



Importance of food waste reporting for collaboration between Australian retail, farming, and food rescue organizations.

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ABSTRACT

Australian retail and farming organisations donate surplus edible food to food rescue organisations.

Previous studies highlight the importance of food waste data for food rescue efforts.

This study identifies a gap in research on food waste reporting by Australian retail and farming organisations.

The study aims to investigate how food waste reporting impacts collaboration with food rescue organisations.

Content analysis of published reports was conducted to assess food waste management practices.

Semi-structured interviews were held to explore collaboration challenges and the role of food waste reporting.

Findings reveal that retail and farming organisations do not report key data, such as total, edible, and disposed food waste.

Increased data capture and public awareness through social media are suggested to strengthen collaboration. Further research is needed to develop food waste reporting guidelines

Access the full thesis here



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INTRODUCTION

Food waste reporting is crucial for managing and reducing food waste, as it improves internal operations and external accountability.

While previous studies have underscored the importance of food waste reporting in reducing organizational waste (Nair, Rashidi, & Dixit, 2017; Sedlmeier, Rombach, & Bitsch, 2019), there remains a significant gap in understanding how such reporting can enhance collaboration between food donors and food rescue organisations.

This study aims to investigate the role of food waste reporting in enhancing collaboration between Australian retail and farming organisations and food rescue organisations.

To achieve this aim, this research aims to answer the following two research questions:

RQ01: How Australian retail and farming organisations reported their food waste management practices?

RQ02: How can food waste reporting overcome collaborative challenges between Australian retail, farming and rescue organisations?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This research employed a qualitative, exploratory design to investigate food waste activities in Australian retail and farming organisations.

Guided by legitimacy theory, the study explores how these organisations manage and report food waste, addressing societal expectations.

A purposive sampling method was used to select three retail companies and nine farming organisations, along with four key food rescue organisations.

Public reports were analyzed to assess food waste management, while interviews provided insights into the challenges of food waste reporting.

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes. Ethical considerations included anonymising interview participants to ensure confidentiality..

RESULTS

Retail organisations report substantial food donations, key data on total food waste, its types (edible vs. inedible), and disposal practices are often absent. Reports mainly highlight progress in partnerships with food rescue organisations, with a focus on donated meals.

Farming organisations, on the other hand, show minimal food waste reporting, with only one providing data on donations.

Food rescue organisations rely on data from donors—specifically quantity, quality, and consistency of food waste—to effectively plan their rescue efforts. However, food waste data recording in the retail sector is often inaccurate, as most staff do not prioritize precise record-keeping.

In the farming sector, only food loss is tracked, with no detailed records of edible or donated food waste.

Implementing real-time data sharing between donors and food rescue organisations could significantly boost the amount of food rescued.

Additionally, government tax incentives for food donations would encourage retail and farming organisations to improve the accuracy of their food waste recording and reporting.

DISCUSSION

The findings highlight that Australian retail and farming organisations do not report the edible food waste data in their published reports which is important in collaborating with food rescue organizations. The distinction between edible and inedible is critical for food waste reduction and food rescue efforts (Corrado & Sala, 2018, de Moraes et al., 2020).

The critical need for food waste data in aiding food rescue organizations to make evidence-based decisions is well-documented (Sedlmeier et al., 2019). However, this study highlights a significant gap in Australia: retail and farming organizations do not engage in comprehensive food waste data recording and instead rely on data from food rescue organisations to identify their donation quantities.

Poor knowledge and attitudes of employees in retail and farming organisations towards food waste and donation are major barriers to effective collaboration. Studies have shown that better education and awareness can significantly reduce food waste and improve food donation rates (Dubey & Tanksale, 2022).

CONCLUSIONS

This research reveals that Australian retail and farming organisations often lack robust food waste data capture systems, hindering accurate food waste reporting.

Food rescue organisations heavily rely on real-time food waste data from donors to effectively plan and forecast their operations.

The research informs policy recommendations for financial incentives for donors and the development of a standardised food waste reporting framework, encouraging greater transparency and accountability in the fight against food waste.

Future research could investigate internal food waste recording systems and extend the sample to include other food donors in the supply chain, such as restaurants and food manufacturers.



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