



Registered Charity No. 1158700



REUSE SYSTEMS UNPACKED

CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR
FOOD AND DRINK PACKAGING



FOREWORD

Imagine daily life without disposable food and drink packaging. It's not easy, is it? All those packets, boxes, cartons and so on add up to an extraordinary amount. For example, it takes nearly 11 billion pieces of single-use packaging just to fulfil the UK's appetite for lunch on-the-go each year¹.

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But the public are also hungry for change. Hubbub polling reveals that 3 out of 4 people in the UK think more needs to be done to make it easier to choose reusable alternatives to single-use food and drink packaging². If the right reusable options are there, people want to use them. How can we create a society where reusable food and drink packaging becomes the norm?

Pioneering organisations have taken on key elements of this challenge, from local coffee cup schemes to hi-tech logistics systems; from event catering to takeaway delivery. They've been learning about what works and what doesn't, tackling barriers from cost to cleaning to product design. These are the organisations driving the shift in their sectors to a more circular economy.

We hope to accelerate progress across the food and drink packaging industry by bringing the findings of all these schemes and systems together, along with insight into public attitudes towards reusable packaging. With the generous support of Bunzl, we spoke to 40 organisations in the UK and Ireland, from start-ups to household names, and conducted a representative poll of 3,000 people in April 2022.

'Reuse Systems Unpacked' sets out our findings and recommendations, including ten key insights for building better reuse systems. There's no 'silver bullet' here: successful systems have a lot to consider, and each one will have its own specific context. If you take one thing away though, it should be this: convenience is crucial. The user experience must be as convenient and frictionless as possible. Achieving this will take collaboration, great design, perhaps even regulation. But the simple fact is that single-use is enormously convenient, and more sustainable alternatives have to compete on that basis.

This doesn't come as a surprise to us at Hubbub. Our work inspiring behaviour change around reusable cups has highlighted how important it is to make things easy for people. It's a key consideration of the Bring It Back Fund, a £1m grant fund run in partnership with Starbucks. There are many other opportunities and barriers with these reuse systems too, which you'll find laid out below and in more detail in the accompanying case studies.

We hope that this report helps organisations to design and deliver successful food and drink packaging systems, inspires collaboration, and informs policymakers and everyone curious about the sector. Most of all, we hope it makes a contribution to the vital shift away from a throwaway culture, and towards one where we keep precious resources in use for as long as possible.

Alex Robinson, CEO of Hubbub



1. Hubbub's lunch on-the-go polling conducted through Censuswide in February – March 2019 with 1,254 UK adult full and part time workers.
2. Hubbub's reusable packaging polling conducted through Censuswide in April 2022 with a UK-representative sample of 3,000 people.

Deposit: An amount of money paid to borrow the reusable packaging, which is refunded when the packaging is returned.

Charges: A fee that is paid to borrow the reusable packaging, or paid if the packaging is not returned.

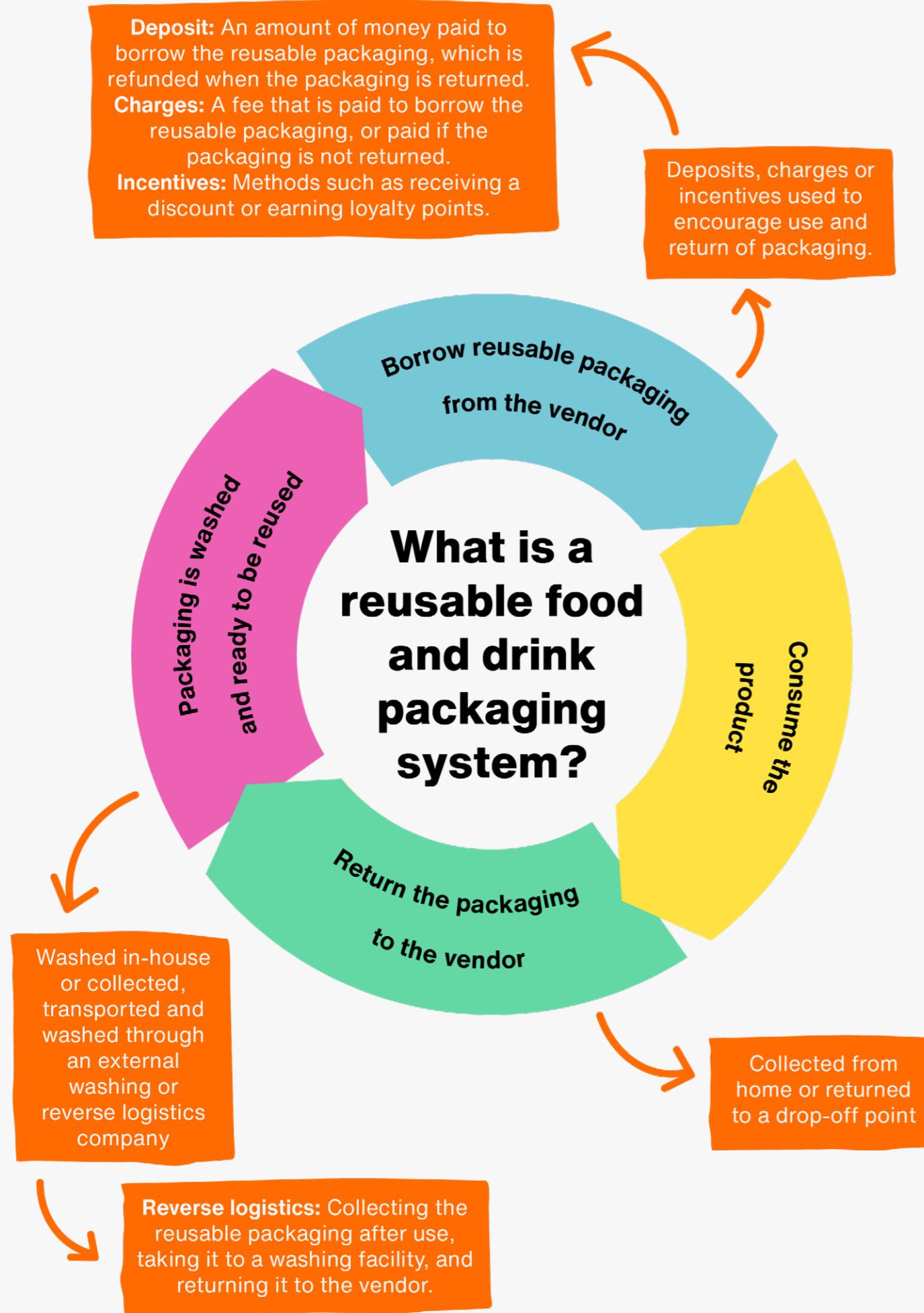
Incentives: Methods such as receiving a discount or earning loyalty points.

