ULLA-MAIJA SUTINEN

Socio-Cultural Approach to Social Marketing

Fostering food waste reduction

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
Tampere University, Faculty of Management and Business
Finland

Responsible supervisor and Custos	Associate Professor Elina Närvänen Tampere University Finland	
Supervisors	Dr. Nina Mesiranta Tampere University Finland	Professor Hannu Kuusela Tampere University Finland
Pre-examiners	Dr. Fiona Spotswood University of Bristol UK	Docent, Associate Professor Hanna Leipämaa-Leskinen University of Vaasa Finland
Opponent	Dr. Fiona Spotswood University of Bristol UK	

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To dad

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It feels a bit surreal that this is it. Such a big amount of work is now summarised into one book. As becomes evident in my dissertation, I have attempted to understand the world from a perspective that goes beyond the individual in the past few years. Similarly, I do not see my dissertation process as a straightforward journey that I have taken alone but instead as a path that has been guided and supported by many. At times, the road has been bumpy, and the destination has felt so far away, almost impossible reach. Luckily, along the way, there has been a great number of people giving me guidance to find the right route.

First of all, I want to thank my responsible supervisor, Associate Professor Elina Närvänen. Without her, I would have neither started my doctoral journey nor finished it. The combination of academic intelligence, ambition and kindness is something that makes Elina unique and a perfect role model for anyone. I have always felt proud telling people that Elina Närvänen is my dissertation supervisor. I want to sincerely thank Elina for seeing my potential already when I did not see it, trusting me in so many different matters and always being there for me. It has meant the world to me. I wish to thank my supervisor Dr. Nina Mesiranta for her endless support. She is always willing to help, whether it is a matter connected to a research struggle or something completely else. Especially in the last phases of the dissertation process, her valuable, constructive comments have assisted me in finding my own voice as a researcher. I truly admire Nina's calming presence in any situation and eye for detail in research. Our meetings with Elina and Nina during the writing process of the compilation part were important moments that challenged my theoretical and conceptual thinking to the maximum. I wish to thank my supervisor Professor Hannu Kuusela for support and encouragement in critical moments. I also want to thank Hannu for introducing me to his fascinating approach to the academic world. Especially the way how he has pointed out the similarities between the work of an artist and a researcher has truly impacted my perspective on academic research.

I also want to express my gratitude to the pre-examiners of the dissertation, Dr. Fiona Spotswood and Docent, Associate Professor Hanna Leipämaa-Leskinen, who gave me valuable advice in the final stage of the process. With the help of this advice I was able to polish the dissertation to its current form. I feel privileged that my

dissertation has been thoroughly read and commented by these two intelligent researchers. I am especially thankful for Dr. Fiona Spotswood for accepting the invitation to be my opponent.

I consider myself lucky for belonging in research communities where the lines between collegial relationships and friendships have become blurred. The research context of my dissertation, food waste reduction, has its roots in the 'Wastebusters' research group in which I started working in 2016. I wish to thank my co-author of one of the articles in the dissertation and co-Wastebuster Dr. Malla Mattila, with whom I have had the privilege to work. Malla's ability to get 100% excited about a new project or someone's achievement is truly amazing. Working together with the intellectual superpower team of Wastebusters has had a huge impact on my skills as a researcher. I am grateful for all the responsibilities I have been trusted with and all the opportunities that I have been given when working as a member of this group.

Another academic home for me has been the Customer-Oriented Marketing research group. The leader of this group, Professor Hannu Saarijärvi, has been a key person on my path. In fact, I remember him saying that he saw a researcher in me almost a year before I even started my doctoral studies. The sincere encouragements and constructive comments from Hannu have been very important for me. Furthermore, I wish to thank all the colleagues, Dr. Mika Yrjölä, Dr. Anne Kastarinen, Professor Emeritus Pekka Tuominen, Dr. Anna Heikkinen and Dr. Larissa Braz-Becker that I have had a privilege to work with over the years. Especially I am thankful for Dr. Sonja Lahtinen for showing how this project can be finished and cheering me on my own path.

It has also been great to see the pool of peer junior researchers in marketing constantly growing. It has been inspiring to learn from everyone's interesting research projects. Tiiku Kuuru, Harri Hokkanen, Saara Huotari, Ines Kaivonen, Johanna Horppu and Roosa Luukkonen, thank you for sharing parts of this journey with me, it has been a pleasure working with you. Our unofficial afterwork group including Aira Ranta, Marjukka Mikkonen, Outi Vehka-aho and Dr. Aleksi Niittymies has also been an important small community for me, online and offline. All in all, I am thankful for all the short and long conversations I have had with people in the academia, for instance, in the corridors or coffee table of our Pinni A 5th floor 'High Five' space and on the doctoral courses, seminars and academic conferences.

I am also thankful for the financial support that I have received during these years. I want to express my gratitude to the Faculty of Management and Business of Tampere University for providing me employment for a large part of the process. I

I want to also thank my friends outside the academia, who have been there for me and made me who I am today. It feels important to know that I am surrounded by friends from different phases of life; friends who have known me for over half of my lifetime and friends who I have made as an adult. The dinners, phone calls, chats, celebrations, walks, holiday trips and other experiences with these friends have allowed me to do something completely else than research work and provided me important perspectives on all the meaningful aspects of life. I also want to thank my relatives who have always cheered for me. Especially, I would like to thank the members of my extended 'family-in-law' for their versatile support, warmth and for always being interested in what I do.

For my childhood family, I am thankful that I have been given the opportunity to pursue my dreams, whether it has been travelling across the world or starting a new hobby. I want to thank my mother, Elina, for our special mother-daughter relationship that has provided me something to count on in different life situations. Growing up, my mom always reminded me to be 'kind and brave'. For this, my mother is the perfect example; she is strong and caring at the same time. My dad would probably have been the proudest person for this achievement. Although he unexpectedly passed away during this process, I feel that he trusted that I would eventually complete the dissertation. Maybe he is somewhere celebrating this moment and hopefully enjoys seeing the dissertation dedicated for him. Furthermore, I want to thank my brothers who have stood by my side. Growing up as a little sister of two elder brothers, Henri and Ville, has definitely had an impact on me as a person. It has been a privilege to watch my big brothers with their own families, which have also brought me a lot of joy.

And very finally, I want to thank my dear Eemeli who is my rock. Us two (or three if I count our dog Ringo) is the closest family unit of mine. Eemeli has been there for me, for which I am beyond grateful. Even when I have not believed in myself, he has always been (sometimes annoyingly) sure that I have what it takes.

At my home office in Rahola, Tampere, April 7rd, 2022,
Ulla-Maija Sutinen

ABSTRACT

Marketing holds great potential to steer changes beyond the commercial sphere. Recently, supporting sustainability and sustainable consumption has been referred to as important or even fundamental development for the discipline. Here, the research tradition of social marketing opens a promising avenue with its ultimate purpose being the pursuit for greater social good. The dissertation focuses on one specific context of sustainable consumption, food waste reduction, and how it could be fostered through social marketing.

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate and conceptualise the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction. While cultural theories and approaches have gained momentum in marketing and consumer research, their use in social marketing is still uncommon. The dissertation is grounded in four articles that take different departures to the research phenomenon. With qualitative methods, the articles investigate the ways in which food waste reduction is fostered in campaigns and the public discussions around them. Empirical attention is focused on social media campaigns, visual materials and online discussions, with an analytical emphasis on socio-cultural meanings, signs and their meanings, and discourses. One article is a conceptual paper that discusses why and how social marketers can support food waste reduction with a practice-theoretical focus.

The dissertation roots its interpretive framework, the socio-cultural approach, in practice theories and understands everyday life as a cultural system of practices. Based on this interpretive framework and the individual articles, the socio-cultural approach is integrated into social marketing. The dissertation concludes with three premises that address the research purpose. The first two premises include statements about how food waste reduction and the role of social marketing are understood within the cultural system of practices. Based on these understandings, the third premise outlines how food waste reduction can be fostered by steering changes in the cultural system of practices.

The dissertation constructs bridges between social marketing, socio-cultural consumer research and food waste research. It primarily contributes to social marketing by broadening its theoretical base and extending its opportunities to foster

change. The dissertation also contributes to socio-cultural consumer research and practice theories by generating insights into how changes in the cultural system of practices can be fostered. Furthermore, the dissertation is valuable for the interdisciplinary food waste research stream by extending understanding about possible solutions to the problem.

For social marketing actors, such as non-governmental and governmental actors addressing food waste, the developed conceptualisation provides a valuable thinking tool that can be utilised when planning and assessing initiatives. While derived from the context of food waste reduction, the socio-cultural approach to social marketing can be adapted for other contexts as well and open new routes to understand the problem in question and identify novel opportunities to steer changes.

KEYWORDS: social marketing, socio-cultural approach, practice theories, food waste reduction, sustainable consumption

TIIVISTELMÄ

Markkinointi tarjoaa merkittäviä mahdollisuuksia muutosten rakentamiseen myös kaupallisen kentän ulkopuolella. Viime vuosien aikana kestävyyden ja kestävän kuluttamisen edistäminen on esitetty keskeisenä tai jopa elintärkeänä kehityssuuntana tieteenalalle. Tähän lupaavan tulokulman avaa sosiaalisen markkinoinnin tutkimusperinne, jonka perimmäisenä tarkoituksena on yhteiskunnallisen hyvän aikaansaaminen. Väitöstutkimus keskittyy yhteen kestävän kuluttamisen kontekstiin: ruokahävikin vähentämiseen ja siihen, kuinka sitä voitaisiin edistää sosiaalisen markkinoinnin avulla.

Väitöskirjan tavoitteena on tutkia ja jäsentää sosiokulttuurista näkökulmaa sosiaaliseen markkinointiin ruokahävikin vähentämisen kontekstissa. Vaikka kulttuuriset teoriat ja näkökulmat ovat vahvistaneet asemaansa markkinoinnin ja kulutustutkimuksen saralla, on niiden hyödyntäminen sosiaalisessa markkinoinnissa vähäistä. Väitöstutkimus pohjautuu neljään tutkimusartikkeliin, joissa tutkimusaihetta tarkastellaan eri tulokulmista. Artikkeleissa hyödynnetään laadullisia menetelmiä ja tutkitaan, kuinka ruokahävikin vähentämistä lähestytään ruokahävikkikampanjoissa sekä näihin liittyvässä julkisessa keskustelussa. Empiirinen tarkastelu kohdistuu sosiaalisen median kampanjoihin, niihin liittyviin visuaalisiin materiaaleihin sekä verkkokeskusteluihin. Analyysissa huomio keskitetään sosiokulttuurisiin merkityksiin, merkkeihin sekä niiden merkityksiin ja diskursseihin. Yksi artikkeleista on käsitteellinen tutkimus, jossa jäsennetään sitä, kuinka sosiaaliset markkinoijat voivat edistää ruokahävikin vähentämistä keskittymällä käytänteiden muuttamiseen.

Tutkimus juurtaa tulkinnallisen viitekehyksensä – sosiokulttuurisen näkökulman – käytäntöteorioihin ja tarkastelee jokapäiväistä elämää käytänteiden kulttuurisena järjestelmänä. Tämän tulkinnallisen viitekehyksen sekä väitöstutkimuksen artikkeleiden pohjalta sosiokulttuurinen näkökulma kiinnitetään sosiaaliseen markkinointiin. Väitöstutkimuksessa jäsennelty näkökulma kulminoituu kolmeen premissiin. Kaksi ensimmäistä premissiä pitävät sisällään käsityksen siitä, kuinka sekä ruokahävikin vähentäminen että sosiaalisen markkinoinnin rooli ymmärretään osana käytänteiden kulttuurista järjestelmää. Näiden ymmärrysten pohjalta kolmas premissi

kiteyttää, kuinka ruokahävikin vähentämistä voidaan edistää rakentamalla muutoksia käytänteiden kulttuurisessa järjestelmässä.

Väitöskirja luo siltoja sosiaalisen markkinoinnin, sosiokulttuurisen kulutustutkimuksen sekä ruokahävikkitutkimuksen välille. Tutkimus esittää uutta tietoa sosiaaliseen markkinointiin laajentamalla sen teoreettista pohjaa sekä mahdollisuuksia edistää muutosta. Tutkimus luo kontribuutiota myös sosiokulttuuriseen ja erityisesti käytäntöteorioihin pohjautuvaan kulutustutkimukseen kehittämällä käsitystä siitä, kuinka muutoksia voidaan edistää käytänteiden kulttuurisessa järjestelmässä. Lisäksi tutkimus syventää ymmärrystä mahdollisista ratkaisuista ruokahävikkiongelmaan, millä on arvoa monitieteelliselle ruokahävikkitutkimuskentälle.

Sosiaalisen markkinoinnin käytännön toimijoille, kuten järjestöille ja julkisille organisaatioille, väitöskirjan jäsennys tarjoaa ajattelun työkalun, jota voidaan hyödyntää erilaisten ruokahävikkiin liittyvien aloitteiden suunnittelussa ja arvioinnissa. Vaikka väitöstutkimus pohjautuukin ruokahävikin vähentämisen kontekstiin, on sosiokulttuurista näkökulmaa sosiaaliseen markkinointiin mahdollista soveltaa myös muissa konteksteissa. Näkökulma avaa uusia polkuja erilaisten haasteiden ymmärtämiseksi sekä uudenlaisia mahdollisuuksia muutosten rakentamiseen.

AVAINSANAT: sosiaalinen markkinointi, sosiokulttuurinen näkökulma, käytäntöteoriat, ruokahävikin vähentäminen, kestävä kuluttaminen

CONTENTS

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ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

The following articles provide the basis for this dissertation. In the text, I refer to them by the Roman numerals indicated below.

Article I Närvänen, E., Mesiranta, N., Sutinen, U.-M., & Mattila, M. (2018). Creativity, aesthetics and ethics of food waste in social media campaigns. *Journal of Cleaner Production, 195,* 102–110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2018.05.202

Article II Sutinen, U.-M. (2020). Assumptions about consumers in food waste campaigns: A visual analysis. In Närvänen, E., Mesiranta, N., Mattila, M., & Heikkinen, A. (Eds.), *Food Waste Management: Solving the Wicked Problem* (pp. 225–256). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20561-4_9

Article III Sutinen, U.-M., & Närvänen, E. (2021, in press). Constructing the food waste issue on social media: A discursive social marketing approach. *Journal of Marketing Management.* https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2021.1966077

Article IV Sutinen, U.-M. (2022). Addressing food waste with a socio-cultural approach to social marketing. *Journal of Social Marketing, 12*(2), 256–274. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSOCM-12-2020-0246

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Article I	The article was co-authored with Elina Närvänen, Nina Mesiranta and Malla Mattila. The study was a joint research effort, and I was involved with all the stages of the research process: the research design planning, data generation, data analysis, writing process of the article and revision process of the article.
Article II	I was the only author of this article.
Article III	The article was co-authored with Elina Närvänen. The planning of the research design and the generation of data were conducted together. I had a major role in the data analysis and the writing process of the article. As the correspondent author, I was responsible for the submission and publication process that included two rounds of revisions.
Article IV	I was the only author of this article.

1   INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is set out to seek new understanding about the potential role of marketing in steering change towards sustainability in the context of food waste reduction. In this introductory chapter, I discuss the inspiration and background of the dissertation and outline the research phenomenon of the dissertation – fostering food waste reduction with the socio-cultural approach to social marketing. Furthermore, I define the main purpose of the research and discuss the roles of the individual articles in the dissertation process. I conclude the chapter by explaining the general structure of the dissertation.

1.1   Background and motivation

Sustainability[1] has received increasing attention within the discipline of marketing during recent years. However, there are still ongoing debates about what sustainability has meant in marketing and what kind of contribution marketing could have to it (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; McDonagh & Prothero, 2014). One major issue in the field is the question of sustainable consumption (Lim, 2017; Prothero et al., 2011). Many of the concerns related to the relationship between consumption and sustainability are directly or indirectly connected to marketing efforts boosting the purchasing of new products and services and encouraging unsustainable consumption practices. Due to this, marketing is often seen as an antagonist of sustainability (Lim, 2016). However, a broad number of researchers believe in the potential of the discipline to make changes towards sustainability and sustainable consumption – or even see it as a vital development for the field (Davies et al., 2020; Webster & Lusch, 2013; White et al., 2019). As Lim et al. (2017, p. 69) put it, 'the simple truth is that consumption patterns cannot continue at their current rate'.

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[1] There is no unified consensus definition for sustainability. This dissertation's perspective follows the Brundtland Commission, who define sustainable development 'as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland, 1987, p. 43).

During the past decade, increasing research attention has been put on strengthening the discipline's contribution to support sustainability and sustainable consumption.

Strongly rooted in the quest for social change towards greater social good (Gordon et al., 2011; Lefebvre, 2011), the research tradition of social marketing represents a promising route to a more sustainable future. Applicable to various contexts and challenges, social marketing has been presented as a potential driver of United Nations' sustainable development goals and sustainable consumption (Truong & Saunders, 2022). However, more scholarly attention is needed to enhance social marketing's role in sustainability and sustainable consumption (Beachcroft-Shaw & Ellis, 2020; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019; Truong & Saunders, 2022).

Food waste reduction represents one specific and relevant context for sustainable consumption. It is also mentioned in the United Nations' sustainable development goals: a target of halving the global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food losses along the production and supply chain is outlined under the goal 'Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns' (United Nations, 2015). Food waste reduction, as addressed in this dissertation, also includes the prevention of potential food waste before it even emerges, following the hierarchy model of food waste[2] (Papargyropoulou et al., 2014). Food waste can be defined as food that could have been eaten but for some reason ended up as waste somewhere along the food system (Stuart, 2009). Thus, not all biodegradable waste is regarded as food waste. Statistically, households produce the largest share of food waste, both in developing and developed countries (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). However, it is important to note that the food waste amount reported as household food waste or consumer food waste has its roots earlier in the food chain. Household food waste may, for instance, be connected to large packaging sizes decided by food manufacturers or the sudden decay of a vegetable that might be a consequence of improper logistics (Block et al., 2016). As addressed by Lorek and Vergragt (2015), sustainable consumption is never only attached to consumers but also the larger system of various market actors.

Sustainable consumption can be defined as 'consumption that supports the ability of current and future generations to meet their material and other needs, without causing irreversible damage to the environment or loss of function in natural systems' (Oxford Commission of Sustainable Consumption, 1999). When it comes

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[2] Food waste hierarchy refers to a pyramid-shaped hierarchy model that proposes waste reduction options in an order that represents their likeliness to deliver the most significant outcome. In the food waste hierarchy model, prevention is seen as the most impactful option while disposal is seen as the least favourable (Papargyropoulou et al., 2014).

to food waste-related consumption, there is a shared consensus, both in the public discussion and the academic literature, that the current levels of food waste are not sustainable in the long run. This type of mutual consensus is rather rare in the field of sustainable consumption, where there are typically many opposing views on several matters (e.g., different opinions on plant-based diets). However, although there is a clear consensus on its severity, food waste can be considered a wicked problem when it comes to solving it (Närvänen et al., 2020). Wicked problem refers to a complex issue involving several stakeholders and multiple viewpoints that might conflict with each other (Rittel & Webber, 1973). As a problem, food waste can be framed from different perspectives (Mesiranta et al., 2021). It is connected to all three dimensions of sustainability – economic, environmental and social – although, quite often, the environmental perspective is highlighted. Food waste is, however, also a social problem, a matter of the unequal division of food, both across countries and within consumer groups in different countries. It has been estimated that the current amount of food waste would be enough to feed two billion people each year (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2013). Furthermore, the issue can be viewed from economic perspective, as a waste of valuable monetary, material and work resources.

Some have argued that many studies in marketing and consumer research on sustainability have overlooked the main problem– that is, overconsumption (Peattie & Peattie, 2009; Watson, 2017). This viewpoint, however, does not directly apply to household food waste, which is more about a gap between over-purchasing or overproduction and underconsumption. Thus, reducing food waste is primarily a matter of how consumption is carried out, but it is also connected to patterns of purchasing and disposal – cut-crossing all phases of consumption cycle[3]. Food waste reduction is deeply interwoven into different stages of consumption (Block et al., 2016; Sirola et al., 2019; Southerton & Yates, 2015). For instance, Sirola et al. (2019) connected food waste reduction practices with food-related practices of planning, grocery shopping, cooking, eating and handling surplus food. Similarly, Southerton and Yates (2015) have argued that food waste is connected to cooking and eating as well as preparing and provisioning. Thus, focusing only on one phase of the consumption cycle does not provide a profound understanding about consumption related to food waste.

As a research topic, food waste has gained momentum in marketing and consumer research (Porpino, 2016). The studies within the field have, for instance,

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[3] Consumption cycle refers to a broad understanding of consumption, including different phases of 'acquisition, flow and use of things' (Trentmann, 2016, p. 1).

focused on understanding consumer behaviour leading to food waste (Farr-Wharton et al., 2014; Principato et al., 2021), analysing the impact of retailers and food marketing on household food waste (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2016) and explaining food waste at different stages of the marketing system (Block et al., 2016). Some studies have put their emphasis on analysing the potential ways to harness marketing to reduce food waste (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2018) and to understand market processes leading to lower levels of food waste (Gollnhofer et al., 2019; Närvänen et al., 2021). During recent years, food waste research has moved the focus from understanding the problem of food waste towards finding solutions for solving it (Närvänen et al., 2020). Especially here, there is still much untrodden ground around the question of how marketing and consumer researchers could contribute to reducing food waste. Social marketing, with its strong objective for change, provides interesting opportunities for this. As suggested by Porpino (2016, p. 41), the context of food waste provides possibilities for marketing scholars 'to meet the criteria of managerial, public policy, and societal relevance'. Furthermore, food waste reduction as a research context entails plenty of 'boundary-breaking opportunities' (MacInnis et al., 2020) that are highly relevant for several stakeholders, ranging from policymakers to industry actors

During recent years, the topic of food waste has gained a lot of attention in the public discussion as well as in political agendas. The number of governmental, non-governmental and commercial campaigns addressing the topic has rapidly increased (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017; Principato, 2018). Despite this growing number, not many studies have focused on precisely the ways in which these campaigns are fostering food waste reduction. Furthermore, several issues that have been addressed in interdisciplinary food waste research have not been incorporated into the initiatives and campaigns. The initiatives often approach the topic from an information-sharing point of view (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017; Principato, 2018) while at the same time overlooking food waste as embedded in certain social and cultural contexts and as something that is often beyond consumers' rational decision-making (Evans, 2011, 2012).

