

The role of retailers in influencing the pro-environmental behaviour of customers on household food waste

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Influencing the pro-environmental behaviour (PEB) of householders has been largely down to national government (e.g. energy ranking labels on products), local government (e.g. provision of recycling facilities) and NGOs (provision of information). However it is not just up to government policies - responsibility must fall to those who have control over particular contexts. Government interventions need to change patterns of individual such as reducing energy and waste from clothes. Other organisations such as companies can change smaller individual actions - such as washing clothes at a lower temperature shown by M&S's change of care label instructions on clothes to wash at a lower temperature, and Unilever's marketing that their laundry products are best in market at washing at lower temperatures.

More recently companies such in Fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and retailer sectors have started to take an interest in influencing the pro-environmental behaviour beyond their sphere of influence into households. This has been part of their proactive sustainable business strategies for creating efficiencies in supply chains, customer loyalty and attraction, product innovation, industry competitiveness and through co-operation with policy makers.

This paper presents the start of a project with Asda supermarket (part of Walmart) to develop, test and implement tools and methods to reduce their customers' food waste at home. Asda, one of Britain's leading retailers serving more than 18 million shoppers each week, has teamed up with the University of Leeds in a pioneering new programme to create more sustainable products for its customers and to reduce food waste. It is funded through the government backed Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) by the Technology Strategy Board and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and Asda. The partnership will see Asda become one of the first major retailers to develop new products, based on its customers concerns and expectations in the area of food sustainability.

The partnership will also develop tools to assist in large-scale behavioural change for customers in the area of sustainability - ultimately helping them to save money at home by reducing food waste. The project will; challenge the attitudes of Asda staff who place products on shelves; save Asda and its suppliers money; improve Asda's competitiveness in the marketplace; but more importantly it will reduce consumer waste that will leading to savings for customers.

The behaviour interventions will be based on a multidisciplinary "Wheel of Change" developed by Young and Middlemiss (2010)¹. This means enabling individuals to take action themselves, enabling the community the change individuals through a mixture of social pressure and support and finally changing the individual's context to reinforce and dictate action change. The fourth area is termed 'quality factors', focusing in data quality and avoidance of rebound and transfer effects. Initiatives need to encapsulate a package of approaches because individuals are not able to change themselves to achieve

environmental reduction targets because of the 'noise' from other sources which crowd out time and actions. We argue that it is dangerous to restrict pro-environmental behaviour change to just one measure type (whether economic incentives or voluntary measures) in an area where change is particularly difficult to stimulate.

The paper will review previous research evidence on effective pro-environmental behaviour around food in households before outlining proposed methods for validating appropriate tools and methods for the Asda context.

ⁱ Young, CW; Middlemiss, L (2012) A rethink of how policy and social science approach changing individuals' actions on greenhouse gas emissions, *Energy Policy*, 41, pp 742-747. doi:10.1016/j.enpol.2011.11.040.