



PLAYBOOK

Reuse at the point of sale



→ Experiences, strategies and tips on how to make reuse the default in your catering business

**mehrweg.
einfach.
machen.**

Initiated by



project
together



Playbook at the ready, steady, go!

Caterers play a key role in reuse

In this playbook, we have summarised the scientific approach to our reuse nudging experiment as well as the nudging measures themselves, results and lessons learned. In doing so, we want to motivate and inspire you to take a proactive and creative look at reuse and preventing packaging, whether you have your own catering business or run a chain restaurant. The results of the experiment prove that caterers can influence and increase reuse utilisation rates at their own

stores by choosing scientifically acclaimed and pragmatic incentives (nudges). Together with large chain restaurants such as Burger King and IKEA Germany, we tested various incentives – which goes to show that even major companies are getting creative and taking the initiative when it comes to reuse.

Followers welcome

Even if not every nudge can be applied equally to every catering business, many measures can be adapted to prevalent framework conditions. We therefore strongly recommend, and encourage, fol-

lowing suit; we have summarised our findings in this playbook to help you on your implementation journey.

Who we are

The mehrweg.einfach.machen implementation alliance, the name of which is a play on words that translates to both “just reuse” and “reuse made easy”, is supported by German reuse association Mehrwegverband Deutschland, WWF Germany and ProjectTogether. Our aim is to pool forces across all social groups and, together with a

strong community of people of action, make reuse the new default.

This is just the beginning

In 2024, committed caterers and implementation alliance mehrweg.einfach.machen are staying on the ball when it comes to reuse. Caterers and sustainability managers at chain restaurants are all welcome to take part in our Reuse Learning Lab for Caterers and the Nudging Experiment 2.0!

What's next? p. 23

The implementation alliance launch.
© Anita Back

→ Getting started?

Do you want to make reuse the default in your catering business?
Join our Reuse Community or start your own reuse nudging experiment!
We are here for you:

↗ get in touch with us!
(Online form, German only)

We want: more reuse.

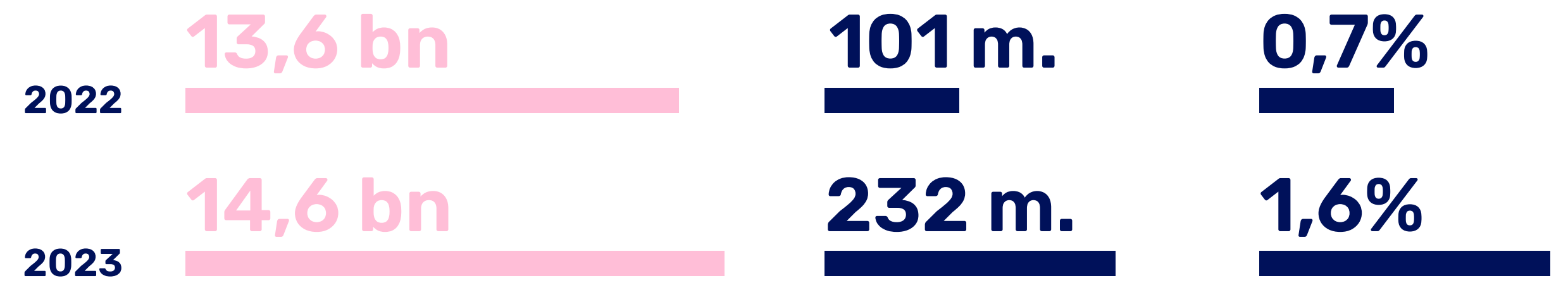


Fig. 1: **Single-use containers given out in Germany**
↗ Source (Germany only)

Fig. 2: **Reusable containers given out in Germany**
↗ Source (Germany only)

Fig. 3: **Reusable rate in Germany**
↗ Source (Germany only)

One year after the introduction of an **i obligation for catering businesses to offer reusable containers**, many businesses have still not implemented it sufficiently and in full. The effect of this obligation to save single-use packaging is thus extremely sobering and the utilisation of reusable packaging a niche phenomenon.

We wanted to know if it is possible to change the utilisation of reusables through initiatives on the part of the catering industry and with the aid of clever tricks at the point of sale – and we are delighted to share our findings with you in this playbook.

Learnings → p. 19

The challenge

The majority of people in Germany say sustainability is a major social concern.¹ At the same time, we keep making decisions that conflict with our own values and sustainability efforts. The phenomenon behind it is widely known: the intention-behaviour gap describes the discrepancy between what people say they are going to do and what they actually do. When it comes to sustainable consumption, and especially to choosing reuse, the gap between intention and behaviour is particularly pronounced.