Food consumption is strongly laden with social and cultural meanings (Rozin, 1996). Thus, a socio-cultural perspective provides a relevant, yet still largely untapped viewpoint for studying food waste reduction. Food consumption is connected to myriad traditions, habits and cultural norms, and also what is considered edible varies significantly across cultures and social groups (Asp, 1999). For instance, what kind of meat is considered acceptable to eat is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural context of consumption (Leipämaa-Leskinen et al., 2018). Food consumption represents one

of the most mundane, but also a very distinct, form of consumption: it is a vital need for consumers and closely connected to their body (Marshall, 2005). Like food in general, also food waste is connected to everyday practices, family traditions, domestic routines and, for instance, customs related to, for instance, whether food products' edibility is assessed through expiration dates or one's own senses (Blichfeldt et al., 2015; Cappellini & Parsons, 2012; Evans, 2012; Lehtokunnas et al., 2020).

1.2   Building the purpose of research

This dissertation addresses food waste reduction within the social marketing research tradition, where change towards greater social good is the overarching purpose. In social marketing, behaviour change is often seen as the most promising way to reach this purpose, and social change is seen as a consequence of many individuals changing their behaviours (Andreasen, 2002). For example, the number of fatal traffic accidents decreases when many people use safety belts, and the national smoking rate lowers when many people quit smoking. To understand behaviour change, social marketing has largely relied on the cognitive and economic theories grounded in the assumption of a rational consumer (Spotswood & Tapp, 2013). This has led to a large number of initiatives and interventions focusing on shifting attitudes or intentions with a presumption that this will eventually lead to behaviour change. While other theoretical approaches have also been applied and utilised in social marketing (Brennan et al., 2014), the strong emphasis on behaviour change has favoured the use of individual-focused theories. This kind of orientation can also be identified in many of the existing social marketing studies focusing on food waste reduction (Kim et al., 2019, 2020a, 2020b; Pearson & Perera, 2018).

This dissertation, however, challenges the above-described perspective, which is considered limited especially when tackling sustainability issues, such as food waste. The focus on individual agents as core drivers of change towards sustainable consumption overestimates the power of choice and overlooks the power of social structures (Southerton et al., 2004; Welch, 2016). One of the core assumptions of this dissertation is that sustainability is not a characteristic of an individual consumer; thus, sustainable consumption research should not only be focused on studying sustainable consumers (Hargreaves, 2011; Sahakian & Wilhite, 2014; Watson, 2017). Instead, consumption needs to be viewed at a level beyond the individual, embedded in socio-cultural practices that are (or are not) carried by different market actors

(Halkier et al. 2011; Warde, 2005; Watson, 2017). With its focus on the socio-cultural sphere, this dissertation extends the emerging but still minor stream within social marketing that highlights the importance of understanding and focusing on the social and cultural sphere (Gordon, Waitt, et al., 2018; Spotswood et al., 2017, 2021; Spotswood & Tapp, 2013; Waitt et al., 2016). In this dissertation, this interpretive framework is referred to as the socio-cultural approach.

Based on its socio-cultural approach, I argue in the dissertation that sustainable consumption necessitates socio-cultural changes that go beyond individual behaviour changes. The dissertation's understanding about the organisation of everyday life and its changes is rooted in practice theories that regard routine-like, socially shared ways of doings and sayings as their basic unit of analysis (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012; Warde, 2014). Based on practice-theoretical flat ontology, the social world is constructed through practices and, thus, any sort of social or cultural change requires practice changes (Schatzki, 2016).

Figure 1 outlines how the research phenomenon of the dissertation is positioned. First, the dissertation roots itself in and primarily contributes to the social marketing research tradition. Second, the dissertation is focused on one specific research context: food waste reduction. Third, the socio-cultural approach is the interpretive framework that, throughout the dissertation, guides the understanding about the organisation of everyday life and its changes.
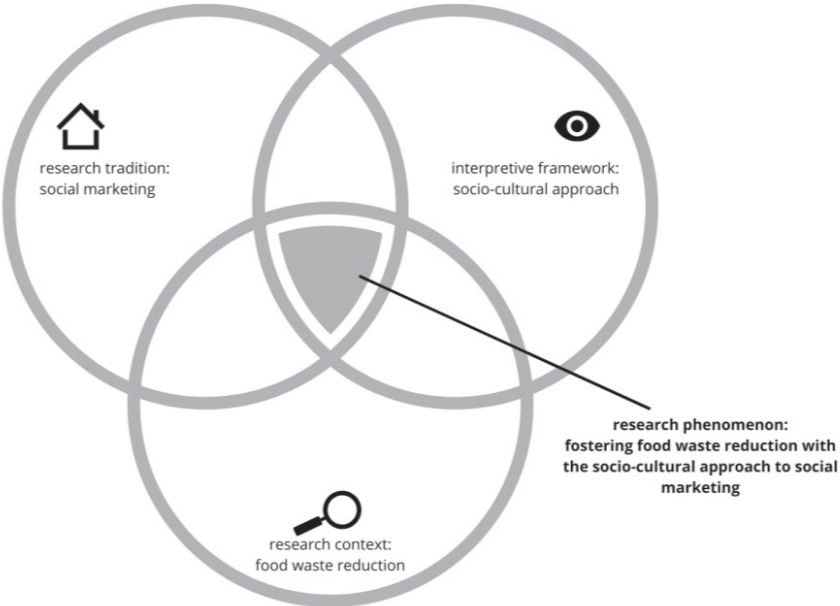
Figure 1. Positioning the research phenomenon of the dissertation

The objective of this dissertation is to *investigate and conceptualise the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction*. The dissertation focuses on examining and analysing the ways in which a socio-cultural understanding of everyday life can and should be integrated into social marketing when fostering food waste reduction. The dissertation also has implications for other contexts, especially those related to concerns around sustainable consumption. The dissertation aims to extend the social marketing field's contribution and provide opportunities to better grasp social marketing's core purpose: to create social change towards a better future (Gordon et al., 2011). In this dissertation, the focus is on understanding food waste related consumption and social marketing from a socio-cultural perspective. This shift in perspective is considered urgently needed. This alteration in focus, however, requires social marketing to broaden its conceptual and theoretical toolbox to rethink its role as a change-maker. To this end, this dissertation offers novel viewpoints on how social marketing can steer socio-cultural changes in the context of food waste reduction. These viewpoints are of value to various audiences also beyond the academia that are interested in fostering food waste reduction through programmes and initiatives, including non-governmental and governmental organisations. While primarily developed with non-profit social marketing actors in mind, the conceptualisation of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing provides important insights also for commercial companies. These include, for instance, retailers, catering companies and waste management companies that are increasingly involved with food waste related discussions and initiatives.

1.3   Individual articles contributing to the main objective

The dissertation consists of four individual articles, all of which contribute to the overall objective of the dissertation. These articles constitute the 'heart' of the dissertation. This compilation part of the dissertation can thus be regarded as the tip of an iceberg: the capture of the extensive theoretical, conceptual and methodological considerations that have taken place throughout the doctoral journey, during the designing, preparing, writing and revising processes of the individual articles. The overall objective and the main thread were shaped and clarified during the research process, and finally obtained their final form in the writing stage of this compilation.

   A research journey is seldom a linear process but instead includes several twists and turns before reaching its final destination. So was the case in my dissertation

process (Figure 2). The main objective has evolved during the process, and several sub-objectives have been addressed along the way. The journey started with an aim to understand food waste reduction as a socio-cultural phenomenon and how food waste reduction campaigns take part in this. Regarding this, Article I focused on the construction of positive socio-cultural meanings of food waste reduction. Next, the emphasis shifted to understanding how food waste reduction is currently fostered through social marketing campaigns – the focus of Article II. The study analysed the underlying assumptions of food waste reduction campaigns based on social marketing theoretical approaches to change. In the third article, the focus shifted to investigating how food waste as an issue is socio-culturally constructed in discussion and conceptualising how this connects to change. In the writing process for Article III, viewing change from a practice-theoretical perspective started to crystallise. Article III analysed the discourses of the food waste issue and provided some suggestions for applying a discursive approach to social marketing. The writing process of Article IV initiated a more profound development of my conceptual thinking. This conceptual article emphasised the role of social marketing in practice changes in the context of food waste reduction and concluded with concrete suggestions on the roles social marketers can adopt.
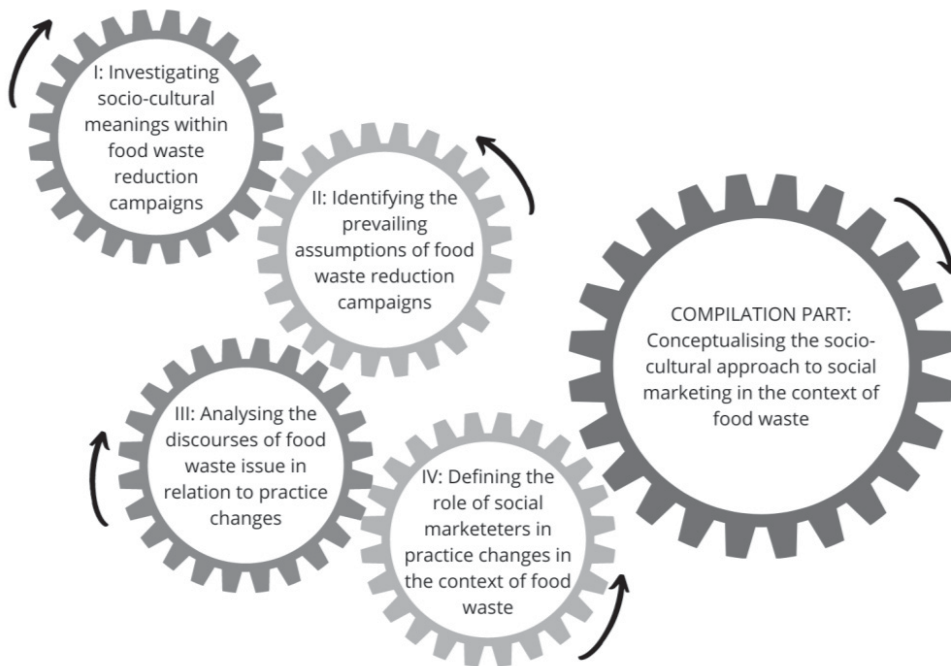
Figure 2. Outline of the research process

This compilation part of the dissertation crystallises the final outcome of the research journey. This compilation is based on the articles and could not exist without them. At the same time, it is also something significantly more, as it offers more space for theoretical and conceptual considerations, integrates the articles and, based on these, develops a conceptualisation for the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste. This is also why the objective of the dissertation departs from the articles' objectives. Table 1 summarises how the articles contribute to the dissertation's main research objective.

Table 1.　　Articles and their contribution to the main objective

MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE DISSERTATION: To investigate and conceptualise the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction		
ARTICLE	**ARTICLE OBJECTIVE**	**CONNECTION TO THE MAIN RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**
I: Creativity, aesthetics and ethics of food waste in social media campaigns	To investigate how sociocultural meanings of household food waste reduction are negotiated in social media campaigns.	Investigates how campaigns construct different socio-cultural meanings around the food waste issue.
II: Assumptions about consumers in food waste campaigns: A visual analysis	To identify and analyse the assumptions about consumers in food waste campaign materials.	Identifies how social marketing communication materials mirror assumptions about food waste and consumers, which also connect to ideas of change.
III: Constructing the food waste issue on social media: A discursive social marketing approach	To examine how market actors participate in the socio-cultural construction of the food waste issue through social media.	Analyses discourses of the food waste issue constructed in an online discussion among different market actors and addresses them from a practice change-potential perspective.
IV: Addressing food waste with a socio-cultural approach to social marketing	To strengthen social marketing's contribution to social change by elaborating how change occurs from a practice-theoretical perspective, what this type of approach means for social marketing and what kinds of roles social marketers can adopt in practice changes.	Discusses the potential of adopting a socio-cultural approach to social marketing and suggests concrete, practice-theoretically based roles for social marketers to support food waste reduction.

To make sure that the research stays within the limits of one dissertation, I have made certain choices related to narrowing the main focus. While I acknowledge that food waste reduction as a form of consumption is steered and constructed by several market actors, the main attention in this dissertation is on the social marketing actors fostering food waste reduction (e.g., non-governmental and governmental

organisations) and consumers. In line with this focus, the main emphasis of this dissertation is on reducing household food waste, while at the same time it is acknowledged that food waste is produced and could (and should) be reduced in other parts of the food system as well. Furthermore, while social marketing is understood holistically, involving strategic consideration, planning processes and measurements of the impact, to mention a few, the empirical focus in this dissertation is on the communication-related data, such as social media, visual campaign and online discussion materials. In line with the socio-cultural approach of the dissertation, the communication-related materials are seen as important producers, constructors and disseminators of, for instance, socio-cultural meanings and discourses (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

1.4   Structure of the dissertation

In this introductory chapter, I have explained the starting points for this dissertation. In Chapter 2, I will focus on the social marketing tradition, which is also the main location for this dissertation's intended contribution. Next, I outline the interpretive framework – the socio-cultural approach – of the dissertation in Chapter 3. Then, in Chapter 4, I explain the research design of the dissertation, including the matters connected to philosophical considerations and the choices regarding the research strategy. The summaries of the individual articles are provided in Chapter 5. The main findings and conclusions of the dissertation provide the main content for the final chapter of the dissertation, Chapter 6. I conclude the dissertation by elaborating on the limitations of the research and providing suggestions for future research avenues.

2 SOCIAL MARKETING FOR A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The dissertation is positioned within and primarily contributes to the research tradition of social marketing. In this chapter, I provide an overview of social marketing by explaining its foundations, essence and aspiration. Furthermore, I discuss matters connected to social marketing for sustainability, and also briefly elaborate upon the evolution of the field and position of this dissertation within a critical social marketing paradigm.

2.1 Understanding social marketing

The birth of the social marketing discipline can be traced back to the late 1960s, when conversations began about the adaptability of marketing to challenges beyond commercial interests (Andreasen, 2003). However, examples of the utilisation of commercial marketing models when promoting social changes can be found even earlier, for instance, when slavery was abolished in the United States and campaigns around this were established (Gordon, 2018; Hastings, 2017). Kotler and Zaltman (1971) were the first to coin the term 'social marketing', which, in their work, referred to the utilisation of marketing as a sort of 'technology' that could also be applied to social issues, or as they put it, 'to influence the acceptability of social ideas' (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971). Currently, the consensus statement endorsed by the main social marketing associations defines social marketing as follows:

> *Social Marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviours that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good. Social Marketing practice is guided by ethical principles. It seeks to integrate research, best practice, theory, audience and partnership insight, to inform the delivery of competition sensitive and segmented social change programmes that are effective, efficient, equitable and sustainable.*
> *(iSMA, ESMA, AASM, 2013)*

During its years of existence, the definition of social marketing has evolved and been reiterated many times by various social marketing researchers and practitioners. The consensus definition provided above has aimed to structure a common narrative for the social marketing stream, especially to be used for different stakeholders (iSMA, ESMA, AASM, 2013). However, to date, different social marketing researchers and practitioners have utilised a variety of definitions for social marketing, and the field is not unitary (Gordon, 2018). Varying definitions have their emphasis on different matters; some highlight the techniques (e.g., the use of the 4P marketing mix model), some emphasise the preconditions (e.g., benchmark criteria of social marketing), while others put their focus on the overarching purpose of the research stream on a more general level (Dibb, 2014; French et al., 2011; Gordon et al., 2011; Lefebvre, 2011). Focusing his definition on the purpose of social marketing, Lefebvre (2011, p. 57) defines social marketing as 'the application of marketing principles and techniques to foster social change or improvement'. Largely in line with this, Gordon et al. (2011, p. 149) have stated that, social marketing is marketing for social change towards a better future. Integrating the ideas of Gordon et al. (2011) and Lefebvre (2011), and emphasising the primary aim of the field, in this dissertation I define social marketing as *marketing with a purpose of fostering social change towards greater social good*.

As currently highlighted in the field, social marketing should be regarded as strategic rather than tactical (Dibb, 2014; Gordon & French, 2019; Tapp & Rundle-Thiele, 2016). Outlined by French et al. (2010), a typical social marketing planning process includes stages of scoping (i.e., examining the issue and gathering citizen insight), developing (i.e., creating a programme based on the insights and choosing the right target group), implementing (i.e., putting the programme in action, providing an exchange and promoting it), evaluating (i.e., assessing the process, impact and cost-effectiveness) and following up (i.e., thinking about the future steps). Emphasising the strategic view of social marketing, however, has not downplayed the important roles of tactical elements such as interventions and communications campaigns as parts of "the social marketing tool kit" (Dibb, 2014, p. 1165).

2.2   A quest for greater social good

Greater social good is a phrase that is often used to describe the ultimate purpose of social marketing, and the phrase is also included in the most recent consensus

statement of the field (iSMA, ESMA, AASM, 2013). The aim for greater social good instead of commercial benefit is also important because it differentiates social marketing from commercial marketing (Brennan et al., 2014; Szablewska & Kubacki, 2019). In its quest towards greater social good, social marketing seeks to benefit both individuals and the broader society. Depending on the topic in question, the focus is sometimes solely on the well-being of the individual, sometimes on the well-being of the society, and sometimes on both (Andreasen, 1994). Although the idea of greater social good is often regarded as self-explanatory, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights has been suggested as a guiding tool in case of any doubts (Donovan, 2011; Spotswood et al., 2012; Szablewska & Kubacki, 2019). In this dissertation, the United Nations' sustainable development goals (SDGs), comprising universal objectives aiming for a sustainable future, are regarded as a similar type of guiding framework for social marketing in defining the ideas of the greater social good (Truong & Saunders, 2022).

2.2.1   Enhancing individual and/or societal well-being

One relevant discussion within social marketing revolves around the question of what exactly is social good and who decides upon it (Andreasen, 1994; Gordon et al., 2016). In social marketing, quite often, societal well-being has been assumed to be reached through enhancing the individual well-being of many (Andreasen, 2002). A good example of this is health-focused social marketing, which has also been the most common and established focus area of social marketing (Truong, 2014). Social marketers have introduced and trialled many different ways to enhance public health. In developing countries, family planning and disease prevention are examples of the focus areas of social marketing, while especially in the Western countries, social marketing has focused on, for instance, issues such as the prevention of risk behaviours for chronic diseases and the usage of alcohol and other addictive substances (Lefebvre, 2011). In public health-related topics, better individual well-being has been seen as the most promising route to societal well-being. For example, getting individuals to exercise more or to eat healthier food are seen as ways to avoid high obesity levels within society, which, in turn, also prevents chronic diseases connected to obesity (Wymer, 2010).

Some social marketers regard voluntary behaviour change and the idea of conscious exchange as central features of social marketing (e.g., Tapp & Rundle-Thiele, 2016). This refers to an understanding that social marketing should build

initiatives and programmes that induce people to change their behaviours because they want to. Closely connected to voluntary behaviour change, conscious exchange refers to the idea that that social marketing should, in a way, provide an exchange offer for behaviour changes. For instance, giving up smoking would be done in exchange for a lower probability of lung cancer and the expectation of an extended lifespan. While some researchers have resisted the idea of treating voluntary behaviour change and exchange as principles of social marketing (Donovan, 2011; Spotswood et al., 2012; Wood, 2008), they remain well-established concepts of the field.

In some concerns and contexts, individual well-being and societal well-being do not go well 'hand in hand'. There are examples where individual and societal well-being might even be at odds, and increasing individual well-being might not directly enhance societal well-being. An example of this would be providing safe places for addicts' substance use, which provides safety for the individual but does not directly contribute to solving the societal problem of drug addiction (Spotswood et al., 2012). In some cases, increasing societal well-being might mean that individuals need to make sacrifices. Consumers may, for instance, need to put effort and time into recycling or choose more time-consuming ways to travel and commute for the sake of environmental well-being. While, for some, this might also enhance individual well-being (e.g., positive feelings arising from fulfilling moral obligations), it is unlikely that this would apply to everyone. Social marketing often balances between societal and individual needs while not providing clear opinions for which is more important if they are not aligned, a concern raised by Spotswood et al. (2012).

2.2.2 Encouraging sustainable consumption and food waste reduction through social marketing

Social marketing's aim for greater social good can be applied to a broad range of challenges and contexts, including concerns related to sustainability and sustainable consumption. Traditionally, health-related topics have dominated the research and practice of social marketing (Truong, 2014). However, there are also examples from the field of how issues related to environmentally sustainable consumption have been addressed, for instance, regarding littering (Almosa et al., 2017), energy consumption (Butler et al., 2016) and environmental protection (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). Several researchers still argue that the full potential of the social marketing

field in sustainability has not yet been reached (Kemper & Ballentine, 2019; Peattie & Peattie, 2009; Truong & Saunders, 2022).