Deposits, charges or incentives used to encourage use and return of packaging.

OUR KEY TAKEAWAYS

Making reusable food and drink packaging systems work is complex. It goes against the tide of a single-use culture that has been embedded over decades. There's no easy fix, but here are our ten key recommendations that will help reuse systems set up and scale.

- 1. Convenience is key:** minimise the friction points and fit into people's current patterns of behaviour.
- 2. Keep the price down:** the price needs to be as close as possible to single-use.
- 3. Choose the right incentives:** they play an important role to encourage use and returns, but deposits can put people off and rewards can lead to over-complication.
- 4. Integrate logistics:** innovation is needed here, such as creating centralised logistics networks in cities, backhauling through existing systems and developing new washing processes.
- 5. Be smart with packaging design:** clever design is about more than aesthetics; it integrates tech, encourages returns and reduces the environmental footprint of packaging and transport.
- 6. Understand the lifecycle analysis:** a consistent process needs to be established to work out the environmental impact of reuse systems in a way that's accurate and comparable.
- 7. Collaborate:** a system working across multiple brands, locations and platforms will be more convenient and less confusing for users.
- 8. Consider the role of tech:** tech can simplify payments, deposit refunds, rewards and track usage, but it can complicate the user journey and put off some audiences.
- 9. Offer reassurance:** the public have concerns around hygiene which can be addressed through a robust washing process supported by good communications.
- 10. Support through policy:** a range of potential policies, standards, incentives and subsidies would support the growth of reuse systems.



OUR INSIGHTS INTO REUSABLE FOOD AND DRINK SYSTEMS

From the conversations we've had across the industry and the polling we've conducted, a number of key themes have emerged which should be considered when looking to set up or improve a reusable food and drink packaging system.

Look out for these icons

Reusable cup system in operation.

Enjoy your drink, nice n slow

Re-use or swap in your cup at the bar

Return your cup before you leave

ecodisco
ENJOY, REUSE, RETURN



Convenience is key

The simple fact is that single-use packaging is incredibly convenient, and society's infrastructure is set up to deal with it, so reusable packaging systems must aim to be as close as possible to that level of convenience to stand a chance of success. Friction points need to be identified and removed, and systems should be designed around people's current patterns of behaviour, whilst also considering accessibility and inclusivity. Good communications also help; simple, step-by-step instructions can explain the system and reassure users that the process is not too arduous.

One of the major inconveniences for users is the need to return packaging, but there are opportunities to make it fit within existing routines, for example using collect-from-home services and strategically locating collection points. Collaboration can also help here, for example brands working together to build systems that work across multiple locations and offer a wide range of products in reusable packaging. The more these systems operate at scale, the more convenient they become.



Keep the price down

In our polling the top motivator for using a reusable packaging scheme was being able to do so at no extra cost. To become mainstream, the price of reusable packaging needs to be as close to single-use as possible for both businesses and consumers. The price consumers are willing to pay for reusable packaging varies significantly depending on the type of product, the packaging design and the location of the system. For example people are willing to pay more for a premium-designed container for a takeaway restaurant meal than a standard plastic cup for a quick takeaway drink.

Opportunities to reduce costs include building centralised logistics systems to make transport and washing more efficient, standardising packaging and reducing material use. Subsidies for reuse and/or charges for single-use would also help close the price gap between the two options.



Choose the right incentives

Our polling showed that incentives such as earning rewards or discounts are major motivators, but customers are equally motivated by the environmental benefit, so this should also be clear in communications. Incentivising returns is crucial to the success of a reuse system, but the best method to do so varies depending on the system.