90% of consumers would use reusables; only 18% do.²

This phenomenon is particularly marked when it comes to takeaways served in reusable containers and can be explained by a range of factors, including: time pressure; convenience; lack of incentive; and social norms that do not support sustainable behaviour. To bridge the intention-behaviour gap in sustainable consumption, we can encourage consumers to change their behaviour through **nudges → p.3**,

in other words, through targeted measures and incentives. This is where our reuse nudging experiment sets in.

The experiment

As part of the collective action project entitled “Reuse: The first choice”, the implementation alliance teamed up with eight German catering businesses at a total of 800 stores and went a step further than the obligation to offer reusables at catering businesses prescribes. Within the framework of the reuse nudging experiment, we asked:

how can caterers persuade consumers to choose reusables when ordering takeaways? Can targeted incentives at the point of sale influence the reuse rate? And if so, which type of incentive has a particularly positive effect?

To answer these questions, the community of caterers set out to test measures that promote

reuse at the point of sale. The implementation alliance initiated and accompanied the development of the **nudge catalogue → p. 5**, the mobilisation of caterers and the implementation and evaluation of the experiment; the alliance also created cross-company learning spaces and opportunities to exchange experiences and ideas.

Participating catering businesses

Burger King → **p. 7**
Haferkater → **p. 9**
IKEA → **p. 11**
Valora → **p. 13**
Foodtrucks United → **p. 15**
Zeit für Brot → **p. 17**

i The obligation to what?

In Germany, the obligation to offer reusable containers became effective on 1 January 2023 and is part of the **German Packaging Act** (“Verpackungsgesetz”, VerpackG). The obligation says that end distributors that sell food and beverages in single-use (plastic) packaging for immediate consumption and takeaways have to offer reusable alternatives as well. As a caterer, you can offer your own reusable containers made of, for example, glass, pottery or plastic or work with a company that offers containers in a reusable system, known as pooling services. No matter how you do it: more reusables mean less single-use packaging, and that in turn means less environmental pollution and fewer wasted resources!

↗ wegweiser-mehrweg.de (German only)

¹ <https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/themen/nachhaltigkeit-strategien-internationales/umweltbewusstsein-in-deutschland#:~:text=Der%20Schutz%20von%20Umwelt%20und%20%2E2%81%AO Klima%2E2%81%AO ist%20f%20ur,allerdings%20ein%20leichter%20R%20ckgang%20ab>

² <https://www.wpn2030.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Studie-Nachhaltigkeitsbewusstsein-2021.pdf>

Nudging customers to reuse – but how?

To make reuse the default in the takeaway field, consumer behaviour needs to change sustainably. Findings from behavioural research can help caterers and sustainability managers with this tremendous task, enabling them to introduce both pragmatic and effective measures at the point of sale which change consumer habits and direct them towards reuse.

The **i** reuse nudges were developed on the basis of findings from behavioural research with the aim of motivating customers to choose reusables instead of single-use packaging when ordering food and drink takeaways and to achieve a measurable increase in reuse rates.

The results of our experiment show that reuse nudges from our **catalogue p. → S. 4** can have other positive effects, besides potentially increasing reuse rates. For example, nudges were able to increase the visibility of the business's own reuse offer, strengthen practical experience with reusable containers within the company and help raise employee awareness.

i What are nudges?

Nudges are subtle yet targeted stimuli that encourage people to make certain decisions and change their behaviour in a predictable way. Today, nudges play a key role in business and trade to promote the sale of certain products or to help customers make healthier choices.

In the catering business, nudges can help customers make healthier and more sustainable decisions, for example by highlighting vegetarian dishes or by offering water as the default option instead of sugary drinks.

The options are limitless and for a nudge to be a success, context is key, as not every nudge can be transferred to other situations without adjustments.

Here, the proof of the pudding is truly in the eating – to find out if a nudge is actually effective, you have to test it extensively. We tested five reuse nudges at eight different catering businesses!



© Kathrin Tschirner

“Let’s be honest: we all value convenience and like to hold on to the tried and tested – including when it comes to reuse. Incentives, clear communication and transparency towards guests and employees are the key to success.”

Restaurant manager, Burger King

Would you like a nudge with that?

The nudge catalogue presents seven reuse nudges, from making reuse the default to a reuse challenge for employees.

The list is not exhaustive; other promising measures are just waiting for you to find them. In the first reuse nudging experiment, we were able to test five nudges. The **Case Studies** → p. 7 and **Learnings** → p. 19 of our partners at chain restaurants are there to help you implement nudges in your own business.

Reuse as the Default

The concept:

A “default” makes reuse the standard option, relieving customers of the need to choose reusables. Single-use containers remain an option; however, customers have to actively request them. As people like to take the line of least resistance, there is a higher chance that they will choose reusables.

How does it work?