The relationship between social marketing and sustainability includes complexities (Beachcroft-Shaw & Ellis, 2020; Conroy & Allen 2010; Kennedy et al., 2017; Peattie & Peattie, 2009). Researchers have argued that the current approaches to social marketing for sustainability are limited to meet the urgent needs of the society and the environment (Article IV, Peattie & Peattie, 2009; Truong & Saunders, 2022). The adopted social marketing approaches towards sustainability-related issues have often overlooked the complex nature of these types of concerns and only focused on solving some parts of them (Carvalho & Mazzon, 2019; Conroy & Allen, 2010). Furthermore, even the term 'sustainability' itself has been interpreted in varying ways among marketing scholars (e.g., Kemper & Ballantine, 2019), which may also be one reason for developing misguided social marketing approaches for sustainability (Beachcroft-Shaw & Ellis, 2020).

Many of the complexities of enhancing sustainability through social marketing are connected to the dual purpose of social marketing in fostering both individual and societal well-being. In sustainability-related concerns, the misalignment of these is often very prominent. Changes towards sustainability are urgently needed to enhance societal well-being, but these changes do not enhance individuals' well-being and, for instance, the widely used concept of conscious exchange often becomes problematic. In sustainability issues, the gained benefit for the change is very abstract or even non-existent. It differs significantly from, for example, health-related changes that might directly contribute to the well-being of the person making the change. Furthermore, the timeframe of change in sustainability concerns often goes well beyond generations: the change is needed to ensure the well-being of future generations.

Food waste, and especially household food waste, as a sustainability concern has gained growing interest within the marketing and consumer research fields (Giordano & Franco, 2021; Gollnhofer et al., 2019; Mesiranta et al., 2021; Porpino, 2016). Governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and private companies have initiated numerous change programmes, campaigns and projects around food waste (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017; Principato, 2018). In social marketing research, the topic has started to gain some momentum. Table 2 provides an overview of the social marketing studies addressing food waste reduction.

Table 2. Social marketing studies addressing food waste

STUDY	FOCUS	APPROACH	ORIGINALITY	THEME
Fine-tuning the fight against food waste (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2018)	The study provides understanding about different consumer groups' behaviours by combining lifestyle and food waste research	Consumer survey, factor analysis and cluster analysis	Introduces different consumer segments and suggests actions and ways to target these different consumer groups in food waste reduction programmes	Providing consumer insight for food waste reduction campaigns
Utilising stakeholder theory for social marketing process evaluation in a food waste context (Hodgkins et al., 2019)	The study addresses the value of stakeholder inclusion in process evaluation	Pilot food waste programme intervention to participant group and stakeholder group surveys	Emphasises the importance of including stakeholders in the process evaluations	Developing theoretical approaches of social marketing programmes
Systematic literature review of best practice in food waste reduction programs (Kim et al., 2019)	The study investigates how social marketing benchmark criteria have been applied in household food waste programmes	Literature review focused on studies addressing 23 food waste programmes	Suggests the most effective techniques for programmes and emphasises that behaviour change is more likely when applying social marketing components into the programmes, highlighting the potential of voluntary approaches	Assessment of existing food waste reduction campaigns
Consumer perspectives on household food waste reduction campaigns (Kim et al., 2020a)	The study focuses on investigating how food waste reduction campaigns could be enhanced with rich consumer insights and co-design	Mixed method: co-design, online survey, fridge audit	Highlights involving consumers in the co-design processes of campaigns and suggests consumer preferences for campaign contents (focus on leftover-reuse behaviour, technology usage and focus on reducing vegetable food waste)	Designing food waste reduction campaigns
Outcome evaluation of an empirical study: Food waste social marketing pilot (Kim et al., 2020b)	The study assesses a pilot food waste reduction campaign based in social marketing benchmark criteria and its impact on household food waste	Consumer groups divided into programme group and control group, self-reports on food waste and questionnaires	Demonstrates the power of social marketing to reduce household food waste. Suggests that behaviour change towards less food waste is more likely if social marketing programme applies the social marketing benchmark criteria	Designing and assessing food waste campaign reduction based on its success
Reducing food waste: A practitioner guide identifying requirements for an integrated social marketing communication campaign (Pearson & Perera, 2018)	The study focuses on the ways practitioners can support consumer food waste reduction	Literature review and discussions with professionals dealing with food waste reduction in their work	Suggests content for integrated social marketing communications campaigns by specifying the needed behaviour changes and ways to address them through communication	Designing food waste reduction campaigns
Thanks, but no thanks: The influence of gratitude on consumer awareness of food waste (Septianto et al., 2020)	The study combines food waste, emotions and framing research and examines the impact of 'gratitude' in food waste reduction messages	Quantitative experiments on consumer responses	Highlights the importance of paying attention to the ways how messages are framed and emphasises the role of positive emotions in increasing the effectiveness of the messages connected to food waste reduction	Developing food waste reduction campaign framings

While the list in Table 2 is not exhaustive, it provides a concise overview of how food waste has been so far addressed in social marketing[4]. The ways in which food waste has been addressed differ; for instance, some of the studied food waste reduction programmes have included separating or composting food waste into their focus (Kim et al., 2019). As highlighted in the last column, titled 'theme', there has been an emphasis on developing and assessing food waste reduction campaigns from the perspective of social marketing (Kim et al., 2019, 2020a), consumer participation (Kim et al., 2020a), improving the messages (Pearson & Perera, 2018; Septianto et al., 2020) and increased consumer insight (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2018).

As Table 2 shows, food waste is by no means a neglected topic in social marketing research, and important work has been done around this issue. However, many of the studies reflect rather uncritical approaches towards the compatibility of the social marketing principles with food waste reduction. These studies are mainly adaptations of existing, general social marketing approaches when developing initiatives for food waste reduction. Thus, they have not utilised, for instance, literature on food waste or empirical findings made in this context to critically assess and develop novel social marketing approaches for food waste reduction. Some studies in Table 2 do include these types of more profound reflections on the current state of social marketing for food waste reduction and develop the theoretical approaches for social marketing; Hodgkins et al. (2019) provide a theoretical contribution by adopting stakeholder theory in social marketing, and Septianto et al. (2020) challenge the food waste communication messages' reliance on cognition and propose more emphasis on emotions when addressing food waste. One focus area that is missing in food waste-related social marketing but is gaining interest in the food waste research domain (Evans, 2011, 2012; Lehtokunnas et al., 2020; Sirola et al., 2019), is that of addressing food waste with social and cultural perspectives. Reasons for the scarcity of interest in this area may, however, be traced back to the roots of the social marketing field and its strong emphasis on certain theories of human action and behaviour change where rather limited attention has been given to the socio-cultural sphere.

2.3   Paradigmatic evolution of social marketing

A deep understanding of consumers' behaviour and especially consumer behaviour change has played a very central role in social marketing. Although there is no such

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[4] Only papers that have clearly indicated they are directly contributing to social marketing and address food waste reduction are included in the table.

thing as unified social marketing theory, several researchers have emphasised the importance of theory in social marketing, setting the foundations for and guiding different social marketing interventions and programmes (e.g., Brennan, 2014; Hastings, 2007; Rundle-Thiele et al., 2019). Theories are needed to make sense of human behaviour, to guide practice and to boost the efficiency and effectiveness of the change initiatives (Brennan et al., 2014; Hastings, 2007). At the same time, it must be understood that human behaviour is such a complex phenomenon that even the most developed theories of human action are unlikely to explain everything (Hastings, 2007).

The theoretical approaches to behavioural change utilised in social marketing include, for instance, cognitive, conative, affective and socio-ecological systems models (Brennan et al., 2014), of which the cognitive approach, focusing on thinking, is the most widely adopted (Wymer, 2011). These different theoretical approaches are grounded in different assumptions about the ways how market actors behave (Brennan et al., 2014). Intended or not, these assumptions are often also reflected in social marketing programmes and campaigns (Article II). For instance, initiatives that focus on providing information for the consumers about the issue in question can be regarded as grounded in an assumption of a rational individual who will change their behaviour as a consequence.

During its years of existence, the field of social marketing has undergone several growing phases, where scholars have taken different routes on different matters (for more extensive elaborations on the field's history, see, e.g., Andreasen, 2003; Dibb & Carrigan, 2013). Gordon and Gurrieri (2014) have outlined social marketing as having evolved through three paradigms: traditionalist, social ecologist and critical social marketing. While this classification is not definite, it provides a good perspective on the theoretical and even philosophical evolvement of the field.

The dominant focus in social marketing has concentrated on understanding and changing consumer behaviour by relying on individual-focused theories (Brennan et al., 2014; Spotswood et al., 2012). Gordon and Gurrieri (2014) refer to this individual-focused area of social marketing research as the 'traditionalist paradigm', which also reflects its established and dominant nature. Derived from, for instance, behavioural and cognitive theories, the individual behaviour change approach has been grounded in the assumption that behaviour change starts from inside the consumer's mind. The focus within the traditionalist paradigm has been on mainstream marketing frameworks and models (Gordon & Gurrieri, 2014). Several social marketing programmes rooted in the traditionalist social marketing paradigm have, for instance, grounded their campaigns on the 4P model, a marketing mix

framework originally created for commercial marketing (Gordon, 2012; Wood, 2008).

In particular, the traditionalist paradigm of social marketing has been criticised as being too narrow in its theory base or reproducing neoliberal ideology,[5] responsibilising individuals while neglecting the influence of the structures and institutions (Crawshaw, 2012; Gordon & Gurrieri, 2014; Gurrieri et al., 2013; Tadajewski, 2010). Especially when tackling complex issues, social marketing approaches that rely on rather simple models applied from commercial marketing have seemed inadequate to create long-term changes (Carvalho & Mazzon, 2020). Within the traditionalist paradigm, there has been a focus on reporting success stories based on the common features of social marketing practice while avoiding critical reflections on the mistakes and failures of social marketing implementations (Akbar et al., 2021).

Social marketing scholars have, however, responded to the critique and the scope of social marketing has been broadened with theoretical models that depart the individual-focused approaches and adopt an understanding of how behaviours are influenced by multiple levels or systems that are in a hierarchical relationship with each other (Collins et al., 2010). Gordon and Gurrieri (2014) refer to the second paradigm within social marketing as the social ecologist paradigm, which has gathered social marketing researchers and studies sharing this type of multi-level understanding; it has also placed interest on issues beyond the individual, such as policy, structural conditions and social norms. Within the social ecologist paradigm, insight about different topics is gained by applying a systems perspective by, for instance, looking at the problem on the individual, community and policy levels (Collins et al., 2010; Gordon, Butler, et al., 2018). Furthermore, the shift to the social ecologist paradigm has broadened the view of potential targets of different interventions to various levels. For instance, social marketing initiatives can include upstream interventions targeted at policy-makers (e.g., Gordon, 2013) or midstream interventions targeted at communities (e.g., McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). As an example, a social marketing programme rooted in the social ecologist paradigm addressing bullying at school would gain understanding about the problem by looking at it on different levels. Based on this elaboration, the programme could then choose, for instance, schoolteachers or certain school grades as its main targets of intervention.

This dissertation can be seen as joining the third, still emerging and not yet unified, paradigm referred to as critical social marketing (Gordon, 2011, 2019;

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[5]Neoliberalism is a political ideology that is rooted in ideas and ideals such as individual responsibility, deregulation and free markets (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018).

Gordon & Gurrieri, 2014). The critical social marketing paradigm involves deep introspection of social marketing that also includes ontological, epistemological and methodological questions (Gordon, 2018; Gordon & Gurrieri, 2014). Critical social marketing as a paradigm has its roots in the critical considerations of commercial marketing's harmful consequences on society (e.g., tobacco marketing, alcohol marketing; Gordon, 2011). The focus of the paradigm has, however, broadened towards internal debate within the social marketing field, where social marketing theories, concepts, discourses and practices are critically analysed in an attempt to 'generate critique, conflict and change that facilitates social good' (Gordon, 2018, p. 86).

Critical social marketing studies have addressed issues such as power relations reproduced within social marketing programmes (Gurrieri et al., 2013), unintended consequences of social marketing (Peattie et al., 2016), changing the terminology of social marketing (Spotswood, 2012) and inclusion of theories focused on the social and cultural (Gordon, Waitt, et al., 2018; Spotswood et al., 2017, 2021; Spotswood & Tapp, 2013; Waitt et al., 2016). The future of social marketing has been brought up by various researchers on different outlets (Dibb, 2014; Gordon et al., 2016; Raciti, 2021). Furthermore, there have been discussions on the ethical concerns related to social marketing and the legitimacy of the field (Dibb & Carrigan, 2013; Gordon et al., 2016). In particular, the critical social marketing paradigm has opened new avenues for interdisciplinary approaches and to find common ground with other sub-disciplines within marketing and consumer research, such as transformative consumer research (Lefebvre, 2012), macromarketing (Kemper & Ballantine, 2017; Kennedy, 2017) and services marketing (Luca et al., 2016; Russell-Bennett et al., 2013). Acknowledging the risk of oversimplifying, the ways the differences between the different paradigms are understood in this dissertation are illustrated in Figure 3.

- **NARROW PERSPECTIVE**
- Focuses on individual behaviour change by relying on traditional models applied from commercial marketing

Traditionalist paradigm

- **BROAD PERSPECTIVE**
- Challenges the traditionalist paradigm's attention on the individual with a broadened focus acknowledging different layers influencing behaviours

Social ecologist paradigm

- **DEEP PERSPECTIVE**
- Challenges social marketing theory and practice with critical reflections including ontological, epistemological and methodological considerations
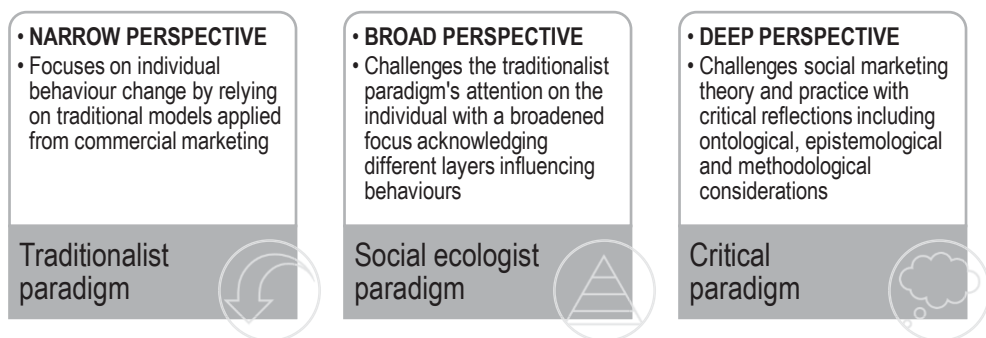
Critical paradigm

Figure 3. Social marketing paradigms

The dissertation positions itself in one contemporary area within critical social marketing: social marketing research focusing on the socio-cultural theories (Gordon, Waitt, et al., 2018; Spotswood et al., 2017, 2021; Spotswood & Tapp, 2013; Waitt et al., 2016). While culture has not been a completely neglected element in social marketing, it has often been treated as an outside force affecting behaviours and behaviour changes rather than being studied 'as it is' (Spotswood et al., 2017). Social marketing studies focusing on socio-cultural theories depart from this restrictive perspective on culture. For instance, Spotswood and Tapp (2013) studied the leisure time activity of low-income families from the perspective of Bourdieu's concept of habitus, grounding their perspective of everyday life in practice theories and suggesting a habitus-changing approach for social marketing that would include interventions regarding, for example, employment opportunities and skills training. Waitt et al. (2016) utilised Foucault's concept of governmentality to study the energy use practices of older, low-income consumers and proposed that instead of sharing information and tips, social marketing should incorporate a narrative approach reflecting collective stories to induce self-reflection about mundane practices. Some conceptual papers have also been published in relation to, for instance, the social marketing opportunities offered by practice theories (Spotswood et al., 2017; Spotswood et al., 2021). Building upon the total process planning model of social marketing (French et al., 2010), Spotswood and colleagues (2017) propose a practice-theoretical intervention planning process that reframes social marketing intervention planning phases on practices instead of individual behaviours.

While there are some interesting examples of social marketing studies applying cultural approaches to social marketing, the position of cultural theories is still minor in the field. This is despite the growing interest in cultural theories, and especially practice theories, within the parallel behaviour change-focused fields where, for instance, an increasing number of researchers have elaborated on how practice theories could be used in designing policy-level interventions (Spurling et al., 2013; Strengers & Maller, 2015; Vihalemm et al., 2015). Socio-cultural theories are grounded in specific understandings of the organisation of everyday life that, in some parts, differ significantly from the more traditionally utilised approaches in social marketing. Thus, it is definitely not a straightforward task to apply theories focused on the social and cultural into social marketing, and reflexive considerations about, for instance, the prevailing assumptions and compatibility of the socio-cultural theories and social marketing approaches are needed. While the potential of socio-cultural theories has been acknowledged within the field among some researchers, there is still a long way to go to root the socio-cultural theories as a relevant, valuable

base for social marketing. Before applying a theory to social marketing, its elements and assumptions need to be clear (Brennan et al., 2014). Thus, I have devoted the next chapter to outlining and explaining the socio-cultural approach, the interpretive framework of this dissertation.

3 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH AS THE INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I focus on the socio-cultural approach, which constitutes the interpretive framework of the dissertation. The interpretive framework comprises the theory-informed assumptions, ideas and principles of the dissertation that also provide boundaries for the theoretical, conceptual and analytical focus (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). In this chapter, I discuss the practice-theoretical roots of the socio-cultural approach and explain how the interpretive framework guides the dissertation's understanding of the organisation of everyday life and its changes. I conclude the chapter with an illustration that captures the main features of this interpretive framework.

3.1   The socio-cultural approach grounded in practice theories

Cultural theories have gained increasing attention in consumer and marketing research (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006; Visconti et al., 2020). Especially, the research stream of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) has strengthened the role of cultural perspectives in the field (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). In the studies grounded in and contributing to cultural theories, consumption, markets and marketing are seen as social and cultural phenomena (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006).

   The socio-cultural approach of this dissertation is built upon an assumption of a culturally constituted world (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006; Visconti et al., 2020). This dissertation approaches culture in a holistic manner, considering it as permeating all aspects of daily life. Departing from the 'everyday understanding' of the term, culture is not considered a static or coherent entity that can be objectified (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Instead, culture is seen as an ever-evolving system, which is constantly produced, reproduced, negotiated and contested by different market actors through everyday practices and representations (Hall, 1997). While culture is constructed by the market actors, it also steers and constrains the ways market actors behave (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Thus, the market actors within the culture

are both influenced by the culture and constantly produce, represent and shape it through their actions.

There are different forms of cultural theories and while all these theories explain and understand action and social order as reconstructions of shared or collective symbolic structures of knowledge, the 'social' and the 'cultural' are understood in different ways based on the form of cultural theory adopted (Reckwitz, 2002). The interpretive framework constructed for this dissertation, the socio-cultural approach, is rooted in the cultural theory stream of practice theories.

3.1.1   Practice-theoretical roots

Practice theories argue that 'human activity is primarily the performance of social practices' (Welch, 2016, p. 237). Practices can be described as routine-like ways of life; the normal, socially accepted ways of doings and sayings, which are performed in daily activities (Shove et al., 2012; Warde, 2016). These include, for instance, everyday practices of eating meals, cleaning and commuting to work or school. As put by Spotswood et al. (2017, p. 159): 'Much of this activity is largely routinised by the people who perform it; there are sets of quietly understood and largely unspoken rules about how, when and with what these various activities are undertaken'.

Practice theories share a flat ontology that regards the 'social' as entirely built upon practices, and no other levels of social exist (Schatzki, 2016). Thus, for practice theorists, a practice is the central – and usually the only – unit of analysis (Schatzki, 2016; Welch, 2016). One of the biggest debates among different cultural theories is the dualism between agency and structure (Warde, 2005), which refers to the debate over whether agency is considered a characteristic of an individual actor or if the structures and institutions have a major role in guiding action. As practice theories locate the social in the practices, they acknowledge both individual agency and structure without emphasising either (Reckwitz, 2002). While practice theories, in a way, escape the traditional debate over the 'location' of agency, individuals are not considered irrelevant. Instead, they are seen as important 'carriers', 'hosts' or 'performers' of practices (Schatzki, 2002; Shove et al., 2012; Reckwitz, 2002), without whom the practices would stop existing.

While there is no unified theory of practice, there are common features that different versions of practice theories share (Warde et al., 2017). They all challenge the idea of the sovereign individual and share an understanding of social order and action taking place through social practices (Schatzki, 2002; Warde, 2016). Practice

theories can be seen as rooted in early philosophical work by, for instance, Bourdieu, Giddens and Foucault.[6] The theoretical development and conceptualisation of practice theories have been done later, by the so-called second-generation practice theorists (Warde et al., 2016), who have, for instance, defined the ontological premises of practice theories (Schatzki, 2002, 2016), regarded practice theories as a distinct school of cultural theories (Reckwitz, 2002), elaborated consumption from a practice perspective (Warde, 2005) and provided conceptualisations on practice changes (Shove et al., 2012).

Practices can be considered both as entities and as performances (Warde, 2005). 'Practices as entities' refers to the idea that practices are nexuses of doings and sayings (Schatzki, 2002). While there are different viewpoints on the 'ingredients' of practices, the majority of researchers consider that practices consist of different elements or components. These elements or components make up a practice. Schatzki (2002, p. 87) defines practices as consisting of components of practical understandings, rules, teleoaffective structures and general understandings. Based on Schatzki's (2002) theorisation, Warde (2005) utilises a three-dimensional scheme of understandings, procedures and engagements. Shove and Pantzar (2005), in turn, approach practices as consisting of elements of objects, meanings and doings. Later, they clarified their element model to include meanings, materials and competences (Shove et al., 2012). The theorisations by Shove and colleagues (2010, 2012) have been utilised and developed further in consumption research, focused on, for instance, digital music consumption (Magaudda, 2011) and readjusting to routine disruptions (Phipps & Ozanne, 2017). In general, practice theories have been broadly utilised as an 'enabling theory'[7] in qualitative marketing and consumer research studies (Dolbec et al., 2021).