Deposits can be effective but aren't always the best solution as the higher upfront cost can put people off, so they may work best for one-off purchases. An alternative is to only charge for unreturned packaging, but this approach often requires an app or online account to function, which adds a point of friction. For frequent or large-volume purchases, such as a supermarket shop, subscription models can be simpler and cheaper.



Build integrated logistics

There is enormous scope for innovation to improve the logistics of reuse systems. For example, the creation of centralised logistics networks across towns and cities to connect reuse systems would boost scale and reduce costs. Developing new technologies for washing processes, such as Again's automated 'clean cells', will improve efficiencies and help to close the price gap with single-use.

Tapping into existing processes can also keep costs down, such as backhauling packaging through current logistics or washing packaging in-house, when space allows. There is also a big opportunity to rethink existing waste management systems to support the logistics of reusable packaging.

Stock management and packaging being damaged or lost could be improved through effectively engaging all stakeholders throughout the chain, from front-of-house staff and cleaning teams to delivery drivers and employees at washing facilities.



Be smart with packaging design

Ultimately, reuse is a systems challenge, not a product challenge. However, clever design can remove barriers for both businesses and users, for example by integrating tech or improving efficiencies for transport and washing. Standardisation of packaging formats and engineering the design of packaging to reduce the amount of material needed can cut costs and lower the environmental footprint, such as [Bockatech's EcoCore® technology](#).

There's also a delicate balance to strike with aesthetics, as less attractive or unbranded packaging, like [Abel & Cole's](#) standard white pots, may be more likely to be returned than more desirable packaging that people might want to keep hold of.



Understand lifecycle analysis and return rates

Reusable packaging is typically more resource intensive to produce and transport compared to single-use, due to the extra material weight and durability required, so a high return rate is critical to ensure it has a lower environmental impact over time.

The environmental impact of a reuse system and its packaging is determined through lifecycle analysis, which looks at everything from the packaging production, distribution, usage, washing and end-of-life process. Due to the current disparity in the way different reuse systems work, their environmental break-even points compared to single-use alternatives differ hugely.



There is an absence of industry standards for lifecycle analysis; the scope varies from one scheme to another which makes it difficult to compare like-for-like. Transparency on the approach that schemes take for lifecycle analysis will help, but establishing standards for conducting lifecycle analysis would improve credibility and accuracy across the industry. In turn, this will help to establish clear targets for return rates depending on the system.

Packaging return rates will of course differ depending on how quickly a product is consumed, such as an olive oil bottle compared to a beverage bottle, but a high return rate is critical to the financial and environmental success of a system, which can be achieved through effective incentives and improved convenience.



Collaboration is the way forward

It would be more convenient and less confusing for users if systems worked across multiple brands, locations and platforms. It would also be easier to change consumer behaviours if there was a consistent approach to reuse across the food and drink industry, and scaling in this way would help to normalise the behaviour of reuse. Other potential benefits include more availability of return points, and reduced costs if brands shared reverse logistics networks.

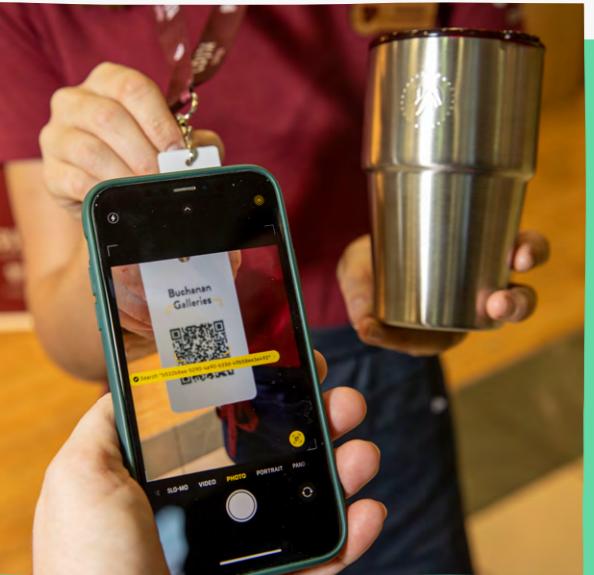
Reuse systems such as [Shrewsbury Cup](#) and [2GoCup](#) have successfully demonstrated the potential of bringing together multiple businesses on a local level. A potential obstacle to scaling this approach is the lack of brand-specific logos on generic packaging, but there are solutions such as branded sleeves or labels added by each participating retailer. Branding could also focus more broadly on the user experience and system design rather than two-dimensional elements such as logos.





Consider the role of tech

Technology has many potential benefits for reuse systems: incentivising returns; embedding new behaviours through gamification; visualising a customer's usage and impact; simplifying the process for payments, deposit refunds and earning rewards; and providing reliable information for businesses on stock levels and return rates. The use of tech is most effective when it's integrated into platforms already used by customers, rather than adding an additional step to the user journey such as requiring them to download a new app. Ideally a tech-free alternative should also be offered to improve accessibility.



However, there is a risk of over-engineering the solution and reuse system providers need to carefully consider their audience and environment before deciding whether technology should be used, and to what extent. For systems with an older demographic, in closed-loop environments or in quick-service models (takeaway coffees or drinks at events, for example) technology such as apps and QR codes might unnecessarily complicate the user experience.



