



ECR Academic Student Award 2022

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Masterarbeit

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Title

**EVALUATION OF IN-STORE PROCESSES RELATED TO RETURNABLE
PACKAGING SERVICES OFFERED IN GROCERY STORES – THE STORE
MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE**

Research question & objectives

What factors lead to costs and benefits in terms of activities & processes related to returnable packaging services in grocery stores?

- Presenting all processes related to returnable packaging systems in a grocery store.
- Illuminating the role of grocery stores as part of a network together with other actors referring to returnable packaging systems.
- Considering the topic of returnable packaging systems in grocery stores from a practical perspective.
- Presenting factors that influence the cost-benefit ratio based on the collected data that arise in connection with returnable packaging systems for grocery stores.

Methodology

- Qualitative research approach
- Research methods = semi structured expert interviews + participatory observation
- Population = total number of supermarkets in Austria
- Sample = stores of a regional supermarket chain in Austria
- Conducting 30 live interviews with store managers between 08.2021 – 12.2021
- Taking notes and pictures at site

Results

Research question:

What factors lead to costs and benefits in terms of activities & processes related to returnable packaging services in grocery stores?

Macro factors form the framework and determine the extent to which micro factors can affect the cost-benefit ratio of returnable packaging systems for grocery stores!

Macro factors

- Size of the store & spatial capacities
- Location & customer clientele
- Location & parking space
- Ownership structures
- Suppliers & producing industry

Micro factors

- High demand for products in returnable packaging
- Fluctuating quantities & quantity differences between return and purchase
- Different conditions of returned materials
- Incorrect handling of the reverse vending machine by the customer
- Acquisition and maintenance of the reverse vending machine
- Return of single bottles and missing standard sizes
- Physical strain due to high weights
- Tied capital, recording errors and financial loss

Cost-benefit ratio or returnable packaging systems for grocery stores

Relevance for ECR / ECR-Members

- The results are particularly relevant for food retailers, which will have to deal with an even higher volume of returnable packaging options in grocery stores in the future, as the expansion of returnable packaging systems is being pushed by politicians.
- From the results of the work it is clear that there is a need for cooperation between all actors involved (producers & suppliers, grocery stores, customers) to ensure efficient operations. Relating to returnable packaging systems, supermarkets as an intermediary link are dependent on the behaviour of the consumer on the one hand, and on cooperation with producers and suppliers on the other.
- Recommendations & implications are provided on how the cost-benefit ratio for grocery stores could be improved, f.e:
 - Targeted expansion of the range of reusable packaging solutions with a precise survey of customer needs
 - Mandatory use of standardized bottles for producers
 - Financial support for self-employed franchise partners from the political side
 - Optimisation of the delivery and collection rhythms together with the supplier

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