

TASTE, DON'T WASTE. Instigating Food Waste Reduction at the Household Level Through Behaviour Change Theory

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Abstract

Every year, millions of tonnes of food get wasted all across Europe, causing serious strains on the environment. As long as food goes to waste, the energy and resources used to produce, package, and transport the food go to waste as well. In terms of the UN Sustainable Development goals, reducing food waste can help tackle Goal 12.3, responsible consumption and production by aiming to halve global food waste by 2030. Therefore, within the European continent, several policies and actions are designed to tackle the issue of food waste both on the international level of the European Union as well as on the level of national and local governments. While food waste occurs at every stage from farm to fork, research has shown that, especially at the household level, the issue of food waste is problematic with domestic food waste accounting for 53.08% of all food waste produced in the European Union (Stenmarck et al., 2016). The following research, therefore, explores the awareness of food waste in households within five European countries (Belgium, Germany, Greece, Republic of Ireland, and the UK), and food waste prevention/reduction practices within the field of consumer behaviour before and during the COVID-19 lockdown. An online questionnaire was distributed to 250 respondents (50 for each country) from which data was analysed using behaviour change theory and the COM-B model (Michie et al., 2011). Across countries, the results show that the main reason for food waste is poor pre-shop planning by the participants. There also appeared to be a slight difference in shopping habits during the Covid-19 pandemic since respondents seemed to have more time to prepare shopping lists and were looking for foods that could last longer in order to postpone trips to grocery stores. Results of this survey can be used as a baseline for the creation of marketing tools based on behaviour change theory in order to help households in food waste prevention and reduction.

Keywords: household food waste, prevention, behaviour change theory, questionnaire study, Covid-19

References

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Acknowledgments: The authors want to thank Dr. Kieran Higgins for his help, feedback and support during the research.