Offer reassurance to reduce hygiene concerns

Hygiene was the thing most likely to put people off using a reusable system in our polling, perhaps unsurprisingly in the wake of the pandemic. However, few organisations we spoke to reported the concern being raised regularly by their customers. Potentially hygiene is more of a perceived barrier rather than based on actual experience, and as reuse becomes more mainstream and normalised we would expect hygiene concerns to decrease.

Clear and simple communications explaining how the system works, including the washing process, can reassure customers without addressing hygiene directly. It can also be helpful to put reusable packaging into context, for example by comparing it to ceramics or glasses which customers are far more comfortable with. As mentioned by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, perceptions of hygiene can be improved by using finishes and materials that feel clean and don't stain.



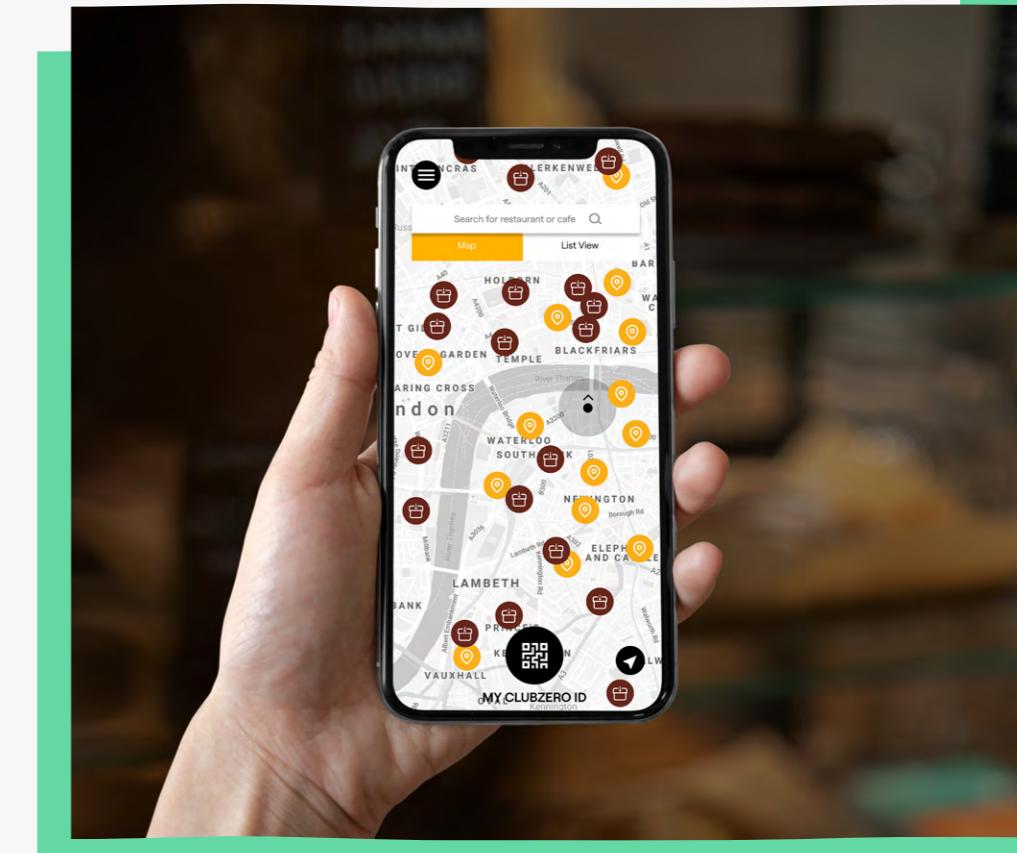
Support growth through policy and regulation

We spoke to a range of organisations including DEFRA, WRAP and Zero Waste Scotland to understand the potential role of policy and regulation to encourage more widespread adoption of reusable food and drink systems.

Targets and voluntary approaches can be a good precursor to regulations, but to stimulate reuse there need to be incentives to prioritise reuse above recycling, and subsidies or charges to close the cost gap between reusable and single-use packaging. Suggestions included: adapting Extended Producer Responsibility to support reuse; changing the Packaging Recovery Note system to incentivise reuse as well as recycling; adding charges on single-use packaging; and removing VAT from deposit payments.

Good policy could encourage standardisation of reuse systems which would help to make them cheaper, more convenient and less confusing for users. Guidance and regulations on washing processes from the Food Standards Agency would also help to reduce hygiene concerns for businesses and users, as highlighted by the British Retail Consortium.

Finally, further funding for pilot schemes and early adopters would help to collect more data and build best practice guidance for businesses, which would accelerate the growth of reuse systems.



WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC THINK?

In April 2022 we conducted polling with a UK-representative sample of 3,000 people to find out what might encourage people to use a reusable packaging system for food and drink, and what might put them off.

What will help get people on board?