Technical default at ordering terminals

Digital terminals are programmed so that reusables are the default option. Customers who want their order in single-use containers have to actively change the settings

Communicative default via service staff

With every order, sales staff always offers the product in a reusable container. Customers have to actively object to the reuse offer and intentionally choose single-use packaging

Zeit für Brot → p. 17

IKEA → p. 11

A Fast Lane for Reuse

The concept:

Immediate rewards help customers learn desired behaviours. A fast lane for reuse makes opting for reusables more appealing in the here and now: reuse shortens a user's waiting time.

How does it work?

Reuse-only checkouts and self-ordering terminals

Some checkouts and terminals are there exclusively for orders in reusable containers. If a customer wants to order products in reusables, they can use the priority line – just like at the airport.

Prioritising reuse orders on digital ordering screens

Numbers for orders in reusables are labelled as such on digital ordering screens and are “bumped up” the list.

Foodtrucks United → p. 15

Jump the Queue

The concept:

Customers are often unsure of whether they have to join the queue for orders when they want to return reusable containers. They decide against reuse to avoid additional waiting times. If a business makes it apparent that customers returning reusables are allowed to jump the queue, there is a higher likelihood that they will choose this option.

How does it work?

Introduction of a “queue-jumping policy” for returns

Customers who want to return their reusable containers take priority; they do not have to join the queue. Individual communication measures inform customers at the point of sale or when ordering.

Valora → s. 13

Burger King → s. 7

Reuse Challenge



The concept:

The order staff's attitude plays a decisive role in promoting reuse: they are in direct contact with your customers. Insufficient information as well as a lack of awareness around and visibility of reuse can lead to reuse falling through the cracks in stressful situations. A challenge motivates individual employees, teams and entire stores to more heavily advertise reuse.

How does it work?

Reuse Hero of the Month

The cash register system records the reuse order rate per employee within a store. Employees with the best, or the highest increase in, reuse rates are rewarded and made Reuse Hero of the Month.

Awarding stores

Headquarters initiates a huge reuse challenge among its own stores. Those with the strongest or highest reuse rate are awarded.

Foodtrucks United → p. 15

Burger King → p. 7

A Single-Use Fee



The concept:

Punishing undesired behaviours has a similar effect as rewarding desired ones. In terms of behavioural psychology, making single-use containers more expensive more effectively increases demand and utilisation rates than making reusables cheaper, due to aversion of loss.

How does it work?

Packaging fees based on percentage

Orders in single-use containers are given a packaging fee based on percentage (e.g. 10 percent of the order amount).

Fees by packaging format

A certain fee is raised for each item of packaging (e.g. 20 cents per cup, 50 cents per bowl).

Reuse Tickers



The concept:

People orient themselves by those around them, especially when they feel uncertain. If we suggest to customers at the point of sale that reuse is the social norm, there is an increased likelihood that they too will opt for reuse and/or bring their own containers when they next visit.

How does it work?

Absolute numbers (live ticker)

Reuse orders at all or single stores are summed up, and the total is communicated visibly.

Relative numbers (majority)

The share of reuse orders in percent at all or single stores is communicated visibly.

Indicating a trend

Using three data points (e.g. today, in one year, in two years), a trend towards reuse for all or single stores is displayed.

Reuse-Only Offer



The concept:

Immediate rewards help customers learn desired behaviours. A reuse offer is introduced that rewards users with exclusive products or discounts.

How does it work?

Reuse-only product offers

An appealing product or meal is sold exclusively in reusables. Customers who want to order the product or meal have to choose reusables or bring their own container. The product is shown with reusable packaging in advertising, as well.

Valora → p. 13

Haferkater → p. 9



Particularly successful nudge



Presumably particularly successful nudge (not tested)



Also suitable for customer-owned containers

→ Have you tried it?

Have you tried a nudge and seen a noticeable increase in reuse rates? Get in touch with us and share your success story:

Contact us by ↗ [mail](#)

→ Feeling inspired?

On the following pages, the catering partners that took part in the reuse nudging experiment share their experiences.

Reuse is king at Burger King

What motivated you to try the nudges?

We wanted to make reuse more attractive, both to our customers and our employees. With the Jump the Queue nudge, we wanted to ensure that our guests, who expect speedy service, weren't "punished" for returning their containers by having to rejoin the queue. In parallel, we ran a four-week employee challenge at our company-owned Burger King branches. Because one thing is certain: our employees' motivation and arguments are key factors for customers choosing reusables during the order process.

How did you proceed?

We informed district managers and restaurant managers of the new return service policy via internal communication channels – for our employees, we developed a comic that was easy to understand and provided details on the deposit system and the new policy in three steps. In addition, we displayed a notice that read "Jump the queue when returning" when customers ordered at digital terminals.

We used similar channels to communicate the challenge. The first prize was a hoodie with the slogan "Reuse is king", which aimed to strengthen the winning team's spirit and create a further touchpoint between the Burger King brand and reuse.

What did you learn?

