solutions — such as tape-free tamper-evident closure systems or self-assembling inserts — that tackle complex logistical challenges without massive R&D investments on the part of the end client. Corrugated cardboard thus evolves from a standard support to a functional architecture, where grammages and flute types are surgically selected to maximise resistance while reducing weight, in synergy with the chosen internal protection accessories.

OPEN INNOVATION: THE BRIDGE BETWEEN RESEARCH AND MARKET

Innovation at Botta EcoPackaging is not an isolated process confined within the company walls, but the result of a solid Open Innovation strategy. This model is based on the conviction that progress should not derive solely from internal resources, but from the creation of a permeable ecosystem where ideas, technologies and expertise flow from outside inwards (and vice versa) through strategic collaborations.

Thanks to these synergies, the company is able to implement advanced digital solutions, such as the iQRcode — a proprietary system that transforms packaging into an interactive touchpoint providing real-time data on sustainability and logistics — and to experiment with cutting-edge cushioning materials, including mycelium.



5



6

4 The SMAU Innovation Award 2025 recognition rewards Botta EcoPackaging's Open Innovation strategy and technological excellence

5 The Botta family leads the company toward an increasingly sustainable future by combining tradition and innovation

6 The Botta EcoPackaging team works every day to transform corrugated cardboard into a strategic asset for sustainability.

Collaboration also extends to international industrial partners, with whom Botta EcoPackaging tests circular economy solutions in real distribution contexts to ensure their operational effectiveness. This strategic openness has allowed the company to position itself at the technological frontier, as demonstrated by the SMAU Innovation Award 2025 and the finalist position at the Packaging Europe Sustainability Awards 2024 for the Eco-Paper Cushioning Bag. Being at the centre of this network means transforming the role of supplier into that of strategic partner: Botta EcoPackaging does not simply offer packaging, but high-level technical consultancy grounded in objective data and emerging trends, intercepting market developments before they even become industry standards.

E-COMMERCE AND REPUTATION: THE RISK OF "GREEN-CLASH"

With an e-commerce market that in Italy will exceed €62 billion in 2025, packaging has become the first physical point of contact between brand and consumer. This has generated a new critical issue: reputational risk.

Many companies invest millions in sustainability communication campaigns, but if the customer receives the product wrapped in excessive layers of single-use plastic or inside an obviously oversized box, brand perception collapses instantly. This "clash" between the promise of sustainability and the real experience generates a loss of trust with heavy economic repercussions.

The Unique Selling Point of Botta EcoPackaging lies precisely in the ability to align these two worlds. Technical expertise in paper combines with sensitivity towards marketing and communication: packaging becomes a coherent "Brand Ambassador," capable of inspiring the consumer and reflecting the company's vision through the unboxing experience.

BEYOND THE MATERIAL

In a mature sector, Botta EcoPackaging demonstrates that innovation does not necessarily come from the discovery of new rare materials, but from the intelligent and engineering-driven use of those we already possess. Corrugated cardboard, supported by circular design expertise and a vision open to global innovation, confirms itself as the most fertile tool for the ecological transition of Italian manufacturing. Designing better to waste less: it is not only an environmental imperative — it is the new frontier of industrial competitiveness. |