Practices are not only entities; they require enactments for their existence (Warde, 2005). This is highlighted in the perspective of 'practices as performances'. Performing of the doings and sayings is the way to sustain and actualise practices (Schatzki, 1996). Regarding this, different market actors have an important role as they carry out the practices in everyday life. In doing this, the market actors are the 'crossing points' of practices that are neither autonomous nor solely guided by the

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[6] For a more extensive elaboration about the historical roots and theoretical development of practice theories, please see Warde, (2014), Warde et al. (2017).

[7] Dolbec et al. (2021) propose three contributions of the utilisation of practice theories in marketing and consumer research: extending discussions on central research topics of the marketing and consumer research field, advancing the field of practice theories, and informing policy, practice or methodology (e.g., Arsel & Bean, 2013; Echeverri & Skålen, 2011; Epp et al., 2014; Thomas & Epp, 2019; Woermann & Rokka, 2015).

structures and institutions (Reckwitz, 2002). Furthermore, especially in the so-called post-humanistic practice approach, researchers have also studied how materiality, including objects and material artefacts, takes part in producing social practices (Fuentes, 2015; Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2021; Mattila et al., 2019). These studies have emphasised that material objects, such as technological appliances, may also act as catalysators of mundane practices (Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2021).

3.1.2   Culture in practice theories

While having roots in the practice-theoretical understanding of everyday life, I call the dissertation's interpretive framework the 'socio-cultural approach' instead of, for instance, the 'practice approach'. This is a deliberate choice to highlight that the interpretive framework of this dissertation is grounded upon an understanding of everyday life as a cultural system of practices. Furthermore, with this choice, I position the interpretive framework within the rather nascent stream of practice theories, highlighting the cultural nature of practices (Welch et al., 2020). This perspective appraises both the cultural and the mundane nature of practices, the latter of which is often at the core of the explanations of practices.

From the perspective of this dissertation, culture is constructed, maintained and shaped through practices. Thus, there is no culture without practices and practices are always cultural (Reckwitz, 2002). However, conceptually and analytically locating culture in practices – or locating practices in culture – includes complications due to the research efforts distinguishing practice-theoretical positioning 'consumption-as-practices' from cultural theories assessing 'consumption-in-culture' (Welch et al., 2020). The so-called 'practice turn' in scholarly research was considered to provide an alternative to the previous 'cultural turn' in consumption research (Warde, 2014, 2017). Practice theories allowed for paying attention to the previously disregarded areas, such as embodied, ordinary and non-communicative dimensions of consumption (Reckwitz, 2002; Welch et al., 2020). Thus, the 'practice turn' shifted the main focus towards the implicit culture: the routine, habitual and material, instead of the explicit culture that includes symbolic, discursive, interactional and declarative features[8] (Welch et al., 2020). During this shift in focus, many concepts and concerns relevant in previous cultural research were excluded from the practice-theoretical literature, or, as put by Halkier (2020, p. 399), 'thrown out as babies with

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[8] The dissertation adopts the concepts of implicit and explicit culture from Welch et al. (2020) who, in turn, ground their terminology in Strandell's (2019) work.

the bathwater'. For instance, the studies grounded in practice theories no longer utilised concepts of discourses, cultural representations and symbols, which had been at the centre of focus during the 'cultural turn' (Halkier, 2020; Warde, 2014). More recently, some researchers have, however, begun the renewal of the practice theories by reappraising the cultural (Welch et al., 2020). As argued by Welch et al. (2020), explicit culture is always embedded within the practices and in their elements. In line with this thinking, practices are never separate or 'free' from the cultural aspects and, thus, these should not be neglected in research either.

In this dissertation, special emphasis is put on discursive aspects of the explicit culture. The relationship between discourses and practices has been of interest among some researchers. Halkier (2020, p. 399), for instance, argues that 'food consumption and practices of provisioning, cooking and eating are both tacit, recursive, mundane activities, and at the same time discursively questioned through multiple, mediatized, cultural repertories of food'. To configurate the interrelations between practices and discourses, Welch (2020) suggests the concept of teleoaffective formation and defines it as 'a configuration across multiple practices, conditioned by a relational nexus of general understandings, that enjoins those practices to common ends and normatively orders the orientations and affective engagements of those practices' (Welch, 2020, p. 67). From this perspective, practices are seen as coordinated towards a certain, broader purpose that can be legitimated in discourses. Furthermore, other elaborations on the relationship between discourses and practices have been proposed for analytical purposes. As iterated by Keller and Halkier (2014), discourses can be considered as important symbolic resources for practices, in a way setting the ground for them. In consumer research, also weaving together the explicit culture and implicit culture, Arsel and Bean (2013) have addressed discursively constructed taste regimes as regulating and ordering practices.

3.2   Change towards sustainable consumption

Practice theories have gained attention in the sustainable consumption field (Hargreaves, 2011; Strengers & Maller, 2015; Watson, 2017), where research has shed light on the inadequacy and unsuccessfulness of individual-level theories in thoroughly understanding – and especially changing – sustainable consumption (e.g., Bouldstidge & Carrigan, 2000; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Despite the significant

research attention placed on the attitude–behaviour gap,[9] sustainable consumption is often promoted with an assumption that it is something that can be chosen, and certain attitudes and values precede the choice to 'consume sustainably' (Shove, 2010). Practice theories look at everyday life and its change from a different perspective. From a practice-theoretical point of view, sustainable consumption is produced in practices, instead of through sustainable attitudes or intentions (Keller & Halkier, 2014; Strengers & Maller, 2015; Warde, 2005).

As expressed by Watson (2016, p. 344), 'We also need fundamental changes in how we live, how we work and how we play. Sustainable consumption demands changes to our practices'. In practice-theoretical thinking, all changes are considered as arising from changes in practices, or as Warde (2005, p. 140) put it, 'sources of changed behaviour lie in the development of practices themselves'. Change is a crucial element of practice thinking. Practices are naturally dynamic and constantly changed through their performances. Research has, for instance, shown how practices of showering (Hand et al., 2005) and storing food (Shove & Southerton, 2000) have evolved over the years.

Shove et al. (2012) have provided an extensive theorisation of how practices change. Their elaboration is built upon two premises: 'practices consist of elements that are integrated when practices are enacted', and 'practices emerge, persist and disappear as links between their defining elements are made and broken' (Shove et al., 2012, p. 21). They suggest practices consisting of elements of materials, meanings and competences, and changes to these elements as a route to changes in practices (Shove et al., 2012). In sustainable consumption research, a practice-theoretical understanding of change has been utilised, for instance, when studying resistance to a ban on plastic shopping bags in Chile (Gonzales-Arcos et al., 2021) and digital shopping platforms supporting sustainable food provisioning (Samsioe & Fuentes, 2021).

Shove et al.'s (2012) account of practice changes has also been developed in other researchers' work with an attempt to inform policymaking and intervention planning. Spurling et al. (2013) conceptualise three framings for practice changes that could be utilised in policymaking. First, building upon Shove et al.'s (2012) elaboration on changes within elements, they suggest the framing of 're-crafting practices'. As another routes for supporting practice change, Spurling et al. (2013)

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[9] The attitude-behaviour gap or intention-behaviour gap, in sustainable consumption contexts, refers to the discrepancy between consumers' positive intentions or attitudes towards, for instance, sustainable product offerings, and their actual behaviours (Bouldstidge & Carrigan, 2000; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

suggest 'substituting practices' (for instance, with more sustainable practices) and 'changing how practices interlock' (with specific attention to sequences and synchronisations). Vihalemm et al. (2015) also acknowledge the practice elements of meanings, materials and competences as the point of departure when interventions are designed. They integrate Spurling et al.'s (2013) work with a diagnosis of a socio-material network and suggest 'creating new practices', 'modifications of practices', 'substituting practices' and 'interruptions of practices' as types of practice changes that can be addressed in different social change programmes (Vihalemm et al., 2015).

While a practice-theoretical account of change does not focus on individual behaviour changes, this does not mean that consumers should be disregarded. Instead, they are ultimately the ones who determine the fate of the practice based on whether they are recruited and retained to the practice or not (Watson, 2017). Sometimes the carriers of practices may initiate the change by adopting new practices or changing the ways they enact the practices (Watson, 2017). Regarding this, some actors may act as opinion leaders, frontrunners or influencers (Meah & Watson, 2011; Närvänen et al., 2019). Certain market actors may play the role of a communal consumer-citizen, a collective inspirer of others to take upon the same practices, or even that of a change agent, not only actively changing their own actions but also aiming to affect others and the society at large (Närvänen et al., 2018, 2019).

Building upon the practice theory-focused studies reappraising the cultural (Welch et al., 2020), the explicit culture also provides fertile ground for practice changes. To this end, Sahakian et al. (2020) introduced an example of the utilisation of cultural artifacts as seeds for practice change, reappraising the material culture. In their study that focused on energy consumption, they regarded indoor microclimate as a cultural artifact and studied how a temperature drop in the home shaped domestic practices. Regarding the role of discourses, which are in the special focus of this dissertation, Keller and Halkier (2014) studied media discourses as symbolic resources for everyday practices and their elements (Warde, 2005) and suggested that media discourses can also provide resources for action and change. Article III of this dissertation adopted this kind of perspective on the connection between the discourses and practice change towards food waste reduction.

3.3   The socio-cultural approach of this dissertation

The interpretive framework of the dissertation – the socio-cultural approach – is built upon an idea of the cultural system of practices representing the organisation of everyday life and its changes (Figure 4).
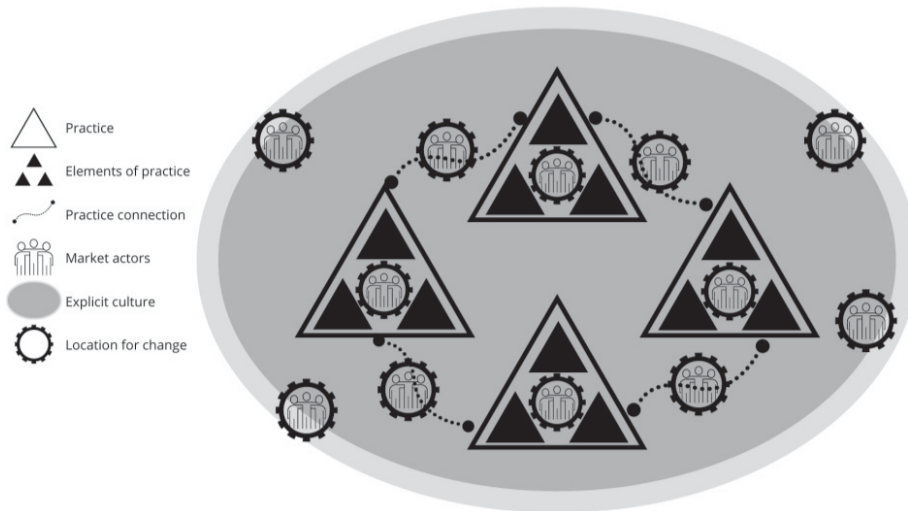
Figure 4. Cultural system of practices

Within the cultural system of practices, everyday life is seen as constructed through practices (larger triangles in Figure 4). These practices are connected with each other (dotted lines between the triangles) and are made up of different elements (black triangles inside larger triangles). In their nature, practices are mundane, socially shared and habitual ways of doings. At the same time, they are also deeply connected to the aspects of the explicit culture (grey ellipse). Different market actors, such as consumers, are seen as important carriers and performers of practices, as well as constructors of the explicit culture (people within steering cogs). Change arises from changes within the cultural system of practices in different locations (steering cogs). Practices are dynamic and are constantly shaped when they are performed, and different market actors, as carriers of practices, can contribute to change within the cultural system of practices in different ways.

In this dissertation, the socio-cultural approach informs the way in which food waste reduction is understood. The interpretive framework outlined in this chapter provides the theoretical foundation for the further elaboration on the position of social marketing and how social marketing can foster change within the cultural

system of practices – the conceptualisation of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing, which is discussed in Chapter 6. Within the cultural system of practices, particular emphasis is put on the practice element of meanings and discursive aspects of the explicit culture.

4   RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter, I elaborate the choices related to the philosophical positioning and research design that I have made during the research process. First, I will discuss the pragmatic philosophy of the dissertation. After this, I will further introduce and explain the research context and methodological choices for the individual articles. Here, I will discuss the adopted interpretive research strategy as well as provide details about the methods and data for each individual article. At the end of the chapter, I critically evaluate the quality of the research.

4.1   Pragmatism as the research paradigm

All research is guided by research philosophical understandings and assumptions. These understandings concern, for instance, what is considered meaningful, what is the nature of reality and what kind of knowledge can be acquired (Kuhn, 1996). These understandings should be in line with the choices related to the research phenomenon and the ways of gathering insight, conducting analysis, and interpreting findings (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Research-philosophical considerations that are typically assessed are those related to paradigm (e.g., what are the shared beliefs of a scholarly community?), ontology (e.g., how are the nature and characteristics of the world and reality understood?), epistemology (e.g., how can insight be gathered?) and methodology (e.g., what types of inquiry are considered relevant?) (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Tadajewski, 2004). The discussion that often dominates the research-philosophical considerations is the separation of the positivist and constructivist paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). The divide is also evident in marketing research, where rather strict distinctions have been made between the traditional positivist and post-positivistic (interpretive, constructionist and humanistic) views (Tadajewski, 2004).

   These types of considerations related to the research-philosophical questions are usually an important part of doctoral dissertations' methodology chapters. However, I have chosen a path for this dissertation that gives a new type of perspective to the philosophy of knowledge by rooting the dissertation in the pragmatic paradigm

(Morgan, 2014). Within the pragmatic paradigm, the questions referred to as ontological and epistemological are treated 'as social contexts of inquiry as a form of social action, rather than as abstract philosophical systems' (Morgan, 2014, p. 1049). Thus, for pragmatists, the questions regarding, for instance, the nature of the world, or the ways insight can be gathered, can be important when designing the research but they are not seen as abstract philosophical positions.

The route to rooting the dissertation in pragmatism has not been straightforward in this dissertation. While pragmatism is 'free' of some of the philosophical considerations, I, as a researcher, have pondered deep philosophical considerations during the research process. Quite often, pragmatism is brought up when justifying a multi-method approach (e.g., Feilzer, 2010; Morgan, 2007), and in this way, the focus has been on practicalities rather than the philosophical considerations (Morgan, 2014). In this dissertation, I, however, follow the idea presented by Morgan (2014) and consider pragmatism as a philosophical paradigm, which allows for my unconventional approach wherein I bridge socio-cultural understanding with social marketing. According to Davies (2015, p. 214), 'knowledge, to a pragmatist, is the ultimate set of truths which lead us to take better action in context'. Pragmatism accepts both the socially constructed and practical nature of knowledge (Silcock, 2015). Adopting a pragmatic philosophical approach thus simultaneously allows for making sense of consumers' everyday life with a socio-cultural approach but still enables concrete suggestions to drive change towards a better tomorrow. [10]

Pragmatism has been regarded as a characteristic of the discipline of social marketing (Hastings, 2007). Spotswood et al. (2012, p. 167) have argued that one of the biggest strengths of social marketing is that it is an 'eclectic discipline that rests upon a multi-theoretical platform, pragmatically choosing techniques that appear promising for a particular context but with appropriate ethical checks and balances'. In consumer research, pragmatism has been suggested as generating an especially fruitful research environment to create progress for societal issues, instead of creating multiple separate silos for the purpose of solving the same problem (Silcock, 2015).

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[10] I acknowledge that the socio-cultural approach outlined in Chapter 3 and many of the individual articles are grounded in a social constructionist understanding of the world and everyday life. The social constructionist view of the world does not typically take stances on how things should be done, but instead, the reality is studied as it is constructed in social interaction. However, in the dissertation, I intend to contribute to social marketing that inherently includes the idea of 'what should be done'. Positioning this dissertation in pragmatism allows the easing of this tension between social marketing's overarching objective for change and the social constructionist nature of the socio-cultural approach of the dissertation.

4.2   Interpretive research strategy

The choices related to the ways of gaining knowledge in this dissertation are based on interpretive research strategy.[11] One defining characteristic of interpretive research is that it emphasises understanding social reality instead of explaining it (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Moisander et al., 2020). As consumption related to food waste is seen as an inherently social and cultural phenomenon, the interpretive research strategy is needed to make sense of it.

4.2.1   Contexts of the dissertation

While interpretive marketing research is a heterogeneous area, it is grounded in theories and methodologies that are based on the understanding that social action can only be interpreted in context (Moisander et al., 2020). In interpretive research, knowledge is always generated in a particular time and place (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Following this idea, I want to pose two major notions about the role of contexts in this dissertation. The first is related to the research context of food waste reduction, and the second is about the Nordic cultural context of the dissertation.

Food waste reduction provides the contextual anchor, both for the dissertation as a whole and for the individual articles within it. As argued by Arnould et al. (2006, p. 107), 'Contexts are of fundamental importance to researchers in developing and testing theories'. The objective of the dissertation is to conceptualise the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction. Thus, the research phenomenon and the research context are deeply intertwined or even inseparable. Throughout the research process, I have put effort into generating a profound understanding about food waste reduction by immersing myself into the existing food waste literature and by participating in food waste related studies also beyond the articles of this dissertation (Mattila et al., 2019; Sirola et al., 2019).

Second, it is important to emphasise that in this dissertation, food waste reduction and ways to address it through social marketing are looked at from a Finnish or Nordic point of view. The dissertation therefore mirrors this specific socio-cultural context. While it is hoped that many of the findings and implications of the dissertation would apply to other contexts, it is inevitable that some of the issues in

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[11] Interpretivism is often regarded as more than a research strategy, including questions related to the philosophy of knowledge. As the dissertation is positioned within the pragmatic paradigm, I consider interpretivism as my way of gaining knowledge. Thus, I have decided to utilise the term 'interpretive research strategy'.

the studies are specific to the Finnish or Nordic cultural context. One example of this could be the relationship between food waste reduction and the Finnish ethos of economism (Huttunen & Autio, 2010), also mentioned in Article II. As identified by Raippalinna (2020), scientific-political discourse, home economics discourse and the discourse of the new urban food culture dominate Finnish media texts. These examples represent the social reality of food waste reduction in Finland, which might be very different when compared with other cultural contexts.

In line with interpretive research, the time of the study should also be acknowledged. The studies comprising this dissertation were conducted in 2016–2021, and the data utilised in the studies were published and generated in 2012–2018; thus, they represent this specific period of time, during which, for instance, food waste has increasingly gained momentum in research, public discussions and political agendas (Giordano & Franco, 2021; United Nations, 2015). Previous research has shed light on the historical changes of the Finnish socio-cultural context from a food waste reduction perspective. For instance, the virtues of food waste reduction have evolved from frugality to respect, as the society has moved from an agrarian society towards a more mature consumer society (Uusitalo & Takala, 2020). Thus, if this dissertation were conducted ten years ago or ten years from now, it would most likely look different.

4.2.2 Methodological choices for the individual articles

The dissertation consists of four related but distinct articles, some of which were co-authored with other researchers. The articles adopt different perspectives, utilise different data sets and apply different analysis methods. The chosen methodologies follow an interpretive research strategy and apply different types of qualitative methods. The strength of qualitative methodology is that it allows for assessing phenomena in their own context instead of relying on existing assumptions of, for instance, causalities between different constructs (Silverman, 2014). Table 3 summarises the methodological choices for the individual articles, while the following sections focus more deeply on describing the data and the analysis processes of the articles.

Table 3.　　Summary of the methodological choices for each article

	STUDY PURPOSE	WHAT WAS STUDIED?	MAIN DATA	ANALYSIS METHOD	LEVEL OF ANALYSIS
I	To investigate how sociocultural meanings of household food waste reduction are negotiated in social media campaigns (Finland)	Three cases of food waste reduction campaigns on social media (Finland)	- Food blogger interviews (7, conducted 2016) - Blog postings (613, published 2012–2016) - Social media postings (494, published 2016–2017) - Observation material from Food Waste Festival (2016) - Website materials (2016–2017)	Qualitative content analysis	Socio-cultural meanings of food waste
II	To identify and analyse the assumptions about consumers in food waste campaign materials	Visual food waste campaign materials (Finland & Sweden)	- Food waste campaign posters, social media pictures (91, published 2012–2018)	Visual analysis inspired by semiotics	Signs and meanings
III	To examine how market actors participate in the socio-cultural construction of the food waste issue through social media	Social media discussion on food waste research (Finland)	- Online discussion during 'Food Waste Week 2018' (3082 social media postings, published 2018)	Discourse analysis	Discourses of food waste
IV	To elucidate the potential of a socio-cultural approach to social marketing by providing different roles for social marketers	Conceptual paper with an illustrative case of food waste; a practice-theoretical lens is utilised as a 'method theory' to revise current social marketing approaches.			

4.2.3   Description of the data

As illustrated in Table 3, the data generated during the research process include both researcher-provoked and naturally occurring data[12] (Silverman, 2014). Researcher-provoked data refers to a type of data that would not exist without researchers' effort. In this dissertation, interview and observation data represent this type of data. For Article I, we conducted semi-structured interviews with Finnish food bloggers. The interviewed food bloggers were the ones actively involved with one of the studied case campaigns for food waste reduction. Due to the nature of the campaign being initiated by this group of bloggers, they were seen as important change agents (Närvänen et al., 2018; 2019) and thus purposefully selected to be invited as study participants. Several food bloggers were contacted via e-mail, and the finally altogether seven interviews were conducted. Furthermore, for Article I, I conducted event observation (campaign event of one of the studied food waste campaigns).[13]

Naturally occurring data represent the largest part of the empirical material. In the articles of this dissertation, the naturally occurring data comprised blog postings, social media postings, website materials, visual materials for food waste campaigns (including posters and social media postings) and social media discussion on Twitter. The majority of the data were gathered in Finland and, thus, the primary language of the naturally occurring data is Finnish. However, the data gathered for Article II were also from Sweden and, thus, also included Swedish text. In addition, there were some exceptions where the data included text in English. It must also be noted that while I did not provoke this data as a researcher as such, I had a major role in gathering and organising the data from different sources. As argued by Kozinets (2020, p. 191), the scientific observer has an important role in classifying something as data. For instance, certain campaign posters or social media postings were only 'forms of information' before my choice to define them as data worth studying.

In Article II, the process of generating the data included several steps; first I searched for food waste research campaigns conducted in Finland and Sweden, ending up in identifying more than 20 different campaigns. The second step included

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[12] In the dissertation, I utilise the term 'naturally occurring data' instead of 'secondary data', which is more common in marketing field. This is a deliberate choice to better highlight the data as something not provoked by the researcher without regarding it as secondary (as contrasted with primary data).

[13] Observation data is sometimes referred to as naturally occurring data (Silverman, 2014). However, here the emphasis is put on the data gathered through observation, such as pictures and field notes, that would not exist without researchers' efforts.

narrowing down the campaigns by leaving out the ones initiated by commercial actors and directed at non-consumer audiences due to social marketing and consumer focus points of the study. After this phase, 14 campaigns were left. The final step included the collection of the visual materials of the campaigns, resulting in 91 visual campaign materials that represented the data for Article II study. For Article III, the focus was put on online discussion during a food waste campaign 'Food Waste Week 2018'. Thus, there was a certain week-long timeframe for the data collection (3082 postings). The second stage of the analysis required an intensive 'dive' into the data as the focus was on the constructed discourses within the postings. To keep the analysed material manageable for the discourse analysis, the primary focus was put on online discussion during one specific date (779 postings).

Studying naturally occurring data has been seen as especially relevant when studying social phenomena 'as they are', yet this type of data is often overlooked as a valuable source for research (Silverman, 2014). In cultural research, this type of data can be referred to as 'cultural talk' (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006), highlighting it as both representing and constructing the social and cultural sphere. The use of naturally occurring data also includes some limitations, as it does not allow for, for instance, follow-up questions. Thus, experiences or feelings, for example, would be very difficult to study with this type of data at hand (Silverman, 2014).

In the dissertation, there is a clear emphasis on data gathered from the online environment and especially social media. The role of social media in today's society is undeniable. It has been estimated that 3.6 billion people were using social media in 2020, accounting for approximately 48.3% of the global population (Statista, 2021a). In Finland, where the dissertation is conducted, 80.4% of the population were active users of social media platforms in January 2021 (Statista, 2021b). In this dissertation, the line between the offline and online is considered blurred, and social media is regarded as an important site and an authentic social and cultural context, not only as a 'new' communication tool (Lefebvre, 2012). In marketing and consumer research, social media has gained increased research interest as a valuable site for data generation (Kozinets, 2020). Attention has been placed on studying consumption practices (both online and offline practices) with data gathered in online environments (Arsel & Bean, 2013; Kozinets et al., 2017; Schau et al., 2009). In social marketing research, the role of technology has also evolved from being treated as merely communication tool towards being viewed more holistically (Flaherty et al., 2021). For instance, 'social listening' of public discussions with the help of technological tools has been suggested to provide important opportunities to learn about the issues in question (Mehmet et al., 2021).

4.2.4   Analysis and interpretation

The analysis methods for each article were designed so that they would be aligned with the data and the purpose of the study. As illustrated in Table 3, different methods are used in different articles. Altogether, the analysis methods followed strongly inductive, data-driven reasoning, with some elements from abductive, theory-guiding reasoning. I (or 'we' in the co-authored articles), however, acknowledged that purely inductive reasoning is seldomly possible, as the researcher is the main tool for the analysis and always conducts analysis from her own position that involves her experience, interest and pre-existing knowledge. In line with interpretive research design, I acknowledge that all research includes interpretation and is driven by the interpreter (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017).

In Article I, we aimed to understand socio-cultural meanings in the three cases of the food waste campaigns based on versatile types of data. We utilised a qualitative content analysis focused on intensive interpretation (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016) to identify the socio-cultural meanings mentioned in the interviews and/or employed in the campaigns. We identified several recurring meanings and finally combined them under three main themes. The analysis was done first independently and then in negotiation with the authors, which enhanced the consistency of the findings (Silverman, 2014).

Article II's findings are based on a visual analysis method inspired by semiotics. Here, I considered visual campaign materials as 'assemblages of signs' (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The analysis followed an inductive logic, and the attention was placed on the signs within the visual campaign materials and their two layered meanings of denotations and connotations (Barthes, 1964; Fiske, 1990). In the analysis, I also focused on the connections and tensions between the different signs within the campaign materials. The process of moving from the signs towards their two layered meanings required intensive interpretation. Finally, I grouped the identified signs and their meanings together with specific attention to their connections with the portrayal of food waste and the consumer.

In Article III, we approached social media discussion from the perspective of discourse construction. The analysis process of the large data set was assisted with the Atlas.ti software tool, which allowed an easy way to perform inductive coding and provided tools for organising the codes. In the first step of the analysis, focus was put on identifying the actors behind the postings, while the second – and the main – step focused on the ways how these actors take part in the discussion. Here, we immersed ourselves in the constructive approach to discourse analysis (Phillips

& Hardy, 2002) and conducted an inductive analysis process of several phases. In the last phase of the analysis, the reasoning took more abductive elements as the discourses were reflected in relation to practice-theoretical understandings of change.

Although not an empirical study, analysis elements can be identified from Article IV as well. Here, the preparation and design of Article IV followed a defined strategy of a conceptual article proposed by Jaakkola (2020). In the article, I utilised practice theories as a 'method theory' to revise the more traditional approaches of social marketing and theorise practice-based approaches for food waste reduction for social marketers. The concluding suggestions on the roles for social marketers in practice changes are grounded in existing studies on practice change; thus, they represent abductive, theory-guiding reasoning.

Following the perspective of Moisander et al. (2020) that to understand a social phenomenon, the researcher must be aware of its cultural and social context (e.g., rules, conventions, beliefs), it was ensured that interpretations were made in context. In this dissertation, this also included considerations about the language. As the data were mainly in Finnish (part of the data for Article II also included text in Swedish), while the studies were written in English, the analysis and interpretation process included moving between languages. As a native Finnish speaker with professional working proficiency in English, this came quite naturally. I, however, utilised different procedures in different articles. For instance, in Article II, I conducted the analysis process (e.g., writing the analysis notes) in Finnish and did not switch to English until I started the writing process. In Article III, however, I began the process by naming the analysis codes with English titles. In the articles including extracts from the data (Article I and Article III), we translated the extracts just before finalising the articles and paid attention not only to the lingual accuracy but also the tone of the translation.

During the research process, significant time and effort was devoted to thoroughly immersing into the data before starting the analysis process and, based on this, I (or we) sometimes made amendments to the initial plans. In the research process of Article I, we familiarised ourselves with the food waste campaigns and their background. For Article II, the initial idea was to also include food waste reduction campaign materials from outside the Nordic countries, such as Great Britain and the United States of America. To avoid misinterpretations due to the different cultural contexts, I, however, decided to focus only on campaign materials published in the Finnish and the Swedish context. In Article III, focusing on online communication during a specific food waste campaign week, our attention was also

placed on understanding the specific procedures and traditions that are connected to the social media platform. These include, for instance, issues related to the platform's limits for postings' length and opportunities for joining discussions (e.g., through retweets). For Article III, we first considered studying the discourses of social media discussion as a whole, including all types of social media platforms. These different platforms are, however, significantly different contexts for discussion, with their own rules and procedures. Thus, we made a decision to leave out the data from, for instance, forums and blogs.

4.3   Evaluation of research

As part of an academic study, a critical, reflexive evaluation of the choices made during the research process is relevant. When adopting an interpretive research strategy, the researcher does not study phenomena from outside but instead interprets them in context and from their own perspectives and ideas. According to this line of thinking, completely objective research cannot exist. Research can never be separated from the researcher, as the whole perspective of the interpretive approach relies on the idea of the researcher-as-instrument (Sherry, 1991; Spiggle, 1994). As depicted earlier in this chapter, the research process of this dissertation included several choices that I have made along the way. These choices include both very broad, abstract considerations, such as grounding the dissertation in the pragmatic paradigm, and more detailed issues related to research design, such as choosing the most relevant data-gathering and analysis methods for each article's study. Throughout the research process, I have paid attention to acknowledging my own role and considered it very important to be transparent about twists and turns along the research journey.

The research process also included an array of ethical considerations and related procedures. In my dissertation, these considerations impacted the whole research process, from outlining the research designs to gathering and analysing the data and writing the articles and this compilation. One of the aspects of research ethical guidelines is informed consent. In Article I of the dissertation, the consent for participation was acquired from the interviewees and pseudonyms were given. When it comes to utilising online material as research data, no clear institutionalised framework for research exists and, for instance, the informed consent is often impossible to be acquired. This, however, does not mean that ethical considerations or procedures are not needed. The procedures related to online data handling in this

dissertation are in line with the protocol presented by Kozinets (2020) regarding investigative netnography. The online data utilised in the studies consisted of materials that were published on public sites with open access to anyone, not restricted by passwords or logging in to the platforms. In addition, appropriate safeguards were taken. For instance in Article III, the presented data extracts in the publication were first translated from Finnish to English and mentions about certain brand or company names were excluded. Although the topic of the study was not sensitive and did not concern vulnerable populations, the translations and leaving out the names assisted with avoiding direct traceability of the postings. In Article II, I considered it important to include pictures in the article as the study was based on visual analysis. This, however, raised some ethical concerns related to copyright issues of the original materials. The concern was finally solved by including an extra stage in the process where I sketched out mock-up food waste reduction campaign posters including elements of the identified signs in the analysis and then, a professional graphic designer, Kaisa Eskola, created the illustrations for the article.

Similar to how everyday life is understood in the dissertation as socially and culturally constructed, the agreements about the evaluation criteria of the quality of research are not 'fixed' but instead constantly (re)produced within the academic communities in negotiation among researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). Despite this, evaluation of the quality of any type of research is important. Two of the most utilised concepts when assessing the quality of scientific research are reliability and validity (Silverman, 2014). However, as these concepts are essentially rooted in positivistic research, I do not consider them the best options for evaluating inquiries of an interpretive or qualitative nature. For instance, validity as a concept is a term usually depicting the credibility of quantitative research, referring to the extent the finding represents the social phenomenon (Hammersley, 1990; Silverman, 2014). Quite often, validity is utilised as a synonym for objectivity, which is a problematic viewpoint when evaluating interpretive research that considers that being fully objective about social reality is never possible (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). As proposed by Moisander and Valtonen (2006), evaluation must always be in line with the applied research strategy. Therefore, I see the criteria proposed by Spiggle (1994), especially developed for evaluating qualitative research, as the most suitable. Spiggle's (1994, p. 500) criteria focus on the textual representation of the research and consist of reflections on usefulness, innovation, integration, resonance and adequacy.

Spiggle (1994, p. 500) summarises usefulness into the question: 'Does the work aid in furthering inquiry?'. The research phenomenon of the dissertation is

positioned in areas with constantly increasing scholarly attention. Steering change towards sustainability is currently an interest of several consumer researchers and marketing scholars (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019). The specific domain of this dissertation, food waste reduction, has been gaining more and more attention in academia (Giordano & Franco, 2021). In this dissertation, I have paid attention to the connections with earlier research on social marketing and socio-cultural approaches to consumption and food waste. Constructing an avenue for fostering food waste reduction has been one of the driving motivations throughout the dissertation process. The work that has been conducted in the dissertation has been done to leverage the potential of social marketing to be more effective in steering change towards a more sustainable future.

According to Spiggle (1994, p. 501), innovation refers to research providing constructs, ideas and frameworks for phenomena. This type of innovative viewpoint has played a significant role in this dissertation, as I have constructed bridges between different streams of research. Building upon studies adopting cultural theories in social marketing (Gordon, Waitt, et al., 2018; Spotswood et al., 2017, 2021; Spotswood & Tapp, 2013; Waitt et al., 2016), I have taken steps beyond the existing elaborations and developed a conceptualisation of a socio-cultural approach to social marketing that can also be used as a theoretical thinking tool by social marketing practitioners.

Integration refers to the capability of research to go beyond the 'identification of common themes in the data' in Spiggle's (1994, p. 501) criteria. In all of the articles of the dissertation, a special emphasis has been placed on the interpretation phase. Thus, the findings of the articles are not about describing the empirical data but providing frameworks and ideas for new types of understandings and insights. Integration has also been at the core during the writing process of this compilation part of the dissertation. Here, I have moved back and forth from the socio-cultural approach, social marketing and the findings of the individual articles with an aim to weave them together and to conclude with a unifying conceptualisation.

Resonance, in turn, takes a step away from the specific domain of the study and refers to the way in which the research also enriches understanding about other phenomena (Spiggle, 1994). While food waste reduction is the contextual anchor for the individual articles and the dissertation as a whole, the findings and the final conclusions are extended beyond this context. Especially in the final part of the dissertation, I also provide some examples of other areas where the socio-cultural approach could be of use.

Adequacy of research is connected to how well the route between the data and the findings is opened up (Spiggle, 1994, p. 501). I consider adequacy somewhat connected to reliability – the extent to which the findings are to be trusted. Making the research process transparent is one way to enhance this (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). In the studies of this dissertation, great effort has been put into describing the analysis and interpretation journey. This is supported in the dissertation's empirical articles by, for instance, providing data extracts (e.g., text citations in Article III) and offering detailed information about the data generation and analysis methods employed. In Article III, grounded in a rich set of social media data, the 'adequacy' was also enhanced with the help of the Atlas.ti analysis tool that allowed for a systematic way to code the data and provided for a platform for a broader categorisation of the codes. Adequacy is also connected to theoretical transparency, which means that the theoretical stances of the studies should be explained so that the reader understands how the interpretation has taken place (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). All articles of the dissertation, as well as this compilation part, include discussions about the theoretical stances. This includes, for instance, stating how social media postings are interpreted as cultural text in Article I and visuals are understood as constructing reality and everyday lives in Article II.

5   SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

In this chapter, I present summaries of the four individual articles that provide the basis for the dissertation. All of the articles have undergone peer-review processes in different publication outlets shaping them into their current forms. As described in the introduction chapter, several sub-objectives have been addressed during the research journey finally leading to the crystallisation of the overall objective and the main storyline of the dissertation. The summaries of the articles represent the most important turning points (or steering cogs as depicted in Figure 2, p. 24) during the dissertation process. The summaries also reflect the development of my conceptual thinking along the way and the journey towards finding the core elements for the dissertation.

5.1   Article I: Creativity, aesthetics and ethics of food waste in social media campaigns

This article, published in the *Journal of Cleaner Production* in 2018, focuses on food waste reduction campaigns on social media. The emphasis is placed on the content of the social media campaigns to understand how food waste reduction can be supported in social media settings. The study approached food waste reduction campaigns as cultural negotiators and constructors of meanings, and the main purpose of the study was to analyse how socio-cultural meanings of household food waste reduction are (re)negotiated in social media campaigns.

The theoretical approach of the article connects previous literature focused on addressing sustainability issues through social media, household food waste reduction and socio-cultural meanings of food waste. The study approaches food waste from a solution perspective and thus focuses on understanding food waste reduction rather than, for instance, reasons for its production. The study adopts a cultural perspective of consumption, meaning that consumption is always a culturally constructed activity, and thus, the socio-cultural meanings may guide, maintain and constrain how people act upon and understand different issues. These meanings are constantly produced and negotiated by different actors, and one site for this is social

media. In this study, social media is seen as a context for meaning negotiation that provides space to publicly discuss everyday life and has the potential to affect food waste levels.

The article approaches three food waste reduction campaigns conducted in Finland as case studies. The data of the study consist of different types of materials related to them, including blog texts, online discussions and social media postings. The data also include interviews with the food bloggers participating in one of the campaigns, as well as observation data.

Through analysis, three major socio-cultural themes within the food waste reduction campaigns were identified: creativity, aesthetics and ethics. These themes share a positive stance on food waste reduction. First, reducing food waste was represented as a way to engage in creative consumption. This included, for instance, creating and adapting recipes based on leftover ingredients, innovative ways for handling and storing food, creating personal food waste pledges and creating something completely new from food waste. Second, aesthetics also had a central role in the studied campaigns. This included visual aesthetics: both leftover food and 'ugly things' (e.g., rotten carrots) were presented in a beautiful way, food waste reduction was presented through transformations from waste to food –or from ugly to beautiful – and campaign materials were professional and aesthetically pleasing. The senses of taste and smell were highlighted as well. Third, ethics was an important socio-cultural meaning foregrounding food waste reduction. This was especially highlighted in the interviews but also mentioned in, for instance, blog texts and posting captions. The theme of ethics included mentions about the appreciation of food, childhood traditions, meanings of thrift, the idea of 'doing the right thing' and the overall responsibility to take care of the environment.

The three themes of socio-cultural meanings shared a positive stance on the food waste issue. Reducing food waste was represented as a way to engage in creative consumption that aestheticised waste and foregrounded more positive moral considerations. The paper suggests that this type of positive approach could be more widely adopted in social media campaigns addressing food waste reduction. For this, social media platforms offer ways to make the often private issues and practices of everyday life more public and visible, and make the meaning negotiations open for a wider public.

The article was co-authored with Elina Närvänen, Nina Mesiranta and Malla Mattila. The study was a joint research effort, and I was involved with all the stages of the research process: the research design planning, data generation, data analysis, writing process of the article and revision process of the article.

5.2   Article II: Assumptions about consumers in food waste campaigns: A visual analysis

The article, published as a chapter in an edited book, *Food Waste Management: Solving the Wicked Problem,* in 2020, sheds light on assumptions about consumers reflected by food waste reduction campaigns. As an increasing number of food waste reduction campaigns have been established and targeted at consumers, this study aimed to build knowledge of how these campaigns portray consumers and what kinds of assumptions about them the campaigns represent. The purpose of the study was to identify and analyse assumptions about consumers in food waste-related campaign materials. To achieve its purpose, the study asked 'How is food waste portrayed?' and 'How is the consumer portrayed?'.

The article views food waste campaigns from a social marketing perspective. The article discusses different theoretical approaches to behaviour change that have been adopted in social marketing (Brennan et al., 2014), focusing on cognitive, conative, affective and socio-cultural approaches. The different theoretical approaches to behaviour change emphasise different matters; the cognitive approach focuses on thinking, the conative approach on action, the affective approach on emotions and the socio-cultural approach on cultural and social surroundings. At the core of these different approaches are the prevailing assumptions about the consumers, which was the focus of this particular study.

The data of the study consist of different kinds of campaign materials published in Finland and Sweden that have been targeted at consumers and published by non-commercial actors. The focus is on the visual campaign materials, published both online and offline. The study approaches the visual campaign material as both carrying and producing meanings, participating in the construction of the social reality around the issue of food waste and food waste reduction. The analysis method was inspired by semiotics, focusing on signs and their two-layered meanings of denotation and connotation that are culturally constructed. The study approached the campaign materials as social marketing advertisements. The analysis was done with a cultural perspective, regarding the materials as 'assemblages of signs' (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006). The multi-layered analysis process concluded with the identification of six different assumptions about consumers. As part of the analysis process, a 'mock-up' poster illustrating the specific features of each assumption was created. I planned the contents of the posters, and the illustrations were created by a professional.

The study identified six different assumptions about consumers reflected in the campaign materials, both in terms of the assumed orientation of the consumer and the assumed agency of the consumer. Three of the identified assumptions – the economical, environmental, and ethical consumer – reflect how consumers are assumed to be driven in food waste reduction. In addition to these, the study identified differences concerning how capable or knowledgeable consumers are assumed to be in food waste reduction. Regarding this, assumptions of childlike, uninformed and active consumers were identified.

The identified assumptions reflect the different types of understanding of the consumer as a food waste reducer. They also mirror varying ideas of how consumers can or should act, and leave different kinds of space for change. The assumptions can also be seen as rooted in different approaches to behaviour change. For instance, the assumptions of the economical, environmental and uninformed consumer are in line with the cognitive approach, relying on the changes in thinking leading to food waste reduction. The assumption of the active consumer, on the other hand, can be connected to the conative approach or sociocultural approach, highlighting the changes in actions and the changes to the cultural context (e.g., materials connected to food waste reduction).

The study proposes that campaign materials always carry and mirror certain assumptions, intended or not. When approached from the constructionist perspective, these campaign materials and the meanings reflected by them also have a role in shaping the reality around the food waste issue and constructing the consumers' role in the process. Thus, the study highlights the importance of understanding and acknowledging these assumptions and reflecting upon them. Campaign initiators should always think about their own perspectives, their target audiences and their detailed aims. The elaboration on the six identified assumptions and especially the idea of the assumed orientation and assumed agency of the consumer, provides a good baseline for this reflection.

I was the only author of this article published as a book chapter.

5.3 Article III: Constructing the food waste issue on social media: A discursive social marketing approach

This article, published in the *Journal of Marketing Management* in 2021, focuses on the discourse construction of the food waste issue on a social media platform among several market actors. The objective of the study was to examine how market actors

participate in the socio-cultural construction of the food waste issue through social media. More detailed research questions focused on what kind of market actors participate in the discussion, what kind of food waste issue discourses can be identified from the discussion and what kind of potential for practice change these discourses have.