There are a lot of internal and external factors that impact the effectiveness of nudges, and the degree to which they can be implemented. These include language barriers; a lack of understanding of deposit and reusable systems; or little awareness of the environmental impact of packaging. The challenge of passing on instructions on how to implement the nudges across many levels of the organisation right down to the cashiers should not be underestimated. Just because restaurant managers know a lot about reuse does not automatically mean that this knowledge and conviction extends to sales staff.

Jump the Queue → S. 5

Duration of the experiment

October to November 2023

Participating stores

760 restaurants

Reuse challenge → S. 6

Duration of the experiment

October to November 2023

Participating stores

145 restaurants

Key takeaway

49,000

Single-use cups saved during the experiment



Measurable effects

20%

more guests are aware of Burger King's reuse offer

x 2,5

Individual restaurants increased their reuse rate by 2.5 times during the challenge



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What we learned about the nudges

Jump the Queue

Proactive employees

In order for nudges to be implemented, and run, smoothly, it is necessary to ensure employees are briefed well so that they can proactively let customers know they can jump the queue.

Saving time a necessity

Being able to return reusables without having to queue is only an incentive if the restaurant actually does frequently have long queues.

Reuse Challenge

Need for communication

The prerequisite for a successful and effective challenge is that employees are well informed of contents and conditions. The degree of implementation heavily depends on the motivation and knowledge of restaurant managers and staff.

A promising measure

The effect of the employee challenge has been proved at restaurant level: individual restaurants were motivated by the challenge and increased their reuse rates by 155%. However, this had little effect on the rate across all branches.

“The right reusable concepts can contribute heavily to reducing packaging waste and thus to conserving resources.

That's why we are very much looking forward to optimising our reuse concept further for our guests and employees during Reuse Month.”

René Henke, Jr. Manager ESG & Sustainability, Burger King

i Burger King

Catering concept
Fast-food restaurant

Founded
**In the USA;
in Germany since 1976**

Employees in Germany
25,000

Restaurants in Germany
760

Haferkater proudly presents: The Reuse-Only Breakfast

Reuse-Only Offer → p. 6

Duration of the experiment

Mid- to late October 2023

Participating stores

12 stores

Key takeaway

10%

increase in customer-owned containers

How did you proceed?

First we developed and determined the framework for implementation – the period, the necessary communications for the campaign and the list of ingredients for Mehrweg-Kater, our reuse-only breakfast. Our Sustainability team then informed the branch managers at the participating branches about the experiment and the Reuse-Only Offer in face-to-face conversations. The most important rule: our Mehrweg-Kater was not to be sold in single-use containers..

What challenges did you face?

Our customers, who are travelling from A to B, and our employees all have limited time capacities at the point of sale. Having to download the Vytal app at the restaurant is therefore an obstacle to its use. In addition, many customers were not aware that they can bring their own containers for porridge – we can improve our communications in this context.

What experiences have you taken away?

The Reuse-Only Offer is a nudge that seems easy to implement and above all can help raise awareness among customers and employees. However, in order to have a measurable effect on reuse rates, the appeal and type of offer, as well as communication and visibility at restaurants, need to be thought through carefully and implemented accordingly. As always, the devil is in the details!

Measurable effects

75%

of the reuse rate is made up of customer-owned containers at some stores

2%

of customers chose the **Mehrweg-Kater** when ordering their porridge



© Marlene Limburg

What we learned about the nudges

Reuse-Only Offer

A range of effects

The Reuse-Only Offer is a good nudge to promote customer-owned and pooling service containers

Takes time

In our experience, few customers immediately opt for the Reuse-Only Offer. As the nudge takes a while to unfold an effect, we recommend planning sufficient time for experimenting.

A decisive incentive

A limited offer and an exclusive recipe did not provide enough incentive to choose a Reuse-Only Offer. We therefore recommend selecting a new item with greater financial incentive or a best-selling product that is only available in a reusable container.

Everybody's darling

The risk of a negative customer experience is low. Our observations during the experiment show customers largely have a neutral, and even positive, reaction to the nudge.

An extra nudge for own bowls

The nudge did not have a positive effect on customer-owned containers. We therefore recommend supplementing this nudge with other nudges and measures to encourage more customers to bring their own containers.

“We believe Haferkater has a responsibility to actively promote reuse and consistently uphold incentives for guests.

We only have a chance of getting reuse out of its niche if politics, operators and consumers work together.”

Anna Schubert, CEO, Haferkater

i Haferkater

Catering concept

Porridge takeaways and café

Founded

2014

Employees in Germany

50-200

Stores in Germany

23

Reuse as the new normal at IKEA

What motivated you to try the nudge?

We are used to being served drinks to take away in single-use cups. What impact does it have if we turn this process around and are offered reusables as the default when we order? Behaviour research and other experiments attribute a great effect to these “default nudges” – we wanted to find out whether we can confirm this hypothesis at our Swedish Bistros, and if consumers actually do tend more towards reusable cups if these are offered as the default packaging when ordering at a terminal.

