

Waste prevention in practice: Confronting public discourses about reusing, reducing, and recycling with consumers' perceptions of wasting material possessions

Dominique Roux

University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne, Laboratoire REGARDS EA 6292

Marie Schill

University of Reims Champagne-Ardenne, Laboratoire REGARDS EA 6292

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Abstract

This research proposes a consumer perspective on waste prevention by examining how individuals cope with public discourses about reducing, reusing and recycling material possessions. We confront consumers' sayings and doings with three objectives put forward by public authorities about waste prevention: raising awareness, improving material efficacy, and promoting sustainable consumption. A qualitative-based methodology with 25 participants shows that waste is mostly equated with destroying and non-using objects, much less with buying as its primary trigger. Consumers also highlight the difficulty to fully optimize the use of their products as well as the lack of channels to recirculate unwanted, unused or broken things. Finally, they show that objects tend to stagnate in the home, a reality that is inadequately captured by public authorities through waste collection and recycling systems.

Keywords: *waste prevention; material possessions; public policy discourses*

Track: Consumer Behaviour