The theoretical framework of the study focuses on previous research on accelerating change through marketing in the context of food waste and especially highlights social marketing as a fruitful avenue to foster change. The study grounds its theoretical perspective of change in practice theories. According to practice theories, (social) change arises from changes in practices. The theoretical approach to change adopted in the study acknowledges both the concrete, routinised practices and the more abstract, discursive and interactive aspects of practices.

The research philosophy adopted in the study is constructionist, and particular attention is put on discourses that are seen as both reflecting reality and actively constructing it. Discourses are considered to be resources for practices (Keller & Halkier, 2014), and thus, discourses can also entail potential for practice changes. Social media represents one of the contemporary sites for discourse construction that allows the participation of different types of actors.

The article utilises a research approach that combines netnography and discourse analysis, called netnographic sensibility (Reid & Duffy, 2018). The paper studied a vivid online discussion on food waste during the social marketing campaign 'Food Waste Week 2018', organised in Finland, and utilised a broad data set of online postings (3082). The analysis was two-phased, first focusing on the actors participating in the discussion and then moving on to deeper analysis and interpretation of the content of the postings, paying attention to how the issue of food waste was talked about following the principles of discourse analysis.

The analysis led to the identification of different market actors participating in the discussion, including non-profit organisations, commercial organisations and individual consumers. While all these actors were equally welcome to participate in the discussion, certain actors' postings were more often reposted; thus, the share of voice varied in the discussion.

The findings shed light on different market actors constructing the issue of food waste through three discourses: explanation, exhibition and appeal. These discourses had differences in their focus and tone but also in terms of their potential to change food waste related practices. The explanation focuses on the problem of food waste, by, for example, providing facts about it. The potential for change of the explanation discourse is rooted in its possibility to shape the understanding about food waste (i.e.

one element of a practice). The exhibition discourse revolves around showing what is done in order to reduce food waste, for instance, by declaring in terms of numbers how much a market actor has managed to reduce food waste. The potential of practice change is connected to the possible normalisation of certain procedures related to food waste reduction and inspiring other carriers of practices (i.e., different market actors) to adopt changes. The third discourse, appeal, focused on the future and the changes needed to solve the problem of food waste. Furthermore, the discourse of appeal was often directed at some actor group. Appeal was the only discourse that had change and future orientation as its inherent feature. This discourse's seeds for practice change can be seen as located especially in the normatively oriented ends and engagements.

The study emphasises the importance of being aware and understanding the discourses of the complex sustainability issues, as they also provide the ground for potential changes in practices. The study also highlights the role of social marketing in maintaining and transforming these discourses. The study introduces a novel discursive approach to social marketing to better understand the socio-cultural level of the sustainability issue and considers the role of social media as a platform for socio-cultural meaning construction, which, in this way, contributes to changes in practices.

The article was co-authored with Elina Närvänen. The planning of the research design and data generation was conducted together. I had a major role in the data analysis and the writing process of the article. As the correspondent author, I was responsible for the submission and publication process that included two rounds of revisions.

5.4   Article IV: Addressing food waste with a socio-cultural approach to social marketing

This conceptual paper published in the *Journal of Social Marketing* focuses on outlining the potential of a socio-cultural approach to social marketing addressing complex sustainability issues. The paper draws on a practice-theoretical understanding of change and discusses how this perspective of change could be better incorporated in social marketing. While the article is conceptual in nature, it utilises food waste as a case through which to illustrate the concerns related to the limitations of individual-focused social marketing approaches and elucidates the opportunities of the practice-based approach. The article elaborates what the practice-based approach means for

social marketing and what kinds of roles social marketers can adopt in practice changes.

The paper joins the research paradigm of critical social marketing, urging social marketing researchers and practitioners to reflect upon the understandings and assumptions within the field and the problems that are being solved. The paper further develops the research stream focusing on understanding behaviour and change from social and cultural perspectives. The paper aims to extend the conceptual work of Spotswood et al. (2017, 2021) that has introduced practice-theoretical thinking into social marketing. Through the case of food waste, the paper conceptualises how a practice-theoretical perspective can inform the phases of 'scoping the problem' and 'developing actions' when planning a social marketing programme (French et al., 2010; Spotswood et al., 2017).

The theoretical lens adopted in the paper is based on practice-theoretical thinking that regards human activity as constructed through practices, which are routinised, socially accepted ways of life, enacted in everyday activities and made up of different elements. Building upon practice-theoretical understanding of change presented in a policymaking context (Spurling et al., 2013), as well as insights gathered in earlier socio-culturally inclined food waste research, the paper proposes and discusses three potential roles for social marketers in supporting practice changes in the context of food waste. The first role, 'social marketers as shapers of practices producing food waste', focuses on shaping the practices known to be connected by shaping the elements within them. The second role, 'social marketers as normalisers of practices reducing food waste', in turn, emphasises how social marketers can support the existing, but yet minor, food waste reduction practices so that they become more 'normal'. The third role, 'social marketers as re-organisers of practice bundles connected to food waste', emphasises social marketers' potential in shaping the linkages between different practices that are directly or indirectly connected to food waste. All these proposed roles need to be based on a profound understanding of the practices connected to the issue in question.

The paper contributes to social marketing research, and especially the critical social marketing paradigm, by deepening the understanding of what it would mean for social marketing if the main focus were shifted to creating practice changes. By utilising food waste as a case example of a sustainability issue, the paper hopes to inspire social marketing to engage more with sustainability-related topics, which are downplayed in social marketing research. The paper also contributes to food waste research by suggesting new ways to integrate the existing knowledge into action.

I was the only author of this article.

6 THE SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO SOCIAL MARKETING

In this final chapter of the dissertation, I discuss the main findings and conclusions of the research. First, I return to the dissertation's beginning and discuss how the main purpose of the dissertation – to investigate and conceptualise a socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction – is achieved. This discussion begins with the findings of individual articles and how they contribute to the conceptualisation of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction. I outline three premises that represent the core of the conceptualisation. Furthermore, I explore the implications of the developed conceptualisation for social marketing practitioners. Then, the discussion shifts to a more theoretical level by extending the approach beyond the food waste reduction context. After this, I summarise the main theoretical contributions of the dissertation. I conclude the chapter, and the whole dissertation, by discussing the limitations of the research and proposing avenues for future research.

6.1 Premises of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction

The individual articles of the dissertation are summarised in Chapter 5. As depicted in the summaries, the articles stand on their own and provide their own findings that are valuable as such. Article I develops new knowledge about how food waste reduction campaigns construct socio-cultural meanings of food waste reduction and how positive socio-cultural meanings can renegotiate the phenomenon of food waste reduction in society. Article II sheds light on how visual campaign materials reflect assumptions about consumers as reducers of food waste and how these assumptions build upon different perspectives of change. Article III provides new insight into discourses around the food waste issue and these discourses' varying potential for change. Article IV conceptually develops the potential roles of social marketing when aiming for practice changes towards lower levels of food waste.

The individual articles have investigated the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste in different ways, thus contributing to the first part of the dissertation's objective. Table 4 summarises the main findings of the articles and their contribution to social marketing. Now, it is time to move on to the conceptualisation part of the research objective by integrating and elevating the findings. The right column of Table 4 summarises the overarching statements derived from the articles. From now on, these are referred to as the *premises*[14] of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction. These premises represent the core of the developed conceptualisation.

Table 4. Main findings

	MAIN FINDINGS OF THE ARTICLE	CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIAL MARKETING ADDRESSING FOOD WASTE	PREMISES OF THE SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO SOCIAL MARKETING IN THE CONTEXT OF FOOD WASTE REDUCTION
I	We identified three positive socio-cultural themes from food waste reduction campaigns: creativity, aesthetics and ethics of food waste. Through these socio-cultural meanings, the campaigns (re)negotiated the food waste phenomenon.	Suggests a focus on positive socio-cultural meanings of food waste reduction.	
II	I depicted different assumptions about consumers in visual food waste campaign materials. These assumptions concern the assumed orientation of the consumer (economical, environmental and ethical) and the agency of the consumer (child-like, uninformed and active). The assumptions reflected different ways to conceptualise change.	Highlights how consumer-directed food waste reduction campaigns always reflect and construct assumptions about consumers, which in turn have an impact on how change towards food waste reduction is seen arising	**FOOD WASTE REDUCTION IS EMBEDDED IN THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES** **SOCIAL MARKETING PARTICIPATES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES CONNECTED TO FOOD WASTE** **FOOD WASTE REDUCTION CAN BE FOSTERED BY STEERING CHANGES IN THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES**
III	We identified different market actors participating in the online discussion on food waste and identified three main discourses from the discussion: explanation, exhibition and appeal. Seen as important resources for practices, these different discourses vary in their potential for fostering change.	Emphasises the importance of understanding the ways how the issue of food waste is discussed about, as different discourses entail varying potential for practice changes towards food waste reduction	
IV	I discussed how social marketing should focus on practice change when addressing food waste and suggested three roles for social marketers: as 'shapers of practices producing food waste', 'normalisers of practices reducing food waste' and 're-organisers of practice bundles connected to food waste'.	Outlines how shifting social marketing emphasis on practice change also shapes the roles for social marketers	

[14] A premise refers to 'a statement or idea that is accepted as being true and that is used as the basis of an argument' (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). In this dissertation, the premises provide the basis upon which the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste is grounded.

The first premise addresses the understanding of food waste-related consumption. It outlines that food waste production and food waste reduction are to be understood as embedded in and arising from the cultural system of practices. As suggested in food waste-related literature, producing food waste is seldom a conscious choice – very few people actually want to generate food waste (Evans, 2011, 2012). Instead, food waste is deeply interwoven into the cultural system of practices and connected to issues such as the temporalities and materiality of everyday life (Mattila et al., 2019). Reducing food waste is connected to all phases of the consumption cycle through practices of, for instance, scheduling for grocery purchases, managing the food pantry or using leftovers in cooking (Mattila et. al., 2019; Sirola et al., 2019).

Understanding food waste reduction as consumption embedded in and arising from the cultural system of practices is connected to the way in which social marketing should scope the problem of food waste and gain insight about it (Article IV; French et al., 2010). As I addressed in Article IV, insights about how food waste is both reduced and generated in practices are important for social marketers. Here, social marketing actors' attention is put on matters such as practices producing and reducing food waste, elements constructing these practices and the explicit culture that provides the ground for these practices. For instance, instead of gaining insight into the people producing the most food waste, the focus is put on building understanding about the routinised, socially shared ways to shop for groceries, plan meals, cook food and eat together with family and friends. Furthermore, consumers' food waste (reduction) related practices are interlinked with various practices of, for instance, retailers, catering companies, marketing agencies and policy-makers (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2016; Block et al., 2016). Thus, understandings about how consumer practices are connected to preceding 'upstream' practices of other market actors also provide valuable learning points for social marketers (Gordon, 2013). In addition, practices that reduce food waste can be seen as comprising of certain elements. As studied in Article I, food waste reduction can be connected with positive socio-cultural meanings of creativity, aesthetics and ethics. Aspects related to explicit culture are also relevant. For instance, the ways how food waste is publicly talked about – online and offline – shape the practices connected to it, and therefore, social marketers should be aware of the discourses related to the issue of food waste (Article III). Following discussions on online platforms and initiating conversations with different market actors are examples of fruitful ways for social marketers to generate this type of understanding about the explicit culture connected to food waste reduction (Article I, Article III; Flaherty et al., 2021; Mehmet et al., 2021).

The second premise clarifies how social marketing (including social marketing researchers, practitioners, campaigns and initiatives) is seen as part of the cultural system of practices. It states that social marketing participates in the construction of the cultural system of practices connected to food waste. Social marketing actors can be regarded as powerful actors, even as cultural gatekeepers (Moisander & Valtonen, 2006) who take part in maintaining the cultural system of practices but may also participate in transforming it. Thus, social marketing actors do not operate outside of the cultural system of practices but are instead market actors within this system, together with other market actors. Social marketing actors can be regarded as certain types of carriers of practices involved in the construction of practices producing and reducing food waste. For instance, social marketing can participate in the construction of positive socio-cultural meanings of food waste reduction, as we studied in Article I. Through campaigns and initiatives, social marketers may, for instance, construct food waste reduction practices as primarily money-saving practices or environmental practices, depending on the portrayed assumption related to the orientation of consumers (Article II), or make certain food waste-reducing practices more visible by sharing consumers' innovative tips for food waste reduction, as was done in one of the campaigns studied in Article I.

Social marketing actors also take part in the construction of the aspects connected to explicit culture. For example, they participate in the construction of the discourses of the food waste issue. Regarding this, social marketing actors are equipped with the potential to amplify certain discourses that hold more potential for change towards food waste reduction. With power comes responsibility and thus social marketers should avoid the trap of conveying too restricting perspectives and sustaining the existing, unsustainable cultural system of practices (Gurrieri et al., 2013; Raftopoulou & Hogg, 2010). For instance, social marketers may be tempted to follow the traditionalist social marketing approaches relying on individual behaviour changes and responsibilise individual consumers for the problem of food waste, which, at the same time, turns the focus of attention away from the other important market actors and solutions. Furthermore, solely focusing on stating facts about the amounts of food waste produced (e.g., 'Finnish consumers generate approximately X amount of food waste yearly') may also contribute to legitimising practices of generating food waste rather than fostering food waste reduction. As we discussed in Article III, which identified explanation, exhibition and appeal as the discourses of the issue of food waste in the social media discussion, some discourses provide more fertile ground for practice changes towards food waste reduction than others. Therefore, paying attention to the ways in which social marketing actors

address the issue of food waste is very important. In today's world, technological development has opened up new spaces for discussions and issue construction in which social marketing actors can also participate. In Article III, we concluded that these online platforms provide fruitful arenas for different types of discussions, where social marketers can shape the discourses connected to food waste together with other actors.

The social marketing literature often discusses the importance of choosing and understanding the target audiences and planning the programmes based on their specific characteristics (e.g., Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2018). However, based on the second premise, social marketing not only targets certain audiences but also constructs them. In Article II, where I focused on the visual materials of food waste campaigns, I identified varying assumptions related to the orientation of consumers towards the issue of food waste and their assumed level of agency as food waste reducers. It is important to acknowledge that these assumptions, shaped by the social marketers, have impacts. For instance, assuming that consumers are 'childlike' versus 'active' provides very different types of opportunities to support food waste reduction. Sometimes, these prevailing assumptions may also restrict change. Food waste reduction initiatives solely building upon an assumption about uninformed, environmentally oriented consumers may maintain a very narrow view on food waste reduction while disregarding other routes to foster that goal.

The third premise moves on to the idea of creating change. It states that fostering food waste reduction is to be done by steering changes in the cultural system of practices. This approach extends and goes beyond earlier studies that have taken the first steps towards integrating practice-theoretical thinking and social marketing (Spotswood et al., 2017; Spotswood et al., 2021). As discussed earlier in this dissertation, there are varying ways how practices become shaped (please see section 3.2). The findings of this dissertation highlight two main ways for social marketing to foster food waste reduction from within the cultural system of practices. The first relates to supporting food waste reduction by steering changes in practices, while the second is connected to steering changes in the explicit culture.

Building upon Shove et al. (2012) and Spurling et al. (2013), in Article IV, I place my emphasis on outlining how social marketers could embrace their roles in practice changes towards lower levels of food waste. As a conclusion, 'social marketers as shapers of practices producing food waste', 'social marketers as normalisers of practices reducing food waste' and 'social marketers as re-organisers of practice bundles connected to food waste' were presented as the potential roles for social marketers in practice changes. In the first role, the emphasis was on steering changes

in practices producing food waste and the idea that practice changes arise when social marketers steer changes in the elements of practices (Shove et al., 2012). Changes in practices are more likely when all elements are addressed (Welch, 2016). Social marketers could focus on, for instance, contesting existing meanings, such as the 'good provider identity' that is known to be connected to higher levels of food waste (Graham-Rowe et al., 2014), building skills related to cooking with leftovers and providing materials, such as recipe banks, to support food waste reduction.

The second role suggested in Article IV was connected to the first one by also focusing on the elements of practices, but moved the focus towards how social marketers can support the normalisation of practices that reduce food waste. In Article I, we focused especially on the element of meanings of food waste reduction and identified the positive socio-cultural meaning themes of creativity, aesthetics and ethics connected to food waste reduction. For example, in Article I, we studied food bloggers as normalisers of leftover cooking or eating products beyond their expiration date. The third role elaborated in Article IV focused on the interconnectedness of different practices connected to food waste and the potential of social marketers in reorganising the linkages (building upon Spurling et al., 2013). Regarding this, social marketers may focus their attention on understanding food waste reduction connected to several practices related to, for instance, planning, grocery shopping and cooking (Sirola et al., 2019), and acknowledging that in fostering food waste reduction, it might be beneficial to focus on practices that may seem distant from the moment when food waste is generated.

Steering changes in the explicit culture of food waste-related practices provides another opportunity for social marketing. Practices can be seen as connected to discursive aspects of the explicit culture through teleoaffective formations (Welch, 2020). This means that reducing food waste, when seen as a teleoaffective formation, configurates certain practices but is also legitimised and steered by broader constructs connected to explicit culture, such as discourses of food waste. For instance, the ways how food waste and food waste reduction are discussed among different market actors offers fruitful possibilities for social marketing to steer changes towards food waste reduction. In Article III, we suggested a discursive approach to social marketing that shifted the attention to the discourse construction of food waste. As powerful cultural actors, social marketing actors should embrace their roles in maintaining or amplifying discourses supporting food waste reduction practices and contesting or suppressing discourses prohibiting food waste reduction practices.

Figure 5. Premises of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction

Figure 5 illustrates how the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction is conceptualised in this dissertation. The conceptualisation is based on three premises. As illustrated in Figure 5, two premises provide the foundation for the approach. These premises, related to the way in which food waste reduction and the role of social marketing are regarded, are grounded in the socio-cultural understanding. These premises are also connected to the third premise at the 'tip' of the triangle that crystallises the approach's account on both how food waste is reduced and how social marketing can foster food waste reduction.

6.2   Food for thought for social marketing practitioners

Addressing food waste with a socio-cultural approach to social marketing provides new avenues for social marketing practitioners to anchor their initiatives and programmes. These practitioners include, for instance, governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations planning and running food waste initiatives. The socio-cultural approach to social marketing presented in this dissertation challenges the ways how change initiatives are often approached with the emphasis on persuading voluntary behaviour changes of individuals; a perspective in line with the neoliberal ideology of contemporary societies (Crawshaw, 2012; Gordon & Gurrieri, 2014; Gurrieri et al., 2013; Spotswood et al., 2017; Tadajewski, 2010). Addressing food waste and food waste reduction as embedded in the cultural system of practices departs significantly from these perspectives; the potential for change is not seen as located solely within the individual but to be found in several locations within the system.

   The conceptualisation developed in this dissertation may be utilised as a valuable thinking tool when planning and designing initiatives and campaigns addressing food waste reduction. To inspire practitioners to adopt this approach to fostering food waste reduction, I have developed concrete implications for guidance. These implications are built upon the three premises of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste outlined above and the implications provided in each individual article. Table 5 summarises each premise in terms of its essence from the practitioner perspective, relevant questions to be asked and concrete suggestions for action. It is hoped that these will be helpful for different types of social marketing practitioners in their mission of fostering food waste reduction. Furthermore, social marketing practitioners may also utilise these implications to critically assess and develop the approaches of their current food waste reduction campaigns and initiatives.

Table 5. Practical implications for social marketing practitioners addressing food waste reduction

	FOOD WASTE REDUCTION IS EMBEDDED IN THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES	SOCIAL MARKETING PARTICIPATES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES CONNECTED TO FOOD WASTE	FOOD WASTE REDUCTION CAN BE FOSTERED BY STEERING CHANGES IN THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES
Essence for social marketing practitioner	Consumption related to food waste should be seen as arising from socially shared ways of doings and sayings instead of individual choices, feelings or even behaviours.	Intended or not, social marketers actively construct the practices related to food waste and the broader culture around food waste	Change approaches should target practices related to food waste or the broader culture around food waste instead of individual consumers.
Relevant questions to be asked during the planning	-What kinds of practices are connected to food waste production? -What kinds of practices reduce food waste? -How (and by whom) are these food waste-related practices carried? -What kinds of elements (e.g., materials, meanings and practices) are connected to these food waste-related practices? -What kinds of aspects of the explicit culture are connected to food waste?	-How do the choices of words, pictures and tones we plan to use to reflect the problem of food waste support change? -Could the assumptions we reflect in our initiative hinder food waste reduction? -How do we want to participate in the public discussion on the topic?	-Are the planned ways for interventions in line with the way we understand the problem of food waste? -What kind of strategy do we implement to change practices? -Do we want to participate in the active shaping of the aspects of the explicit culture connected to food waste?
Concrete suggestion for action	Create new insight through, for instance, observations and (mobile) ethnography; cultivate the existing research on food waste-related consumption.	Be cautious with word choices and participate in the discussions in a considered way.	Innovate ways to disrupt practices producing food waste or find ways to support food waste reduction.

While these suggestions provide starting points for the concrete implementation of a socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste, more work is needed to further develop the implementation strategy. For instance, as noted by Spotswood et al. (2021), there is a need to alter the evaluation methods and measures so that they will not be focused solely on behaviour change.