What challenges did you face?

Our data analysis has shown that reuse rates both at experiment and control stores were not consistent and instead exhibited at times strong fluctuations, depending on the day of the week. At some experiment stores, reuse rates decreased heavily over time, after showing an initial increase when we introduced the nudge. We have not been able to clearly establish the reasons why, but we presume these lie in logistics, technology and communication.

What experiences have you taken away?

The main benefit of the predominantly technological implementation was the centralised and standardised switch, which allowed for high comparability between stores, despite the fact that the experiment was conducted nation-wide. Still, a smooth and simultaneous roll-out of the nudge at the ordering terminals required long-term planning and proactive internal communications to ensure we were able to keep an eye on everything at every stage, to persuade customers and employees alike and to meet the schedule. The nudge works particularly well if the corporate strategy already includes reuse targets and if there is a fundamental awareness of reuse at all levels of the company, so that you are not starting from scratch.

Reuse as the Default → s. 5

Duration of the experiment

May to December 2023

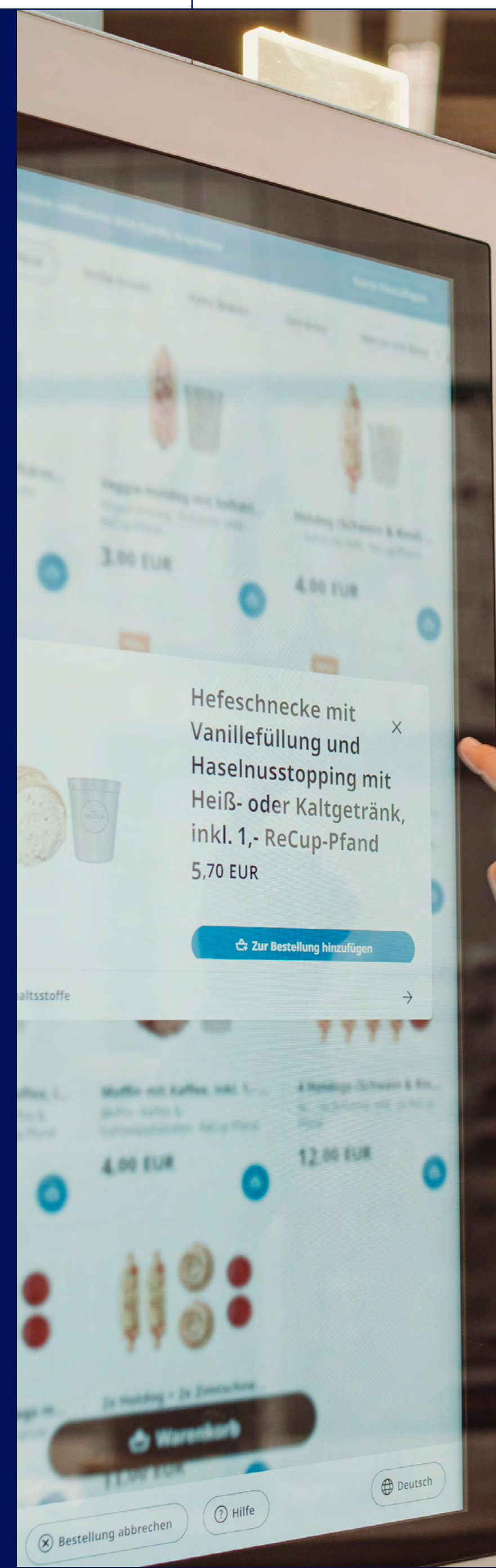
Participating stores

12 furniture stores

Key takeaway

12% → **36%**

Increase in the reuse rate during the experiment period



Measurable effects

80%

as opposed to a reuse rate of 5% at some stores

40%

reduction of single-use cups given out every day



© Marlene Limburg

What we learned about the nudge

Reuse as the Default

Wholly independent

The technological default does not depend on the situation or on the knowledge and motivation of individuals.

Best be well prepared

As the effects are tangible immediately after the nudge has been introduced, internal processes and logistics need to be ready to deal with the higher demand in reusables.

Advising barely possible

When using the technological default, it is not possible to make customers aware of the reasons behind the reuse offer and of how it is handled. Unlike the communicative default, the anonymous order process at the terminal does not create social pressure to choose reusables.

Deposit darling

Currently only works with deposit-based systems, and not with digital reusable systems.

“We are aware [...] of our responsibility and have tasked ourselves with keeping food and non-food waste to a minimum. For us, this experiment is a chance to team up with strong partners to demonstrate how easy and attractive the reuse offer is.”

Tanja Schramm, Country Food Manager, IKEA

i IKEA

Catering concept

Bistro

Founded

**In Sweden;
in Germany since 1974**

Employees in Germany

19,487

Furniture stores in Germany

54

The price is right – increasing reuse at Valora

Jump the Queue → p. 5

Reuse-Only Offer → p. 6

Duration of the experiment

Mid- to late October 2023

Participating stores

32 stores

Participating brands

Ditsch, BackWerk, Back-Factory

What motivated you to try the nudges?

To reduce packaging waste and make reuse more attractive, we were interested in finding out whether pricing and convenience play a role. Can a characteristic and attractive meal consisting of a hot beverage in a reusable cup and a pastry that is cheaper than its single-use counterpart lead to an increase in reuse?

How did you proceed?

To create a high level of comparability between and within our individual brands – BackWerk, Back-Factory and Ditsch – we focused on the urban area of Hamburg for the experiment. We used the appropriate channels to inform our branch managers of the nudging experiment, its duration and how to handle the nudges, and they passed that information on to their employees.

What experiences have you taken away?

The nudge roll-outs went smoothly at all participating branches. Our field staff raised awareness for the experiment and its implementation on site, as they are in close and regular contact with our employees and branch managers. They were also responsible for putting up the advertising materials, which guaranteed a uniform set-up at all branches. The high-quality advertising materials in the respective brand designs were well received by the branch managers.





© Valora

“As part of the Valora sustainability strategy, we want to prevent, reduce or reuse packaging. That’s why we were delighted to be part of the nudging experiment with our brands and, together with our guests, to move towards more sustainability in the takeaway field.”

Angelo Mans, Director Brand Support, Valora

i Valora

Catering concept
(Self-service) bakery

Stores in Germany

520

What we learned about the nudges

Jump the Queue

Not a stand-alone

While a simple return process may be fundamental, it is not a primary incentive for choosing reusables. As a stand-alone measure, this nudge therefore does not have a motivating effect – however, when combined with a stronger nudge, it could strengthen the effect of the latter.

Needs visibility

Only works if communicated effectively to customers before they order so that they are aware that this customer service policy exists in the first place.

Reuse-Only Offer

Prominent placement

The time, room and space for communicating the Reuse-Only Offer at the point of sale are limited. The offer and its benefits therefore need to be placed and advertised visibly in the stores.

A small discount is not enough

A small financial incentive alone is not enough for the Reuse-Only Offer to have a measurable effect on reuse rates. However, too high a subsidy is not a long-term, economically viable solution, either.

Reuse take to the road at Foodtrucks United

What motivated you to try the nudges?

For us, the interaction between our customers and employees at the point of sale is key when it comes to choosing between reusable and single-use packaging. That's why the employee challenge was a good way of motivating employees to actively advertise reuse, making customers aware of, and winning them over to, the different reusable options they have when they order at the food truck.

We really loved the Fast Lane for Reuse, because it allowed us to give our "reuse customers" an advantage. Can a fast lane also create awareness and trigger a learning effect in other customers? We wanted to find out!

How did the experiment go?

It took a while for our employees to get into the new routines and the challenge to gain momentum. Over time, the challenge was met with more approval at the participating food trucks, and at the end of each shift, there was a regular and lively exchange of strategies and the number of reusables given out every day. The more ambitious and competitive the challenge, the more effective and fun it became.

By maintaining close contact and involving the customers, our employees increasingly influenced them positively towards the various reusable options when ordering at the food truck, resulting in customers bringing their own containers with them the next time they ordered.

What experiences have you taken away?

The fast lane nudge was definitely the harder of the two to implement. Here, too, it initially took a lot of time and some explaining to communicate the fast lane properly. Even so, none of the single-use customers voiced criticism or protest. One thing is hugely important: that superiors and managers send a clear message to employees that reuse has highest priority – that creates support!

A Fast Lane for Reuse → p. 5

Duration of the experiment

October 2023

Participating stores

1 food truck

Reuse Challenge → p. 6

Duration of the experiment

October 2023

Participating stores

4 food trucks



Measurable effects

Based on an interview with Franziska Weidner

x 2

The use of reusable bowls doubled over the course of the experiment period thanks to the employee challenge.

80%

of the reuse rate is made up of customer-owned containers



© Foodtrucks United

What we learned about the nudges

Reuse Challenge

Fuel motivation

It might take a while for the Reuse Challenge to catch on with all employees. It makes sense to keep communicating the challenge and to create spaces where employees can exchange success stories and a competitive atmosphere can arise.

Keep in contact

The Reuse Challenge is particularly effective when orders are placed by the customer directly and not via order terminals. Employees can talk to customers about, and motivate them to choose, the reuse offer and signal that reusables are the preferred packaging options for takeaways from the food truck.

