

Invitation

You are cordially invited to the public defense to obtain the academic degree of

DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ECONOMICS

by Daphne Ribbers

**MOTIVATIONS (AND) MATTER: A DEEP DIVE INTO THE ROLES OF CONSUMERS' MULTI-FACETED MOTIVATIONS AND
MULTI-USE PRODUCTS IN MINIMIZING HOUSEHOLD FOOD WASTE**

Supervisors:

Prof. dr. Mario Pandelaere - Prof. dr. Maggie Geuens - Dr. Erica van Herpen

Tuesday, 23 April 2024 at 17:00

in the Faculty Board Room, Campus Tweekerken, Tweekerkenstraat 2, 9000 Ghent

Please confirm your attendance no later than April 12 by email to daphne.ribbers@ugent.be

EXAMINATION BOARD

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Abstract

Food waste constitutes one of the greatest societal challenges, with significant ecological, economic, and social consequences. Hence, there is an urgent need to gain a better understanding of how consumers can be encouraged to avoid food waste. Previous literature underscores the complex interplay between factors at the personal and product levels influencing consumers' food waste behavior. Although the literature has identified a multitude of drivers for consumer food waste at both levels, there often lacks in-depth investigation into key factors. This dissertation aims to bridge this gap by conducting a comprehensive exploration, at the individual level, of consumers' motivations to avoid food waste and its relationship therewith. Additionally, we investigate at the product level the impact of perceived product indivisibility on consumers' utilization of food items, with the potential to significantly decrease instances of food waste. Finally, by analyzing the interaction between personal motivations and perception of product indivisibility, we shed light on how motivations are pivotal in shaping consumers' handling of product (in)divisibility. Altogether, this dissertation offers a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior and strategies for effectively reducing food waste.

In Chapter II, "Development and Validation of the Motivation to Avoid Food Waste Scale," we examine the various motivations prompting consumers to avoid food waste. Prior research has demonstrated that motivations are crucial drivers of behavior change, yet limited attention has been given to motivations behind food waste. Furthermore, a suitable measuring instrument systematically mapping the various motivations for avoiding food waste is lacking. This chapter aims to address this gap by introducing the Motivation to Avoid Food Waste (MAFW) scale. This scale comprises 21 items and explores a wide range of motivations, including environmental, moral, financial, and social reasons. Three studies are presented demonstrating the internal reliability, test-retest reliability, nomological validity, and predictive validity of the MAFW-scale. This measurement scale serves as a valuable instrument for research and practical applications, such as segmenting target audiences and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions to reduce food waste.

Building upon the findings from the previous chapter, chapter III examines the impact of various motivations (environmental, moral, financial, and social) on household food waste. The findings indicate that, contrary to previous assumptions where financial motivations were considered dominant due to their direct personal implications, moral motivations are actually the strongest and sole predictors of reduced food waste. These findings emphasize the significance of recognizing and understanding the diverse motivations contributing to reducing food waste. They have important implications for practitioners, policymakers, and theoretical perspectives in the field of food waste, suggesting a prioritization of moral motivations in designing interventions, formulating policies, and developing theoretical frameworks to effectively address the pervasive issue of household food waste.

In Chapter IV, we investigate a less recognized cause of consumer waste: the perception of multi-usage products as single entities. It identifies a link between this perception and leaving unused utility, potentially leading to waste. Consumers' tendency to view multi-usage products as one entity, for instance, a bag of chips or a carton of milk as one item, hinders them from fully utilizing the multiple usage opportunities. This standard categorization impedes consumers' ability to consider multiple consumption moments, thereby increasing the likelihood of unused utility. Changing this perception by presenting products in differentiated units, such as mentioning servings on the packaging, can assist consumers in reducing unused utility and consequently possibly preventing waste. Furthermore, the research reveals that individuals committed to preventing food waste due to moral considerations are particularly sensitive to such interventions. This suggests that differentiated units may remind them of their motivation not to waste, thereby making them, for example, more inclined to repeatedly use already purchased products, ultimately leading to less unused utility and waste.

Curriculum vitae

Daphne Ribbers (°1996, Doetinchem) obtained her Master in Management, Economics, and Consumer Studies at Wageningen University, focusing on Marketing and Consumer Behavior in 2019. In 2020, Daphne embarked on her PhD journey in Business Economics at the Department of Marketing, Innovation, and Organization at Ghent University. Daphne's academic endeavors also took her to Vanderbilt University in the United States as a visiting scholar between April and September 2023. Her doctoral dissertation, "Motivations (and) Matter: A Deep Dive into the Roles of Consumers' Multi-faceted Motivations and Multi-use Products in Minimizing Household Food Waste," showcases her commitment to addressing the pressing issue of consumers' food waste. She has published papers in reputable journals such as *Global Environmental Change* and the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*. In addition to her research contributions, Daphne has presented her work at several international conferences including the Association for Consumer Research, the Society for Consumer Psychology and the AMA Marketing and Public Policy Conference, and she has given invited presentations for international organizations such as the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP).