

## AT A GLANCE

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- Incorporation:** 2020
- Sector:** Waste (plastics) to resources
- Website:** [www.thinkecovia.com](http://www.thinkecovia.com)
- Stage of Startup:** Pilot demonstration
- Stage of Product:** In-market
- Customer Focus:** B2B, B2C
- Funding:** Friends, Family and Savings



**Dhwani Mehta**

As an economist, Dhwani was drawn to the reuse economy. An entrepreneurial family background gave her an edge and also gave her the experience and insights the conviction that a startup with the right business model can create a tremendous impact. Through Ecovia, she aims to eliminate single-use plastic packaging, by incentivizing all stakeholders involved.

## ABOUT

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Ecovia is a packaging-as-a-service company that upcycles used billboard banners and recycled plastic polymer to make reusable packaging for e-commerce and hyperlocal deliveries. It has successfully completed its pilot in Surat and is geared to scale up to metro cities.

## THE CONCEPT : PROBLEM & SOLUTION

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Growth in e-commerce sales has led to a significant rise in packaging waste. Statistics show that out of the entire plastic production since 1950, only 9% has been recycled, with the rest, polluting the water bodies and the land. This is where Ecovia comes into the picture with India's first circular model of reusable packaging to help businesses switch completely from single-use plastics. Ecovia is a tech-enabled and returnable packaging solution offering end-to-end management of reuse cycles.

## PRODUCT/SERVICE

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At Ecovia, bags are made out of used billboard banners and strengthened with recycled polyester fibers that are extracted from used plastic bottles. These bags are customizable, sturdy and can be used 120-150 times. The upfront cost of bag can be recovered after 2 cycles of bag reuse.

Ecovia works on a reusable packaging-as-a-service model for ecommerce and hyperlocal brands. . The end users are incentivized to return the packaging at drop off points in exchange for exclusive rewards.

## CUSTOMERS

To scale operations, widen the reach, and ensure a better return of the bags, Ecovia is looking to partner with:

- Local brands and e-commerce aggregators
- Third-party warehouse companies
- Last-mile logistics partners, to monetize the drop off the network by facilitating deliveries and returns
- Society management companies like Mygate and Resident Welfare Associations for a higher rate of collection at source

It is a two-way deal as the drop-off points experience greater footfall and Ecovia gets the bags back for the next cycle.

Their model was validated with a pilot in Surat where Ecovia acquired 10 clients and 3 event partners. They had 600 bags in circulation and achieved a 63% return rate with their 70+ drop-off points.

## VALUE PROPOSITION

- Ecovia with its unique operations model enables the higher material cost to be balanced by lower packaging cost as a result of its reusability upto 120 times
- With their pay-per-use model, the need for working capital and storage costs is reduced
- Ecovia's packaging is sturdy, size-adjustable, and collapsible thus reducing the chances of damage to the product in reverse shipping cycles.

## SUPPLY CHAIN

Ecovia started out by producing bags, reusable up to only 50 times. These were created from flex material sourced from shops that manufactured banners, classified as waste due to their high chlorine content. Later, Ecovia's team came across another raw material – polyester thread, derived from waste plastic bottles. Its sturdy nature made a packaging material longer-lasting thereby increasing the reusability of the bags up to 150 times. Ecovia buys this material directly from the production units that recycle waste plastic bottles.





## IMPACT

Ecovia has a two-fold environmental impact.

- By upcycling waste flex-banners and plastic bottles, waste is prevented from going into landfills or oceans (1 metric ton banners for every 4000 packages by an estimate).
- Single-use packaging is replaced. One Ecovia package has the ability to eliminate the need for a hundred single-use packages.



## FUNDING

Currently, Ecovia is bootstrapped but they are actively looking for grants and investments to support scaling of their operations across 3 cities in India and help build a stronger team.

## CHALLENGES: HURDLES & LESSONS

Ecovia's inception clashed with the pandemic. . Even though their operations were immediately impacted, they used this time to build capacity and strengthen their business model. They focused on increasing business connects and reaching out to mentors that Dhvani believes hold the key to business success. With their disruptive business model, they aim to bring a behavioral change in the consumer mindset. The major hurdle is low willingness to return the bags. The success of this model depends on how well Ecovia manages this. They are continuously experimenting and revising their business model to focus on incentivizing all the stakeholders for higher success.

To make their scaling easier, Ecovia is looking to onboard e-commerce giants and last-mile organizations as clients. Being the first reusable packaging brand in India the key is to onboard early adopters who can help revolutionize the packaging industry. With their intense focus on networking, they are connecting with brands across the country to make this possible.

## WHAT'S NEXT

As a natural step after their successful pilot in Surat, Ecovia is now gearing to scale in metros. They are looking for collaborations with other brands to achieve this circularity.