Using it for no extra cost



Earning rewards or discounts



Knowing that it's better for the environment



Wide availability of schemes in their local area



Not having to go out of their way to do it



It might not be clean or hygienic



It might cost more money



Having to carry or store it until they can return it



They might forget to return it



It might be scratched, stained or damaged

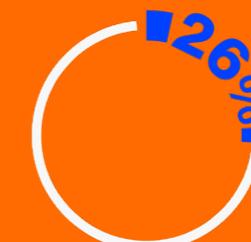
TAKEAWAY DRINKS

Single-use coffee cups are a clear opportunity to be replaced with reusable alternatives due to their standard design and scale of use. The main consideration in a fast-moving environment like coffee shops is convenience for customers. Creating collaborative systems between retailers across towns and cities would help to achieve convenience at scale, but any use of technology needs to work for a broad audience. Below are some of the key snapshots of conversations we had with organisations operating in this space.

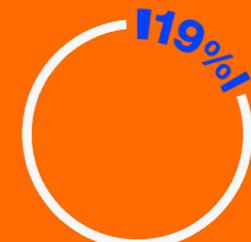
64% of people are open to borrowing and returning a reusable cup for a drink, but when are people most likely to do so?



Visiting a café they go to regularly



Visiting a café at work/place of study



Wouldn't use it for a drink

Costa



BURT (Borrow, Use, Reuse, Take back) is a reusable cup trial across 14 stores in Glasgow. Users pay a one-off £5 deposit upon joining the scheme, and cups are cleaned in-store.

- Collection points across multiple participating stores in the same city prevents users having to carry around dirty cups.
- Despite communicating how the scheme works, there was a lack of awareness and understanding from customers, so a key learning has been to make messages as clear and simple as possible.
- Blockchain allows for data collection around the movement of cups, uptake, returns and time of purchase. However, a non-technology solution is needed alongside this to ensure accessibility, such as using receipts to track usage.



2GoCup



A reusable cup system with a €1 cash deposit, operating at 150 locations in Ireland from small independent cafes to larger organisations.

- They decided against users having to download an app, which can complicate buying a coffee, but they see the benefits of technology to increase return rates.
- They've targeted working within hospitals to allay concerns around hygiene: "If a hospital can make a reusable cup system work, so can you."
- 2GoCup have created a cost-saving calculator to engage with businesses by communicating the money-saving potential compared to single-use packaging.
- On-site washing makes use of existing infrastructure, reducing costs and ensuring washing is to the same standard as dine-in ceramics.

Reuser



A reusable cup scheme operating across independent coffee shops in East London plus corporate events and offices.

- This free-to-use system with a fee for not returning the cup, which is monitored through an app, incentivises returns without adding a cost barrier. Deposits and refunds can slow down service, which is a challenge in busy cafes.
- They're speaking with councils to offer more on-street collection points. In future, they see potential for the collection and washing for reuse systems to be gradually integrated with existing waste management systems.

Shrewsbury Cup



A community-led reusable cup scheme with a £1 cash deposit, operating in 30+ independent cafes across Shrewsbury.

- Staff engaging customers with the scheme is pivotal, but there's a risk of putting off customers through repetition, so it's important to have other routes of communication about the scheme.
- It uses a cash-based deposit system, which is good for accessibility as it doesn't require a customer-facing app or technology.
- Society is moving away from cash, so cashless cafes are less likely to join up to the system. However, having to pay merchant fees for deposit refunds by card could be problematic for smaller businesses.



Starbucks – Returnable Cup trials



As part of Starbucks' ongoing commitment to reduce waste by 50 percent by 2030 and become resource-positive, the company continues to test new innovations and solutions. This year, Starbucks has introduced its returnable cup programme pilots in three European cities and communities (the UK, France and Switzerland) to encourage a greater uptake of reusables, before rolling out a reusable solution at scale in all 4,000+ Starbucks stores in Europe, the Middle East and Africa by 2025.

Gatwick Airport - A trial in airport stores where Starbucks customers were offered reusable cups to borrow at no extra cost, and collection points were located across the departure lounge.

- Adding messaging on the packaging to communicate how the system works improved the return rate in the Gatwick trial. "The cup itself is your best method of communication."
- The trials discovered that there's a fine balance to strike in the design of the reusable packaging. The cups had to look/feel different enough from single use packaging, but not be too desirable that customers wanted to keep them.

Canary Wharf Returnable Cup – a pilot across 5 Starbucks stores in London, including a Drive Thru. Customers pay a £1 deposit for a cup which they can return for a fresh cup or a refunded deposit.