6.3 Extending the socio-cultural approach to social marketing beyond food waste reduction

The objective of this dissertation was to investigate and conceptualise the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction. Building upon this, I will next develop a theoretical conceptualisation of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing that is no longer solely connected to the context of food waste reduction. The theoretical standpoints of the socio-cultural approach have been defined in Chapter 3. These include understandings about everyday life and its changes arising from the system of practices. However, at that point, it remained unsolved how social marketing can be incorporated into this interpretive framework.

In Figure 6, social marketing is embedded into the illustration of the cultural system of practices. Illustrated as blue people in Figure 6, social marketing is seen as one of the market actors within the system of practices: carrying the practices and holding the practices' connections with each other as well as constructing the explicit culture setting the base for the practices. Within the cultural system of practices, social marketing has different opportunities for steering change. These possibilities are marked with blue arrows. Social marketing may steer practice changes by, for instance, steering changes within the practice elements, change being more likely when several elements become shaped (Shove, 2012; Welch, 2016). Social marketing can also shape the connections between different practices. Furthermore, social marketing can contribute to change within the cultural system of practices by actively shaping the aspects related to the explicit culture, for instance, by challenging the main discourses.
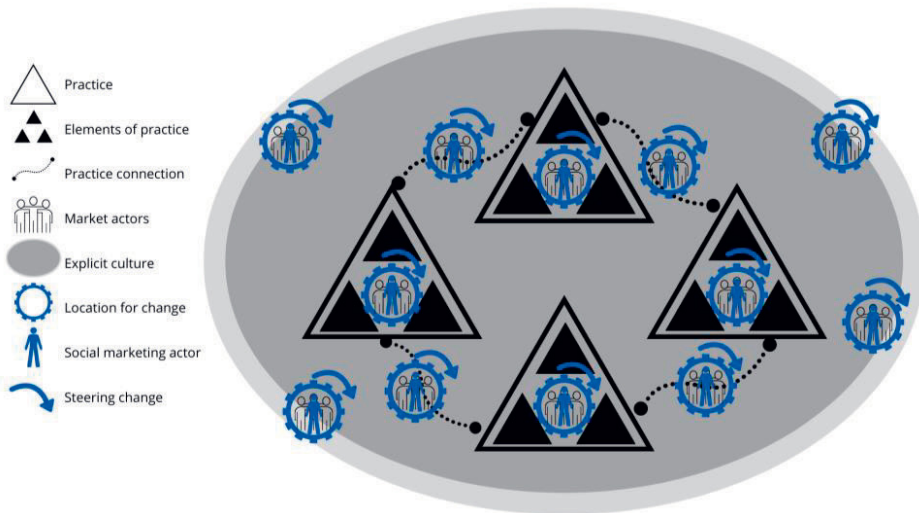
Figure 6. Social marketing within the cultural system of practices

While having its roots in the individual articles' findings connected to the context of food waste reduction, the conceptualisation of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing can be applied to other contexts as well. Especially, social marketing addressing other sustainability concerns can be regarded as potential areas where the socio-cultural approach could be more extensively adopted. Practice theories are already suggested as providing a fruitful theoretical framework for sustainability research (Watson, 2017) and have been suggested for policy interventions (Spurling et al., 2013; Vihalemm et al., 2015). However, there are still numerous untapped opportunities that the socio-cultural approach could offer for social marketing to embrace a more powerful role in changes towards sustainability. Earlier social marketing research has already, for instance, explored the ways the practice perspective can help with gathering insight about green consumption (Beatson et al., 2020). However, a socio-cultural approach to social marketing, as conceptualised in this dissertation, elaborates the potential of this interpretive framework more holistically, starting from the ontological stances. This conceptualisation can be seen as a starting point to create changes within sustainability contexts where substantial changes are urgently needed. With its emphasis beyond the individual, it also helps to overcome the issues that often get in the way of approaches that focus on individual behaviour changes when trying to foster sustainable consumption, such as the attitude–behaviour gap (Bouldstidge & Carrigan, 2000; Vermeir & Verbeke,

2006). An example of a sustainability issue that could be addressed with the socio-cultural approach is plastic recycling.

A socio-cultural approach to social marketing can also open new opportunities to address issues beyond sustainability contexts. For instance, in the social marketing literature, there are examples where practice theories have been applied in social marketing programmes when addressing the physical activity of primary school students (Spotswood et al., 2021). Placing its emphasis beyond the individual, the socio-cultural approach to social marketing can open novel opportunities for addressing various types of issues within a particular cultural context, such as the increasing global health concern related to unhealthy eating habits among children (World Health Organization, 2021) or excessive alcohol consumption in Finland (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, 2018). Table 6 provides some examples of how a socio-cultural approach can inform social marketing when approaching challenges of low levels of plastic recycling, unhealthy eating habits of children and excessive alcohol consumption.

While Table 6 provides some ideas for the adaptation of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing to different contexts, it must be noted that the means and methods always need to be adjusted within the specific context and challenge at stake. For instance, it is very different to gather insight about sensitive topics such as alcohol consumption practices compared to food waste reduction practices that may be very proudly shared, for instance, on social media. The approach developed in this dissertation is not, thus, a simple model that can be directly transferred to different contexts. Instead, being based on an interpretive framework, it should be regarded as a thinking tool, a key that can open new doors for fostering change.

Table 6.   Adapting the socio-cultural approach to social marketing for different contexts

CHALLENGE	LOW LEVELS OF PLASTIC RECYCLING	UNHEALTHY EATING HABITS OF CHILDREN	EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION
CONSUMPTION IS EMBEDDED IN THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES Relevant questions that can help with generating insight	-When looking at active recyclers of plastic, how is plastic recycling embedded in consumers' everyday lives? -How does plastic recycling connect to other forms of recycling, e.g., are there differences related to the elements between different recycling practices?	-What is the role of unhealthy food products in children's everyday life? -How does the consumption of unhealthy food connect with other practices?	-What kinds of elements (e.g., materials, meanings and competences) are connected to excessive (or moderate) alcohol consumption? -What kinds of roles does alcohol have in social situations in the specific cultural context?
SOCIAL MARKETING PARTICIPATES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES Examples of issues that should be taken into account	Social marketing actors should carefully consider how plastic recycling is portrayed, e.g., as an ecological practice or simply as 'new normal practice'.	Social marketing actors need to be aware of their choices of words and tone, e.g., words such as 'junk food' carry negative connotations.	Social marketing actors could focus more on supporting moderate alcohol consumption or sober life rather than judging excessive alcohol consumption.
CHANGE CAN BE FOSTERED BY STEERING CHANGES IN THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF PRACTICES Concrete suggestions for initiatives	-Supporting and connecting plastic recycling with other, more established practices that could be joined with plastic recycling (e.g., segregation of other types of waste) *(steering change in practice elements)*	-Shifting the cultural conventions of consumption situations where unhealthy food products play a big role, (e.g., snacking, parties) *(steering change in connections between different practices)*	-Transforming the ways in which alcohol consumption is talked about among youth *(steering change in the explicit culture)*

6.4   Summarising the theoretical contribution of the dissertation

This dissertation has three main 'destinations' for theoretical contribution (see Figure 7). First, the dissertation contributes to social marketing. With its emphasis on the purpose-focused definition of social marketing as 'marketing with a purpose of fostering social change towards greater social good' (introduced in Chapter 2.1), the whole research process has strongly focused on extending the contribution of social

marketing to social change and especially food waste reduction. The contributions of social marketing studies are often based on creating and assessing interventions for different types of behaviours. However, this dissertation and the developed conceptualisation of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing can be considered an 'intervention' to the theoretical roots of social marketing approaches. The conceptualisation developed in this dissertation extends and goes beyond the work begun by other social marketing researchers that have focused on the socio-cultural realm and, for instance, addressed the potential of combining practice thinking with social marketing (Spotswood et al., 2017; Spotswood et al., 2021). The conceptualisation of a socio-cultural approach to social marketing strengthens the role and broadens the possibilities of social marketing to foster change in the complex world. As sustainable consumption requires significant changes to practices (Watson, 2017), the socio-cultural approach to social marketing opens new avenues for social marketing actors to foster these changes. Thus, the research contributes to the ultimate aim of social marketing for the 'greater social good'. The dissertation also contributes to the critical social marketing paradigm, which has opened the stage for more reflexive research approaches and developments of the understandings and theories utilised in the field (Dibb, 2014; Gordon, 2018; Gordon & Gurrieri, 2014).

Figure 7. Theoretical contributions of the dissertation

While social marketing is considered the main area for this dissertation's contribution, it is not the only one. Through its elaboration on the socio-cultural approach, the dissertation contributes to practice theories. First, it focuses on the concern about the impracticality of practice theories raised by several researchers (e.g., Sahakian & Wilhite, 2014). The pragmatic approach of this dissertation allowed for elaborating the utilisation of practice theories when aiming for change, continuing the efforts already done in, for instance, the policy field (Spurling et al., 2013; Vihalemm et al., 2015), and also introduced recently to social marketing (Spotswood et al., 2017; Spotswood et al., 2021). Second, the dissertation further develops the 'reappraisal of the cultural' stream among practice theorists, which emphasises practices as connected to the explicit culture (Welch et al., 2020). In recent years, the materiality of practices has especially gained increasing attention, and studies have illuminated the important role of socio-material actors that previously has been somewhat neglected in practice theories (Fuentes, 2015; Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2021). This dissertation extends the knowledge, particularly about the connections between discourses and practices, which has not yet gained the research attention it would deserve (cf. Halkier, 2020; Keller & Halkier, 2014). A socio-cultural approach of the dissertation is built upon an understanding of the 'cultural system of practices', which acknowledges aspects related to the explicit culture, such as discourses, as being tightly connected to practices. Based on this type of thinking, changes in practices may be rooted in changes in, for instance, discourses, as was discussed in Article III. This extends the existing theorisations about how practices may change.

Furthermore, the dissertation makes important contributions to food waste research, which is an interdisciplinary, constantly growing stream of research (Giordano & Franco, 2021). In order to take steps towards solving the wicked problem of food waste, solution- and future-oriented perspectives are urgently needed (Närvänen et al., 2020). This dissertation contributes to solution-oriented food waste research by generating insight into how food waste reduction can be fostered and what type of role social marketing can adopt in it. The opportunities elaborated here for social marketing actors may also be applied to other market actors relevant for food waste-related practices. For instance, the employees and managers of a grocery store should be aware of their active role within the cultural system of practices connected to food waste within retail settings (Moser, 2020). While food waste has been addressed in social marketing research (as discussed in section 2.2.2), the socio-cultural approach of this dissertation raises themes that have so far remained outside the scope of social marketing research. Furthermore, the

dissertation provides new insights about food waste reduction as a socio-cultural phenomenon and arising from practices, thus contributing to socio-culturally inclined food waste studies (Evans, 2011, 2012; Lehtokunnas et al., 2020; Mattila et al., 2019; Sirola et al., 2019; Southerton & Yates, 2015). The findings of the individual articles about the socio-cultural meanings of food waste reduction, the role of social marketers in the construction of the issue (Article II) and discourses of food waste discussion (Article III) all provide novel contributions to the interdisciplinary food waste research field. In addition, while, for instance, the socio-material side of food waste and food waste reduction has recently gained more attention among food waste researchers (Alhonnoro et al., 2020; Mattila et al., 2019), this dissertation brings novelty by also acknowledging the discourses as important resources for changes in food waste-related practices.

6.5   Limitations and opportunities for future research

This dissertation has conceptualised the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of food waste reduction. This conceptualisation is rooted in the interpretive framework of the dissertation and the individual articles investigating the issue of supporting food waste reduction. This conceptualisation was also developed further by incorporating social marketing within the cultural system of practices. One limitation of the dissertation, however, is that the conceptualisation is mainly based on one specific context. While I have provided some examples to illustrate the suitability of the approach when tackling issues other than food waste, more research is needed to develop and extend the approach in other contexts. The increased interest in the use of socio-cultural theories, especially in sustainability research (Hargreaves, 2011; Watson, 2017) but also in health-related domains (Maller, 2015), could be regarded as an indication that social marketing approaches should also develop in this direction.

The conceptualisation developed in this dissertation needs to be regarded more as a thinking tool than as a concrete planning guide for social marketing practitioners. As I have laid out in section 6.2, the premises of the socio-cultural approach to social marketing can be very useful for social marketing planning. The focus of the dissertation was on the conceptualisation of how to integrate a socio-cultural approach to social marketing; thus, measuring the impact of this approach, for example, was beyond the scope of this dissertation. Therefore, future studies building upon interventions grounded in this approach are needed to further

strengthen and develop the socio-cultural approach to social marketing. Concrete examples of the implementation of the approach could also have a normalising effect and lower the barrier for other social marketers to explore new approaches for fostering change. These initiatives could, for instance, be grounded in the different roles for social marketers proposed in Article IV. Furthermore, as this research is grounded in a pragmatic paradigm, the lessons learnt in practice are important, as they help in revising the premises of the approach and may raise new and important themes.

Another limitation of the study is connected to the complexity of the socio-cultural approach. The socio-cultural approach proposed in this dissertation, rooted in the idea of a cultural system of practices, acknowledges the multiplicity and the interconnected nature of practices. To gather all the insights necessary to address different issues through social marketing might be difficult (Spotswood et al., 2021). While the socio-cultural approach regards a multiplicity of market actors as relevant carriers of practices, the main focus of this dissertation was on social marketing actors and consumers. Future research could place closer scrutiny on other actor groups and their role within the cultural system of practices connected to the issue in question. This suggestion connects with the proposal by Hodgkins et al. (2019) to apply a stakeholder approach to social marketing when addressing food waste. The multiplicity of the different market actors within the cultural system of practices was also touched upon in Article III, which noted that the discourses of food waste were constructed among various actors. Relevant actor groups shaping the cultural system of practices connected to food waste could include farmers, retailers, catering companies, food waste researchers and politicians (Article III). There might be interesting structures of power among the actors that frame the problem in a certain direction (Mesiranta et al., 2021) that could be further studied.

One specific area worthy of further research is the use of social media in social marketing. Social media platforms played an important role in this dissertation, and a large portion of the individual articles' data was online data. While the use of technology in social marketing has evolved from being merely a tool of communication towards more holistic understandings (Flaherty et al., 2021), there are still many areas that could be more extensively studied and utilised in social marketing. Social media may assist in making private practices more public, allowing space for issues that are typically invisible and providing a platform for open discussion (Article I, Article III). Thus, rather than treating social media as a site for intervention, it should be regarded as an important social context where everyday practices are shaped (Article I, Article III).

The whole dissertation process has been driven by a strong motivation to make a change in the world as a marketing scholar. Thus, the ultimate purpose of social marketing for greater social good has resonated profoundly with me. I hope that the individual studies and the dissertation as a whole can be seeds of inspiration for both researchers and practitioners interested in the ways in which changes towards a better future can be fostered. I strongly believe that there are already plenty of opportunities for this, scattered across different disciplines. We just need new bridges across different fields of knowledge – and researchers who construct and strengthen these bridges.

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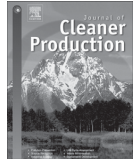
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Creativity, aesthetics and ethics of food waste in social media campaigns

Elina Närvänen, Nina Mesiranta, Ulla-Maija Sutinen and Malla Mattila

Creativity, aesthetics and ethics of food waste in social media campaigns

Elina Närvänen*, Nina Mesiranta, Ulla-Maija Sutinen, Malla Mattila

University of Tampere, Faculty of Management, Finland

A B S T R A C T

A majority of food waste in developed countries is caused by households. Previous studies have focussed on explicating reasons and contexts for food waste, whereas consumer-oriented solutions still need further study. This study investigated how sociocultural meanings of household food waste reduction were negotiated in social media campaigns. It adopted an interpretive approach through a qualitative case study and utilised interviews and online materials as data. The study identified three sociocultural themes, creativity, aesthetics and ethics of food waste, interlinked through connections with food, waste and social media. The analysis elaborated how these three broader positive sociocultural meanings were used in the studied social media campaigns to (re)negotiate the food waste phenomenon. The paper proposes that highlighting positive meanings of food waste which resonate with consumers and facilitating consumer-to-consumer communications are potential ways to address sustainability issues.

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1. Introduction

Household food waste is often considered the most problematic type of food waste, not only because of its volume (Parfitt et al., 2010) but because it can also be considered a waste of all resources, such as water, through earlier parts of the value chain (Ridoutt et al., 2010). Reducing household food waste has recently gained momentum both politically (European Commission, 2016) and in research (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017, 2015; Hebrok and Boks, 2017; Principato et al., 2015; Secondi et al., 2015; Young et al., 2017).

Previous studies have focussed on explaining why food waste emerges in households (Evans, 2012, 2011) and the nature and composition of household food waste (Hanssen et al., 2016; Jörissen et al., 2015; Katajajuuri et al., 2014). Demographic factors including education level and gender, attitudinal and behavioural patterns related to food waste and the degree of concern regarding the issue have also been identified as influencing food-waste behaviours (Principato et al., 2015; Secondi et al., 2015). Some studies have argued that while consumers may have positive attitudes towards reducing waste, the actual problem is difficult to address, because it

links to factors including consumer lifestyles, habits and beliefs about food provisioning, planning, shopping and storage (Parizeau et al., 2015; Stancu et al., 2016; Stefan et al., 2013). For instance, Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2015) argued that more than just mere motivation to reduce food waste, consumers' skills in food provisioning and handling, or making trade-offs between priorities played roles in food-waste behaviour. Accessibility and convenience were argued as more relevant than information and education in attempting to change behaviour patterns (Bernstad, 2014). However, previous research has focussed on generating knowledge of the problem rather than on possible solutions (Hebrok and Boks, 2017).

In many consumer campaigns, food waste has continued to be framed negatively as an environmental problem, highlighting consumers' individual duty and obligation to change behaviour (Evans, 2011). However, studies have shown that people usually have strong reactions to food waste compared to other types of waste (Gjerris and Gaiani, 2013). People do not want to waste food, and it evokes feelings of guilt (Blichfeldt et al., 2015; Evans, 2012) together with environmental concern (Qi and Roe, 2016). It has been suggested that the reason for strong negative reactions arises at the existential level, where food waste is experienced as disrespectful. Food represents both a physical and symbolic link between humans and nature (Gjerris and Gaiani, 2013). Hence, as Evans (2012) argued, consumers are not careless about wasting food. For instance, consumers' intention to eat in a healthy way and

provision their family might intersect with their intention to avoid waste; these are not always compatible (see e.g. Porpino et al., 2016, 2015).

According to one recent study, success factors of consumer-oriented campaigns directed at reducing household food waste included collaboration with other organisations, timing, involvement of people with the right competencies, managing attention and achieving large audiences (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017). One issue found important in these initiatives was a positive focus, which can be viewed as a facilitator of motivation. Although positive aspects were encouraged in previous research (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017; Gjerris and Gaiani, 2013), further research is needed into how these can be implemented. Researchers have also recommended focusing more on social and cultural contexts, norms and values as well as everyday conditions in which food is provisioned (Evans, 2011; Hebrok and Boks, 2017). This orientation suggests putting more emphasis on sociocultural aspects of consumption — how consumers actively construct and reconstruct as well as negotiate symbolic meanings related to food waste in everyday life (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). From this perspective, consumers are not perceived merely as passive recipients of information but rather as active participants in meaning creation. The meanings created and recreated through language and other symbolic structures (e.g. images) play an important role in how people understand and interpret the world and themselves (Berger and Luckmann, 1984).

Social media is an increasingly important platform where consumers share information, interact and negotiate meaning. Research has also begun investigating the potential of using social media in sustainability campaigns (for a review, see Pearson et al., 2016). However, only a few studies so far have focussed on using social media in food waste reduction campaigns (Comber and Thieme, 2013; Young et al., 2017). The purpose of this study is to investigate *how sociocultural meanings of household food waste reduction are negotiated in social media campaigns.* Food waste reduction provides an interesting context for studying sustainability campaigns in social media. Food has positive meanings for people, while waste is associated with something negative and unwanted. This paper aims to contribute to the literature stream related to using social media in sustainability campaigning as well as to research related to household food waste by focusing on the *content* of consumer-oriented food waste reduction campaigns rather than characteristics of the channels or objective success factors of different approaches.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Addressing sustainability issues through social media

It is impossible to disregard the current role and impact of social media. Social media refers to 'a group of Internet-based applications which build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and which allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content' (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Statistically, one-third of the global population and 71% of Internet users use social media regularly (eMarketer, 2017). It offers valuable opportunities for engagement, interactivity and dialogue, suggesting that these opportunities provide potential for organisations' communication and shareholder management (Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). Utilising social media is crucial for commercial companies (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010); non-profit organisations and public actors have also started realising social media's potential when aiming at different kinds of social goals (see e.g. Lovejoy and Saxton, 2012). For instance, different health organisations have seen social media's potential for improving people's health (see e.g. Korda and

Itani, 2013). When the world's most popular social media platform, Facebook, reached two billion monthly users in June 2017, company CEO Mark Zuckerberg highlighted the platform's responsibility over issues such as climate change (Chaykowski, 2017).

Social media contributes to sustainability in many ways, such as providing platforms for social activism and information sharing as well as supporting sustainable business practices and addressing sustainability issues in companies' business practices (Pearson et al., 2016). Burchell et al. (2013) stated that campaigns aiming at encouraging new types of social norms related to sustainable consumption increasingly rely on digital technologies and social media. Social media allows existing social norms to be made visible, creating potential to attract the wider public's interest in sustainability issues and consequently to drive pro-environmental change at individual and structural levels (Pearson et al., 2016).