A Fast Lane for Reuse

Get employees on board

When introducing a fast lane, it is necessary to be particularly sensitive towards employees and to take a positive approach to reuse. We recommend planning enough time for face-to-face conversations with employees to provide information on the fast lane, the reasons behind it and the benefits of reuse. It also makes sense to discuss how to handle points of criticism in advance so that employees feel safe and supported in every situation.

i Foodtrucks United

Catering concept

Food trucks & street food

Founded
2022

Employees in Germany
680

Food trucks in Germany
150

“We all do our part. At my events and locations, I can do something good for my guests and my trucks and help them become familiar with reusables. If each of us takes action in our own environment, we will make a lot more progress.”

Franziska Weidner, Initiator, Foodtrucks United

Zeit für Brot: Time for reuse!

How did you approach the nudge?

We developed two phrases as specific aids for our employees: asking "Would you like your coffee in a Recup?" and "Is a reusable cup okay for you?" were a friendly way of making customers aware of the reuse concept and to thus establish a communicative default. We communicated our participation in the nudging experiment and the implementation of the nudge we had chosen to bakery managers and employees via an internal app. Besides raising awareness for the experiment internally, sending reminders via the internal app and creating the example sentences, we did not introduce any other measures or processes.

What challenges did you face?

It is not easy to introduce new and standardised instructions for customer communications and to monitor their implementation, as this depend heavily on the employees' intrinsic motivation as well as the different circumstances and framework conditions at each bakery and the point of sale.

During the ordering process, there is not much time for in-depth conversations with customers to tell them about the benefits of reuse and the use of pooling services. This meant that, despite the nudge, we were not really able to reach customers who had not yet come into contact with reusables and would have needed convincing.

What experiences have you taken away?

Clear internal communications on the reasons behind, and framework of, a business' participation in the nudging experiment are key to convince, motivate and activate employees and bakery managers. Over the course of this process, it is definitely an advantage if reuse has already played a role within the organisation for a longer period of time and is perceived as part of the corporate strategy and purpose of the business. Nonetheless, employees still need to be made aware of, and motivated towards, reuse. Only if they are aware of the importance of preventing packaging waste, and of the options we all have in our own daily lives and actions to do so, can they experience a sense of (self-) efficacy.

Reuse as the Default → p. 5

Duration of the experiment

Mid- to late October 2023

Participating stores

12 bakeries

Key takeaway

30%

Increase in number of reusable cups served

Measurable effects

x 2

Some stores doubled their reuse rates over the course of the experiment.

25%

of the reuse rate is made up of customer-owned containers



© Marlene Limburg

i Zeit für Brot

Catering concept

Bakery chain & café

Founded
2009

Employees in Germany
600

Stores in Germany
15

“We believe in reuse as the new default and want to do our part to accelerate this development.”

Karolin Saak, Brand & Experience Lead, Zeit für Brot

What we learned about the nudges

Reuse as the Default

Communication is key

Implementing a communicative default demands high levels of motivation and awareness from employees. They have to learn to handle situations in which they experience rejection from customers. They also have to understand the benefits of reuse, deposit systems and their own reusable pooling service offer and be able to convey these to customers.

Default with support

Not always necessary but also helps with the communicative default: stand-up displays, posters and reusable containers placed prominently at the point of sale all make things easier for employees and have a supportive effect.

What you can learn from the experiment

So what do these results actually mean for reuse in the catering industry? Here are our key takeaways from the experiment.

Set new standards.

Especially the two variants of → **the Reuse as the Default** nudge increased reuse rates considerably; the technological default at ordering terminals was especially effective. Here we have seen that **customers choose reusables if the decision is made particularly easy** through a prior selection or if employees are heavily involved in the process and proactively advertise the reuse offer. For example, the technological default helped increase reuse rates from 10% to 35% across stores and has remained a fixed part of customer service policies, even after the experiment had ended.

Nudges have a range of effects.

Some nudges did not have a positive effect on reuse rates. However, even these nudges helped **increase the visibility of reuse** at the point of sale and, by creating additional touchpoints, provably helped raise customer awareness. Within the catering establishments, the implementation process also helped increase **employees' knowledge of the reuse offer at their business**.

The magic's in the mix.

Even if some nudges alone do not affect reuse rates, they can definitely help stabilise and potentiate effects when **combined with strong nudges**. One way or the other, additional, targeted measures can support, maintain and potentiate nudges and high reuse rates – for example by increasing visibility, by the store's design or through a marketing campaign. The message is clear: at our store, reuse is normal and welcome.





Nudges are not a silver bullet.

In order to have a sustainable effect, nudges need to be supported by other measures that promote reuse; they also need to be embedded in the corporate strategy in the long term. However, the results of the experiment confirm that nudges can be an extremely helpful, practical and promising tool on the way to making reuse the default. Nudges play a key role in activation; however, **the support for, and prioritisation of, reuse needs to be built up at management and store level;** at the same time, a sustainable awareness of reuse and the respective reuse offers need raising among customers and employees.

Knowledge does not equal action.

