

Targeting Youths' Intentions to Avoid Food Waste: Segmenting for Better Policymaking

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Abstract:

Food waste is a global challenge that raises many questions about the reasons and prevalence of this phenomenon in all sectors of the economy. The youth is regarded as a consumer group, which is the most prone to food waste. This paper aims to understand their food waste intentions to support tailored policies for policymakers, retailers, and other market actors. We applied the extended Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to find the relevant variables that affect the youth's intention not to waste food. Besides creating a general model, we divided the sample into segments differing in respondents' intentions to avoid food waste and specific socioeconomic characteristics. The data confirm significant differences between young women and men from urban and rural areas. Each of the segments was characterized by specific latent variables, influencing the intentions to avoid food waste. This segmentation allowed for developing policy recommendations that were tailored to each segment. It is a unique approach to differentiate the youth to unveil their specific food-waste intentions. Based on the above, we conclude that segmenting is a useful approach to the general TPB model, allowing for interesting insights. A fine segmentation is also a milestone to develop tailored policies, interventions, and communication on food waste reduction in rural and urban areas.

Keywords: food waste; youth; consumer attitudes; Millennials; gender; rural areas; urban areas

Conclusions:

Youth are perceived as one of the most wasteful consumer groups. They contribute significantly to food waste at the household level. Therefore, their food-related behavior and intentions to avoid it should be investigated with greater attention. There is also an urgent need to take actions that would influence them and lead to behavioral changes. Our methodology enabled the segmentation of this group of consumers. It was possible to distinguish slight differences between young women and men from both rural and urban areas. We identified specific latent variables, which influence their intentions to avoid food waste. Subsequently, we provided tailored policy recommendations for policymakers, retailers, and other market actors regarding food waste avoidance. Although our study has certain limitations and further research is needed, we could better target youth's intentions to avoid food waste. The differences presented should be triggered to deepen the research among other socioeconomic groups and acquire targeted knowledge to influence their food-waste intentions and behavior effectively.