

Food Waste | From Excess to Enough



How consumers handle food from surprise bags at home

Retailers and food service providers face the challenge of preventing food waste from surplus. A creative solution to this problem is the use of surprise bags (e.g., Too Good To Go). Surprise bags sell surplus food at a discount without revealing what is inside until pickup. While this initiative contributes to mitigating food waste in retail and food services, we do not yet know how it impacts food waste at home.

To understand if the surprise bags save surplus food from being wasted or just shift the waste problem to households, we examined how consumers handle surprise bag contents at home. We also considered factors that influence their behaviors, including how much they like the food and their motives for buying the surprise bags.

We conducted two studies with 346 users of Too Good To Go in the United Kingdom. We found that people tend to eat the food they like, share or throw away food they do not like, and store food that they feel neutral about. Additionally, sharing and disposal behaviors vary with the motives for purchasing surprise bags. For instance, those

with a strong motive to reduce waste or try new experiences are more likely to share the food, and those focused on waste reduction are less likely to throw it away.

This research shows that surprise bags can be effective in reducing the waste of surplus food and offers insights into optimizing such initiatives for less waste by considering consumers' food liking and purchase motives.



Source

Zhang, Y., van Herpen, E., Van Loo, E. J. Swallow, store, share, or squander? Impacts of food liking and purchase motives on how consumers treat food from surprise bags. *Under review.*