Our survey confirms: even when customers have more information on reuse and the reuse offer at a catering establishment, they don't automatically use them. The nudges (with the exception of **Reuse as the Default**) were only able to close this gap to an extent. This also means: **catering establishments should approach the matter proactively and not wait for customers to actively request reusables.** It's worth taking the first step!

Achieving more together.

To make reuse the default at your own catering establishment in the long term, you don't need to re-invent the wheel. The experiment shows that different catering establishments often face similar challenges and opportunities, which is why, when it comes to reuse, it makes sense to **exchange experiences, to network and to join forces.** Participating businesses found that the regular exchange, the sharing of best practices and the discussions on current reuse issues that took place as part of our learning lab were valuable – and the project continues!

What's next? → p. 23

Your reuse journey starts now!

Putting reuse in place in your own company is a journey. And the ultimate destination should always be “reuse as the default”.

1.

Select nudges based on whether containers are owned by the catering establishment or provided by a pooling service.

The decision on which nudges to use depends on the design of the reusable system – whether it uses containers owned by the catering establishment or provided by a pooling service; it often makes sense to combine the two. While deposit-based reusable systems are more suitable for a “reuse = default” nudge, app-based systems require a strong incentive to install the app; accordingly, a fee for single-use items is a more promising solution. It may also make sense to think about combining nudges. The case studies provide more details on experiences gathered.

2.

Schedule enough capacities and time.

The more capacities are dedicated to reuse nudges, the more smoothly the communication and implementation of the measures will run. Scheduling time for documenting and processing achieved effects can also make sense in order to assess the success of the measure. It may even be worth thinking about external scientific support.

3.

Develop a communication strategy to inform and activate employees as well as for roll-out and implementation.

At chain restaurants, it is essential that all employees are aware of the nudges to ensure their effectiveness. Despite often not being directly involved in the introduction, cashiers play a key role in customer contact and conveying incentives.

i In general

Reuse as part of the corporate strategy

To boost, and maintain, employee motivation, it helps to manifest the prevention of packaging within the business as one of the central targets of the sustainability strategy and to communicate this at many appropriate occasions. If possible, employees at management level should be closely involved in, or support, the process.

Prior knowledge and practical experience around reuse

To successfully implement reuse nudges, it is essential that the catering establishment already has a reusable system in place and that employees are both familiar with the system and trained to prevent packaging. If necessary, conduct extensive trainings and test phases before introducing nudges.



8.**Scale nudging measures gradually.**

Depending on capacities, the complexity of the selected nudges and the importance of matters related to reuse in the corporate strategy, it may make sense to run a test phase with a few stores and then scale to the entire network of stores. In the initial phase, it can help to opt for regional tests, as these enable high levels of comparability and control, if necessary.

6.**Reuse nudges should not be perceived as additional work.**

Reuse should never mean more work. In this context, it is important to make sure nudges do not depend on specific situations, in other words, each reuse nudge has to work regardless of the different framework conditions at stores, the day of the week or extreme situations such as they often arise in the workaday at a catering establishment.

4.**Plan the practical implementation at stores thoroughly.**

Stores should be equipped with enough reusable containers at all times; containers should be placed visibly to prevent additional trips and waiting times. For some nudges, a heavy increase in reuse rates is to be expected; therefore, think about how to ensure returns and dishwashing logistics run smoothly in parallel.

7.**Trust is good. Control is better.**

Monitor whether nudges are actually implemented at store level, as otherwise, there is a risk of the implementation of nudges not being prioritised and therefore not taking place.

5.**The nudge roll-out phase is essential.**

Our experiment also confirmed that there are many factors that can lead to nudges being implemented half-heartedly or not at all at individual stores. To ensure nudges are implemented the same way across all stores, in some circumstances it may be beneficial to involve field staff in the roll-out.

→ Any questions?

We have an interest in the nudges being implemented as widely as possible. Do you need anything else to do so or have questions?

Contact us by [mail](#)

Over to you!

→ For networkers

The Reuse Learning Lab

In 2024, the implementation alliance is offering a learning lab on reuse for interested persons from owner-managed catering establishments and sustainability managers from chain restaurants.

The learning lab is free of charge and will take place digitally every two months. The format is there to help participants network and exchange experiences across companies and to create space for collective learning. With curated talks, the lab covers elements for a high reuse rate that is sustainable in the long term at catering establishments.

Interested? ↗ **Get in touch with us! (Online form, German only)!**

→ For do-it-myselfers

The Nudging Experiment 2.0

The experiment is entering the next round: pragmatic, ambitious and with scientific support. This time, we will be focusing on the nudges "Reuse as the Default" and "A Single-Use Fee" as well as on combining different nudges effectively.

If you are interested in implementing reuse nudges in your own business, we are looking for ambitious partners who would like to help us deepen our previous findings.

“We want to mobilise caterers across Germany to go the extra mile towards the reuse transition with the nudging experiment.”

Franziska Beez, Project Manager, mehrweg.einfach.machen



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