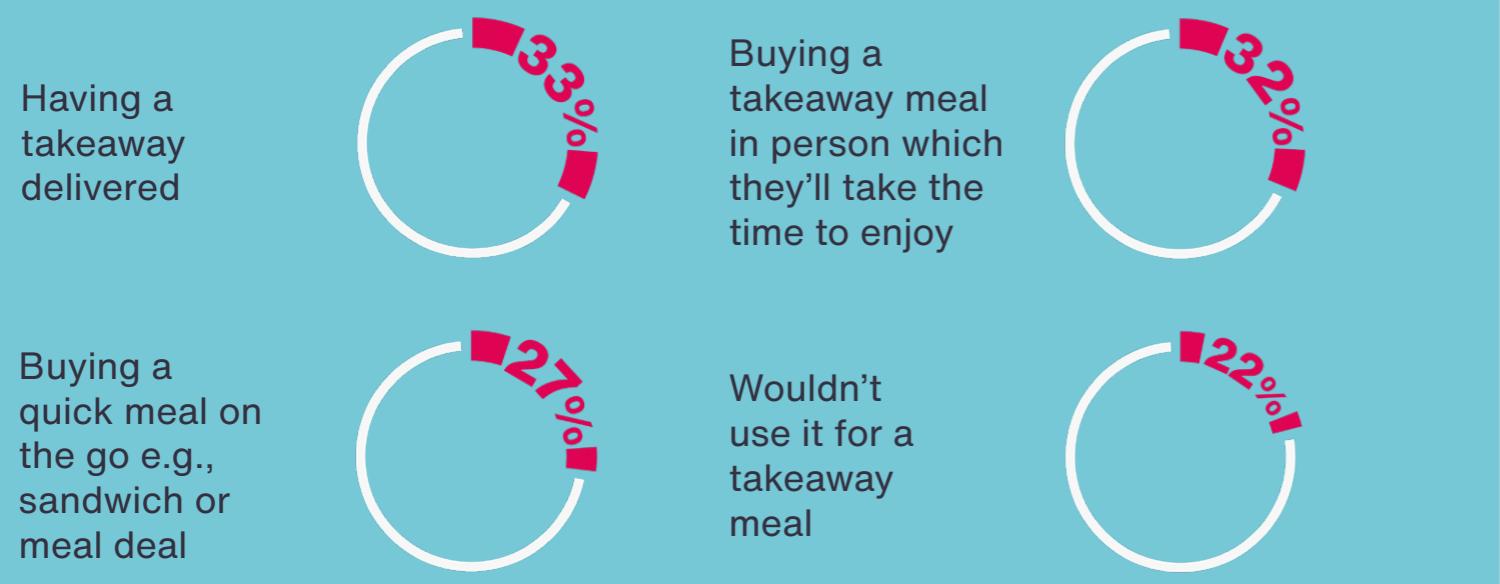
- Most people first heard about the scheme through the barista serving them, so training for staff to be confident explaining the system is important.
- Feedback from customers showed that the environment, novelty and discount were the top motivators to use the returnable cup, but remembering to return or having to carry an empty cup were barriers to taking part.
- Returnable Cup was found to be more straightforward than personal reusables in a Drive Thru setting, as the barista can start making the drink before the cup is returned.



TAKEAWAY FOOD

Takeaway food is a broad sector, ranging from sandwiches and meal deals to fast food and higher-end takeaways. Convenience drives many takeaway meal purchases, so it's important this is impacted as little as possible. However, there is an opportunity to adapt takeaway delivery logistics to backhaul packaging, which would make it more convenient for users. Existing food delivery apps can be adapted to improve the user experience for reuse systems. Below are some of the key snapshots of conversations we had with organisations operating in this space.

63% of people are open to borrowing and returning a reusable container for a takeaway meal, but when are people most likely to do so?



Ecoeats

- Ecoeats' platform provides access to independent takeaways with zero-emission deliveries, as well as reusable packaging, which broadens their appeal.
- Return points are located across a range of businesses as well as partner restaurants.
- Ecoeats use technology to incentivise returns and track packaging usage, but it is integrated into their existing app to avoid adding additional barriers.
- They avoid adding additional touch points that will impact restaurant workflow. Ecoeats requires minimal new tech for restaurant partners.

Just Eat x CLUBZERØ



CLUBZERØ is a free, app-based reusable packaging system for in-store, takeaway and delivery. They've partnered with Just Eat and Just Eat for Business to trial the packaging with restaurants in London.

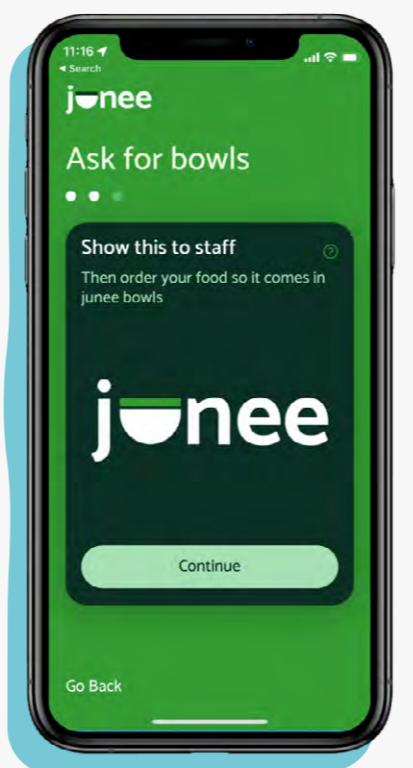
- CLUBZERØ's app uses gamification and incentivises packaging to be returned through a points system, and works with brands to establish these incentives.
- The biggest opportunity for scale is through partnerships. The bigger the return network, the more convenient the solution will be for customers and restaurants.
- As a leading marketplace, Just Eat is looking for sustainable food packaging solutions that are suitable for the majority of restaurant partners.
- Compared to single use there is always an unavoidable additional step in the order and return process, which can be a barrier for customers.



junee



junee is a reusable lunch container scheme for London offices that partners with their local cafes or restaurants.



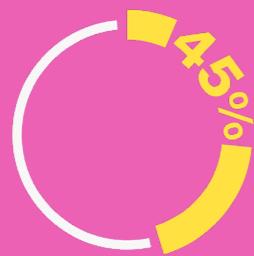
- junee promotes the social as well as environmental benefits: "junee's a fun way to welcome people back to the office and enjoy lunch with a colleague." This helps with onboarding new users, as the best way to get to grips with something new is to buddy up with an existing user.
- Their technology allows office partners to access impact reports, which include data on waste and CO₂e reductions.
- Junee uses standard bowls from suppliers which reduces their costs: "Reuse is a systems problem, not a product problem. You don't need to reinvent the bowl".
- Stacking efficiency of bowls is vital to reduce space needed for restaurant partners.
- Bowls can go missing at all points throughout the system, not just from customers, so it's important to engage with all stakeholders in the logistics chain to minimise leakage.

GROCERIES

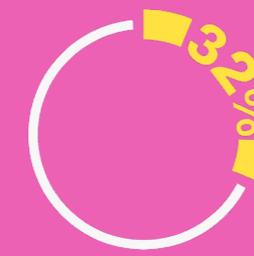
While physical stores remain the norm, the grocery sector is increasingly operating online. Home delivery services create a convenient model for customers to use and return reusable packaging and can expand the system's reach. The wide range of products requires different packaging formats and there is a gap to trial reusable packaging beyond store-cupboard ingredients.

Deposits can be a barrier when purchasing multiple products; other methods such as subscriptions and loyalty points may be more effective for groceries. Cooperation with suppliers is needed across the sector to achieve scale but adapting production lines for reuse will be expensive and may require government support. Below are the key snapshots of conversations we had with organisations operating in this sector.

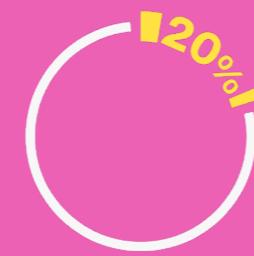
67% of people are open to borrowing and returning a reusable container for groceries, but when are people most likely to do so?



In a supermarket in person



For home delivery



Wouldn't use it for groceries

Tesco



Tesco launched a trial with Loop in 10 stores to test branded reusable packaging for groceries using a deposit-based system.

- The upfront cost from deposits is a major barrier: "If someone were to purchase 20 products in Loop packaging in one shop, it's quite easy for them to have anything up to £30 of deposits tied to those products, and that's not affordable for a lot of people".
- The return rate differs for different product types depending on how long it takes to consume them, such as a vegetable oil bottle versus a beverage bottle.
- Linking reusable packaging to existing customer incentives such as the Tesco Clubcard scheme could increase accessibility.
- Packaging for food and non-food products must be kept separate throughout their use due to contamination risks.
- Ideally packaging should be tamper-proof without using single-use plastic seals.



Abel & Cole



Abel & Cole runs Club Zero, a scheme enabling customers to buy pantry ingredients in reusable pots by paying a £10 annual subscription fee.

- Abel & Cole opted for standard, unattractive pots so customers won't be tempted to hold onto them, and they encourage customers to decant their products out of the pots to allow for more regular returns.
- They can build on existing behaviours; customers already return their delivery boxes, so returning their reusable pots at the same time is straightforward.
- They're planning to change the current £10 annual fee as it doesn't provide regular reminders or incentives to return the packaging. Customers need to be further incentivised to return their packaging more frequently in order to scale the scheme.
- Working with suppliers is key to scale up the number of products available in reusable containers, but it's resource-intensive for suppliers to do this. The big supermarkets have more influence over suppliers, but smaller retailers can help to increase demand too.



Moree



Moree ran a trial delivering groceries in reusable packaging with a same-day delivery service in North London. Their business model now focuses on a B2B tech platform that helps food and FMCG brands switch to reusable packaging.

- Next day collection of the packaging encouraged people to decant and return it, rather than keep the packaging at home. The packaging could be flat-packed, so it occupied less space when the product had been decanted.
- It worked well on a local scale, using micro-depots for convenient and efficient collection and washing.
- It's important to show the value of packaging that's been used and explain why it isn't pristine. Moree used a tally on the packaging to show the number of uses, which helped manage customer expectations.
- In urban areas there's an opportunity to collaborate with grocery-on-demand services.

Good Club



A business delivering groceries in reusable packaging, direct to customers and through other retailers.

- Their e-commerce model makes reuse much more accessible and convenient as it reaches those without local solutions such as 'zero-waste' refill shops. They've expanded this by supplying other retailers with products and brands in reusable packaging too.
- A standardised design for the packaging with asset tracking allows for efficient processing, cleaning, and refilling, making reusable packaging more convenient and affordable.

EVENTS

Events are often viewed as a no-brainer for reuse as they keep packaging contained within a closed environment. However, factors such as vast audiences and large queues present significant challenges, so the system needs to be as simple as possible to work effectively. Customer-facing technology is generally not needed, and existing security measures can be used at exits to ensure cups don't leave the event.

However, preventing damage to the cups is an important reason to incentivise returns, so payment methods and deposits should be adapted depending on the audience. There's also a gap to test reusable food packaging within event environments. Below are the key snapshots of conversations we had with organisations operating in this sector.

ONE Planet ONE Chance



An end-to-end reusable cup solution for large events, including the cups, logistics and washing.

