

# *Mimica*

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transforming the everyday

Mimica Touch is a temperature sensitive tag that indicates food freshness. The tags change in texture as a product expires, allowing users to identify by touch whether their product is safe to eat. Solveiga Pakštaitė is the founder of Mimica and inventor of the Mimica Touch tag. She describes how her work led her to invent Mimica Touch.



**SP:** I studied industrial design at Brunel University. This was my final major project. I was initially interested in helping people with visual impairments to manage their food and access healthier options. Currently, our main indicator of freshness is a printed expiry date. That discourages people with visual impairments from buying fresh, shorter life foods because they can't easily judge freshness.

But really, those dates don't serve anyone. The vast majority of the food - roughly 60 to 70 per cent of wasted food is still edible. The dates are very conservative. They represent the spoilage date in the worst-case scenario, i.e., if the food is stored at the incorrect temperature. Producers can't guarantee it will be stored correctly so that's the only option. Mimica tags respond to storage conditions, so they're far more accurate.

*You're looking to engage retailers. Why would they be interested in increasing shelf life and reducing waste? Doesn't more waste at home mean more sales?*

**SP:** A huge amount of the food waste takes place in-store. Currently, the value of in-store waste is double that of actual profit margins so it's a huge loss. If products have a longer shelf-life, they have more time in which they can be purchased.

Short-dated food is also less likely to be bought as customers actively search for products that last. Customers will buy smaller amounts because they know the food might go to waste. Extending shelf life will actually increase fresh food sales.

**“We're in a very powerful position as designers. You can use harmful practices and harmful design or positive design for positive impact. Those choices will define the outcome.”**

### *What is the potential impact?*

**SP:** 60 to 70% of food we throw away in the UK is still perfectly edible. Our research shows that by extending shelf life by two days store waste can be halved. People will buy it before it expires and they are likely to buy more, knowing it will last. In the home those two days have an even bigger impact on how likely it is to be used. Those two days can reduce waste by 63 per cent. The difference it can make is huge. Even if we just extended shelf life by one day, we could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 0.3 per cent globally.

### *Why has design been important in the process?*

**SP:** Those numbers – the difference we can make just through small alterations – show how each design decision can be magnified when it goes into mass production. A considered design process is the key to having a much greater impact at the end. Diving in without that information means we'd never understand the issue or tackle it effectively.

“The work was based on talking to the right people and asking the right questions: what do people need and respond to? How much difference can I actually make? What is and isn't already being done?”



“Just by extending the life of perishable food items by one day, we can reduce just under half a percent of all carbon emissions on the planet!”



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