- The cups feature the OPOC logo as opposed to the client's brand, which avoids the negative brand association for clients when branded cups are discarded.
- Using unbranded cups also means they can be circulated between events more often and prevents cups being taken home as a souvenir, which reduces the amount of stock needed.
- Deposits vary depending on the event and customer base. Their experience shows festival-goers are less likely to return cups unless a larger deposit is used. In football stadiums, people don't have time to queue to get their deposit back. Instead, OPOC encourages clients to use a small micro-deposit that's linked back to a charity, to fund something tangible and linked to their club.
- Tech can complicate schemes at large-scale events, where there are high volumes and people want drinks fast. Anything that delays service has cost and customer service implications.
- Since broken cups can cause damage to the ground, OPOC are seeing a move towards polycarbonate at some festivals as these are nearly unbreakable.

Ecodisco



A reusable cup rental scheme with a standardised cup, focused on urban nightlife and small music venues.

- They make communications simple and fun, for example playful messaging above urinals.
- They use the cup as a key method of communication. Ecodisco cups feature messaging about the cup's life and asks users to 'leave me at the bar'.
- Injection in-mould labelling means the on-cup design will last longer than anything printed onto the outside of the cup, which extends its life.
- If businesses can't afford to absorb the whole cost of the reusable cup system, some of this can be passed on to customers. Ecodisco suggest being up front about this, as it's positive for customers to know their money is making a positive difference.
- Ecodisco are developing a solution for customers to not have to hold their cup when they've finished their drink, using a built-in clip to attach it to their pocket, which will avoid cups on the floor getting broken or scratched.



Green Goblet



A reusable cup solution for events, including the packaging, logistics and washing.

- They've found that a payment method is a must: "If you give anything for free, it's going to be treated as single use". Systems can operate with different methods e.g. a one-off charge, deposits, club membership or donation to charity, but an incentive is needed to ensure returns.
- Washing on-site at events is rarely possible or efficient, so it's best to centralise the process with purpose-built washing facilities.

PRODUCT AND SYSTEM DESIGN

Good design can find the right balance between cost and durability to optimise the environmental impact of reusable packaging. Standardisation of packaging will help to make logistics easier and reduce costs, as will improving technology in the logistics chain. However, branding is still a big sticking point that's holding organisations back from creating collaborative systems, so a shift in perspective to focus branding on the user experience instead of logos on the packaging is needed to aid collaboration. Below are the key snapshots of conversations we had with organisations operating in this sector.

Unpackaged



A consultancy specialising in reuse and refill solutions that helps organisations to establish new, effective systems.

- They believe that deposits at a systemic level will present challenges as reuse scales, as the amount of customer money being held could be an ethical and financial risk.
- They emphasised that reducing single-use options is part of the solution to encourage switching to reuse.
- They see an opportunity to start with grocery own-brand products, many of which are supplied by the same manufacturers, which could enable widespread change quickly.

Again

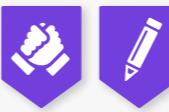


A reverse logistics company with localised, automated cleaning facilities in cities. By specialising in cleaning technology and automation, Again are reducing costs for brands, which is essential to get them on board and scale the industry.

- Glass, aluminium and stainless steel are faster to clean and therefore cheaper, but plastics are lighter and more durable.
- Standardisation can reduce costs and increase stock availability by sorting packaging into fewer categories. It could be easier to implement in non-customer facing applications such as spirits behind a bar.
- Again reuse existing single-use packaging such as glass bottles, reducing costs for brands.
- "Reuse systems should almost be invisible, where consumers are buying products in reusable packaging, disposing of it at the kerbside, it gets separated at a MRF, sent through one of our clean cells and then back to the brand. It's more scalable and it doesn't involve significant shifts in consumer behaviour."



Root



Root is a sustainable packaging consultancy delivering packaging strategy and impact analysis support to global brands and packaging producers.

- The majority of a product's environmental impact is determined at the design stage, so Root believes it's essential to look primarily at the product, and then design the most effective system to deliver that product to consumers.
- There's more to branding than a logo and brands need to think more three-dimensionally and experientially to engage and convert users to reuse. Brands should design and own the user journey and in-store experience, not just traditional packaging.
- Products which people buy regularly are an easier habit to change. The more spontaneous the purchase, the less suitable it is for reuse.

Bockatech



Bockatech use their EcoCore® plastic manufacturing technology to make low-cost reusable containers, that are insulated, durable and recyclable, for food service providers and reuse schemes.

- Their technology reduces the amount of material needed for reusable containers, creating lightweight packaging which lowers the cost and number of uses needed to reduce carbon compared to single-use containers.
- The right balance must be found with durability as it's usually the visual condition of a container that determines whether it's still acceptable to use. Some businesses want as many uses as possible and accept more wear and tear, others prefer less and accept fewer uses.
- Unique identifiers on packaging allow for container tracking and customer rewards. Solid RFID chips embedded in the container are more robust than surface-printed alternatives but may need to be removed from packaging before they're recycled.
- Moulded features that keep containers apart after washing are useful for drying, make it easier to separate packaging and reduce odour.
- Preventing spillage and drips is a big concern for customers, so checking the efficiency of seals during packaging design and production is essential.



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