For consumers, social media platforms offer arenas to publicly document, articulate and scrutinise everyday sustainable living, i.e. consumption choices and practices, often aiming to motivate and control themselves (Haider, 2016; Sörum and Fuentes, 2017). As Sörum and Fuentes (2017) pointed out, social media technologies can thus be considered Foucauldian 'technologies of the self,' helping consumers learn self-control and self-management. Short individual consumer narratives on sustainable consumption in social media create 'an online ecology of information' (Haider, 2016, p. 477) which shapes and is shaped by sustainable consumption-related collective norms and values. With neoliberalist thinking increasingly assigning responsibility to consumers for solving sustainability issues, consumer activities in social media can also be considered new forms of political consumerism, where sharing individual and private consumer acts become not only public but also collective and political (see Haider, 2016; Stolle and Micheletti, 2013; Sörum and Fuentes, 2017).

Researchers hold different viewpoints on social media's ability to affect food waste levels. Young et al. (2017), together with a large British grocery retailer, studied what types of interventions had the strongest effect on consumers' food waste behaviour. They claimed that for greater effect, conventional media should be used in the interventions instead of social media. However, this study has raised some criticism, and further inquiry is still needed on the potential of social media in helping solve the food waste problem (Grainger and Steward, 2017). In terms of food waste reduction, different types of social media interventions have been studied. Comber and Thieme (2013) conducted a study evaluating the use of BinCam (camera placed in consumers' bin, where the view was posted on Facebook) and found that triggering a self-reflection process had particular impact on consumers' food waste behaviour. Despite these efforts, research on affecting food waste levels through social media remains scarce and narrow. Previous studies have focussed on objective effects of different initiatives and interventions, while less research has examined their message content. Earlier research on social media and food waste has also concentrated more on interventions initiated by policy-makers or researchers (see Pearson et al., 2016) instead of examining consumer-to-consumer discussion.

2.2. Reducing household food waste

Previous research has produced contradictory results regarding the possibilities of affecting food waste levels. On one hand, some have suggested that campaigns aiming at reducing consumer food waste should concentrate on transforming consumers' everyday practices instead of trying to affect intentions or attitudes (Stefan et al., 2013). On the other hand, some have also argued that increasing consumers' perceived behavioural control over wasting food could have a positive effect (Koivupuro et al., 2012; Visschers

et al., 2016). Mourad (2016) went further, calling for a focus on 'strong prevention', necessitating reassessment of the whole food system and power relationships connected to it.

Many initiatives have been established around the food waste issue (see Secondi et al., 2015). Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2017) studied the success elements of initiatives focusing on consumer-related food waste. They divided the initiatives into three types, according to the supply chain parts they interacted with: information and capacity-building initiatives, redistribution initiatives, and retail and supply chain-alteration initiatives. There has also been research on design interventions, mostly focusing on packaging-, refrigerator-, and freezer-related innovations (for a review, see Hebrok and Boks, 2017).

Gjerris and Gaiani (2013) suggested three strategies employed by initiatives aiming to reduce food waste: knowledge transfer, moralising and presenting new narratives of the good life. The first strategy has been common in food waste campaigns, especially governmental interventions (Hebrok and Boks, 2017). However, knowledge transfer does not always lead to actions (Gjerris and Gaiani, 2013). The second strategy views consumers as passive subjects who need to learn and adopt externally supplied normative standards to act more ethically or sustainably (Cherrier, 2005). According to Qi and Roe (2016), households express guilt related to food waste behaviour as well as concern over food safety and freshness related to consuming food past the expiry date. Also, the 'good provider identity' is one of the strongest barriers to reducing food waste; that is, consumers believe that in using leftovers, they could risk their family's well-being or health (Graham-Rowe et al., 2014). The third strategy calls for approaching food waste positively, including joy, appreciation and a relationship with nature (Gjerris and Gaiani, 2013). Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2017) also demonstrated the importance of humour and the appreciation of food in successful initiatives; focusing on positivity also meant not moralising consumers about negative effects of food waste.

2.3. Sociocultural meanings of food waste

This study builds on the cultural perspective of consumption as a symbolic activity (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). Culture is perceived to permeate all aspects of human life, helping people make sense of the world and themselves in it. Culture is constantly produced and reproduced, contested and negotiated in the everyday lives of its members (Hall, 1997). Consumption, on the other hand, is a thoroughly culturally constructed activity, both maintaining and recreating social and cultural meanings, values and everyday consumption practices (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006).

Prevailing sociocultural meanings guide and constrain the way people make sense of their everyday lives and how they engage in related consumption practices. Thus, these meanings make certain kinds of consumption patterns and interpretations more likely than others (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). However, consumers do not just passively reproduce cultural meanings but also actively transform and negotiate them in their daily lives. This meaning-production process also occurs in the market and by other actors, including companies and organisations (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). These meanings are also shared and continuously negotiated in social media platforms (e.g. Rokka and Moisander, 2009). To change perceptions of food waste, actors must reinterpret and renegotiate the sociocultural meanings related to it. This was the process of interest for this particular study, focusing especially on three broader sociocultural meanings: creativity, aesthetics and ethics. These meanings were selected because they variously connect the topics of food and waste as well as social media. Fig. 1 depicts how these meanings were interrelated in the framework
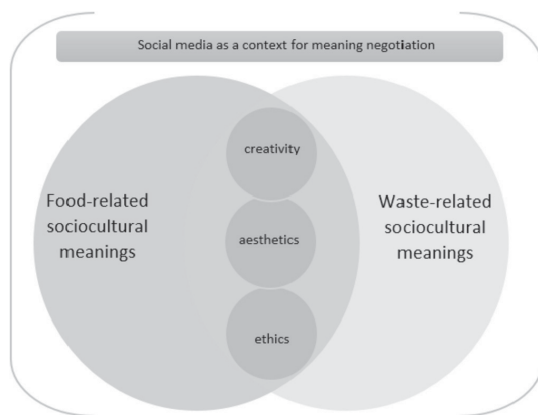

Fig. 1. Framework depicting the interrelations of food, waste and social media.

of this study.

Creativity is generally defined as the production of novel, useful ideas or problem solutions (Amabile et al., 2005). Creativity is also part of cooking and food provisioning. For chefs in haute cuisine, creativity intertwines with embodied experience of exploration and exploitation and is often guided by the utilisation of 'free mind' (intuition); this creativity is 'judged' through social recognition by customers or restaurant guides, for instance (Stierand et al., 2014). For ordinary people, kitchen creativity and improvisation is shaped by individual agency and social structure, and through actively creating something new, home cooking in everyday life can lead to social change (McCabe and de Waal Malefyt, 2013). Waste can also be a source for creativity, for example when dumpster divers create art by repairing and modifying discarded items (Fernandez et al., 2011). As consumers network through social media communities, individual creativity becomes complemented with various forms of online collective consumer creativity, enabling consumers to create new interpretations and innovations together which would not occur with individual creativity (Kozinets et al., 2008).

Aesthetics denote meanings related to multisensory knowledge and emotions as well as hedonism (Venkatesh and Meamber, 2008). Aesthetic meanings are readily available in the food context, because they entail embodied experiences gained through somatic sensations — vision, sound, taste, smell and touch (Joy and Sherry, 2003). Food as potential waste is not as easily associated with positive aesthetic experiences. However, waste can also create positive aesthetic meanings; Hawkins (2001) gave examples of waste education campaigns where organic waste was portrayed as beautiful, 'as an aesthetic of abundance' which involved relation to waste based on enjoyment rather than moral duty (p. 18–19).

Aesthetics play an important role in social media platforms, especially those emphasising visual presentations, such as Instagram. Social media allows for a range of visual presentation opportunities which extend, intensify and alter many forms of visuality (Hand, 2017). Visual aesthetics have become an important aspect of food, especially due to presentations of food on social media platforms such as food blogs (Kozinets et al., 2017). McDonnell (2016) noted that this 'food porn' is 'situated within the twin forces of conspicuous consumption online and food as an art form in the age of digital reproduction' (p. 239). In their study of online food image sharing, Kozinets et al. (2017) emphasised how public (beyond one's own private network) or professional (e.g. food bloggers) sharing of food images on social media made food

and eating public and collectively shared.

Ethics connote self-conscious emotions, which drive individuals either to follow or disregard their personal or social standards (Tracy and Robins, 2004). Emotions such as shame and guilt can be considered negative but may be transformed positively through emotions such as pride (ibid.). Issues of sustainable consumption, including practices related to waste, raise ethical concerns, such as feelings of guilt and moral duty, which help create the virtue of managing waste (Hawkins, 2001). Consumers have a collective sense of individual responsibility for sorting rubbish, based on a conscience and commitment to do something for the environment (ibid.).

Food waste conveys judgements about food as waste and waste as food as well as ecological concerns about future well-being. Watson and Meah (2012) found that consumer reluctance to waste food was rarely related to global environmental concerns like greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, consumers had a sense of responsibility towards time and money spent on food but also felt responsibility towards food itself, thus having 'an innate resistance to wasting food as an expression of an ethic of thrift' (ibid., p. 117). Blichfeldt et al. (2015), on the other hand, noted that consumers with more altruistic ideologies related to food waste, i.e. ethical reasons and feelings of guilt, seemed to produce less food waste than consumers with more hedonistic ideologies, i.e. not wasting money. Thus, these ethical meanings of sustainable consumption also arise from the role of citizen-consumer, highlighting how consumers should take responsibility for change by making consumption decisions based on sustainability issues as opposed to individual, hedonistic interests (see e.g. Stolle and Micheletti, 2013). By actively trying to reduce food waste, consumers can fulfil their civic duties and thus reduce guilt (see Blichfeldt et al., 2015). However, environmental campaigns relying on moral obligation and duties create negative rather than positive meanings (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017; Gjerris and Gaiani, 2013; Hawkins, 2001).

Consumers also negotiate and debate the moral aspects of ethical consumption on social media platforms, shown by previous research, for example, on ethical food consumption (Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014) and global travelling (Rokka and Moisander, 2009). The empirical analysis of this paper examines how meanings of food waste reduction related to creativity, aesthetics and ethics were negotiated in social media campaigns.

3. Methods

The primary aim of this study was exploratory — to build understanding of an emerging phenomenon of food waste campaigning in social media. Therefore, the research problem was approached with interpretative, qualitative methods. The core focus lies on the *content* of the social media campaigns and not their ultimate effectiveness, which is a topic for further research. The main strength of qualitative research is to offer rich holistic knowledge of a phenomenon (Silverman, 2006). In line with the interpretive paradigm, this study seeks to understand rather than explain phenomena (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). In this paradigm, reality is seen as socially constructed and containing multiple viewpoints (Berger and Luckmann, 1984) and social beings as voluntaristic and proactive (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

The study utilised qualitative case study methodology (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007; Stake, 2005), referring to a research strategy that aims to develop theory though one or multiple case examples. It enabled studying a complex research problem, generating rich research data 'in situ' and among different 'bounded systems' (campaigns). The case study methodology also enabled the use of different types of data sources (Eisenhardt and

Graebner, 2007). However, the qualitative case study method has limitations regarding the findings' generalisability. While it can provide in-depth insights, the findings need further investigation with other methods and a larger sample.

Internet and social media offer a constantly growing source of rich data for researchers, with materials such as blog texts (Haider, 2016; McQuarrie et al., 2013; Schau and Gilly, 2003), online discussion forums (Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014) and materials on Facebook groups (Sörum and Fuentes, 2017) as data sources. With the growing awareness of sustainability concerns, an increasing number of campaigns and initiatives around food waste have recently been established (see e.g. Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017; Secondi et al., 2015). This study utilised three different food waste campaigns as cases of the study, with data collected from different social media platforms.

To select the cases, a theoretical sampling method was used; in other words, cases were chosen on a basis of the opportunity to learn the most (Stake, 2005, 451) and suitability to illustrate the researched phenomenon (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The cases represented recent Finnish food waste campaigns; Table 1 summarises these cases. All chosen campaigns had certain aspects in common: they targeted consumers directly with the same driving aim — to broaden knowledge about food waste and encourage consumers to prevent and reduce it. These campaigns fall into Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2017) 'information and capacity building' initiative category. All three campaigns utilised more than one social media platform and originated in Finland (thus representing sociocultural meanings in the same cultural context).

Despite several common characteristics, the three campaigns were also heterogeneous in terms of social media platforms used and their campaign content. Different social media platforms afford different types of activities and content (see also Sörum and Fuentes, 2017). For instance, blogs are personal, diary-like platforms of mostly textual content (Schau and Gilly, 2003), Facebook is more about sharing as well as creating communities of interests and different kinds of projects (Sörum and Fuentes, 2017) and Instagram focuses on visual representations, offering a platform mainly for picture sharing. The bases of the campaigns also varied. In 'From Waste to Delicacy', the initiators were food bloggers (consumers), in 'Waste Week', the initiator was a Finnish non-governmental organisation and in 'Waste Challenge', the initiator was a company.

The data was approached as cultural talk (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006), meaning that the authors looked for sociocultural meanings employed in the campaigns to discuss food waste and related practices. According to the study's philosophical positioning, without social interaction, there would not be (any) social reality. Cultural talk, like cultural texts, are social constructions, produced, shared and used in culturally specific, socially organised ways (ibid.). The generated interview data were analysed using the qualitative content analysis method focusing on intensive interpretation (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). Visual data were first collected and then viewed carefully. Then common, repetitive themes were grouped together. Some emerging themes were the same as in the interviews and blog postings, but particularly when analysing sociocultural meanings related to aesthetics, the pictures played an important role. To ensure that the study met general quality criteria for qualitative research, the reliability and consistency of the analysis and interpretation was enhanced by all authors first analysing and interpreting the data separately and then through comparing and combining their perspectives (Silverman, 2006). To clarify the chain of analysis and interpretation for the reader, the paper's results section is supported by verbatim quotations from the data.

Table 1
Case campaigns and the data generated about them.

Case campaign	SHort description of the campaigns	Data
From Waste to Delicacy	Food bloggers (about 30) initiated the campaign in their blogs in 2012 as a short-term campaign to raise awareness of food waste. The campaign tag has continued to be used in the participating blogs.	May 2012—October 2016 • 597 blog postings (May 2012—August 2016) • 7 blogger interviews (October 2016)
Waste Week	An annual awareness-raising campaign organised by a non-governmental organisation since 2013 in Finland. Includes events, information sharing and cooperation with participating actors (companies, associations etc.).	January 2016—September 2016 • 331 Instagram pictures • 94 Facebook postings • Food Waste festival (observation September 3, 2016)
Waste Challenge	A public relations campaign organised by the largest coffee house company in Finland to reduce retailer and household food waste.	January 2016—April 2017 • 59 Instagram pictures • 10 Facebook postings • 16 blog postings • Campaign's website

4. Results and discussion

Within the themes of creativity, aesthetics and ethics, several sociocultural meanings related to household food waste reduction were identified.

4.1. Creativity in reducing food waste

The first meanings identified related to creativity in reducing food waste. Creativity in the campaign data included innovating new recipes based on ingredients, adapting recipes, and creatively using ingredients as well as creatively handling and storing food. The recipe is the foundation in modern cooking, but from the food waste viewpoint, following a recipe to the letter can be problematic, as consumers must have all listed ingredients available. If plans change or the packaging is too large for the recipe, the ingredients can easily become waste. Therefore, to minimise food waste, consumers should be more creative in cooking — abandoning an exact plan is desirable.

For example, food bloggers, who can be considered forerunners in creating recipes and tasty food, presented food waste as valuable ingredients. In the blog campaign From Waste to Delicacy, the bloggers discussed the way their skills allowed them to care less about the recipe:

I argue that the biggest reason for food waste is the lack of skills […] It's a big advantage in reducing food waste, not being dependent on recipes, but being able to adapt. ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger A, interview)

Hence, the capability to utilise food waste was presented as a specific talent. Creativity was connected to the consumer's experience accumulated through experiment and kitchen improvisation (McCabe and de Waal Malefyt, 2013). This was something food bloggers were more likely to have, because of their general interest in food and cooking. A consumer could act as an artist while creating something beautiful, tasty and useful out of waste that was not conventionally seen as such (Fernandez et al., 2011). Besides acting as artists themselves, the bloggers encouraged readers to create something new out of food waste, to be creative and to adapt recipes. *How* a recipe was written in the blog was a way to communicate with their audience that food waste was best avoided if recipes were only used as guidance. Some bloggers listed alternative ingredients in their recipes to encourage readers to use what they had instead of buying more:

Title: 'Don't care about the recipe' You don't (always) need to measure, weigh or count. As long as it's close enough. You taste it. You go with the flow. You create something out of what you have in the food pantry. Whatever you feel like. It's delicious! ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger B, blog post)

In the Waste Week campaign, meanings of creativity were also prominent. For instance, as part of the campaign, consumers were encouraged to invent and make their own waste-reduction pledge and post it on social media. Consumers promised to stop obeying expiry dates blindly, make new dishes from leftovers and use up all ingredients they bought. These pledges were made by ordinary consumers but also by celebrities and politicians. While the pledges were personal, the pledge content (what was promised) was inspired by information given by the Waste Week campaign related to the main causes of household food waste. Thus, the content created in the campaign was in line with the causes of food waste identified in research (see Hebrok and Boks, 2017). In addition to pictures of food, people posted images containing hints for reducing food waste through innovative and creative storage solutions. In one image, for instance, a consumer bought transparent food containers, explaining that they were new 'weapons' in the war against food waste.

The Waste Challenge campaign was almost entirely based on creative meanings. The campaign, organised by a coffee house, wanted to challenge food bloggers to innovate uses for coffee grounds, among other food waste. The bloggers presented ideas of how they could use coffee grounds as material for homemade cosmetic products such as exfoliator, body scrub, or a cover of grey hair. This campaign also asked consumers to send the best tips and hints for reducing food waste, similar to the Waste Week campaign.

4.2. Aesthetics of food waste

Social media with its various applications and sites allows for a range of visual presentation opportunities, enabling the aestheticisation of food waste. In the studied campaigns, this aestheticisation was somewhat similar to 'food porn' (Kozinets et al., 2017; McDonnell, 2016), but in this context, it helped move from negative meanings of food waste as something that looks and tastes bad towards more positive associations. Kozinets et al. (2017) argued that 'food porn' online made 'surrendering to gluttony something to collectively celebrate' (p. 672), increasing consumers' desire to eat. However, in the food waste reduction context, it may be used, for instance, to increase consumers' desire to use leftovers.

In all the campaigns, dishes made of leftovers or ingredients which would otherwise have become waste were portrayed in an aesthetically pleasing way. The photos were colourful and styled, the food portrayed in a very well-thought-out manner. Fig. 2 represents a collage of example pictures shared on social media by consumers in the campaigns.

The From Waste to Delicacy blog campaign could be compared to the other posts in food blogs which were not related to the campaign; in many cases, the only thing differentiating campaign posts from regular posts was the 'From Waste to Delicacy' tag. Otherwise, the foods were portrayed in the same way as other recipes on the blog. The bloggers also reported that while they might be amateur chefs, their skills in photography were good, or at least they were interested in constantly developing them.

Another aesthetic theme found in the campaigns was to deliberately present and depict 'ugly things', or things considered waste. These could be purposefully aestheticised and made more beautiful, but the mere presentation of 'waste' in blogs or social media posts could also be considered exceptional. This was because consumers were used to self-expression and identity creation through consumption and material goods. Hence, one could say consumers generally use social media to publicly present their best or desired selves, representing their identity (Schau and Gilly, 2003) and taste (McQuarrie et al., 2013). From this perspective, association with waste by posting a picture of one's bio-waste container, for instance, could be considered a radical move. Besides posting beautiful pictures of finished dishes, some consumers both in the From Waste to Delicacy campaign and Waste Week also posted photos of ingredients which were wilted or somewhat spoiled. These were often posted as 'before' and 'after' posts, concretely showing the transformation of the food from 'waste' to 'delicacy'.

Especially in the visual data, such as Instagram postings, food waste was often presented in bright colours. While food waste is often seen as ugly and colourless, like the contents of biodegradable waste containers, in these pictures, the foods, such as smoothies and vegetable soups, had bright colours. One picture posted by the Waste Week portrayed damaged fruits with brown spots, but the outcome had a bright pink colour. Presenting the transformation from repulsive-coloured waste into tasty-looking food challenged this general way of thinking. It visualised the invisible boundary between 'food' and 'waste' that has been found to be decisive in influencing decisions of wasting or not wasting food (Evans, 2012; Watson and Meah, 2012).

Aesthetics involves a multisensory experience, and hence, other elements than the visual dimension are important when constructing aesthetic meanings for food waste (Joy and Sherry, 2003). The senses of taste and smell were also depicted in these campaigns. From Waste to Delicacy blogger described the wonderful taste of food cooked from fish that has been forgotten in the fridge:

Fig. 2. Collage of example pictures related to food waste, shared on social media.

I cooked the recipe using the leftover herrings that I bought from Herring Market event, but I presume that similar leftover fish can be found forgotten in many a fridge after Christmas […] I was totally amazed at how insanely delicious this beetroot-herring casserole finally turned out to be! ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger F, interview)

However, the technological platform restricted the creation of sensory experiences and meanings, because it is currently not possible to convey tastes and smells of food directly in social media. In some posts, consumers who prepared food from leftovers emphasised the good scents and tastes, because the photograph could not convey the full aesthetic experience. In the Waste Week campaign, associations with aesthetic experience were also promoted by inviting an artist who had made art pieces about food waste to the final event organised by the campaign. The Waste Week campaign also had a range of posters designed by marketing communications professionals, containing tips and information regarding the food waste reduction issue.

The Waste Challenge campaign's initiator company also invited several popular bloggers to participate. They posted visually rich pictures about ways of reducing food waste, similar to bloggers in the From Waste to Delicacy campaign. Many bloggers also shared their postings in their own social media accounts, and their readers took part in the campaign by sharing their own pictures, aimed at obtaining a prize offered by the blogger and the company. The Waste Challenge campaign also had a well-developed professional web page which brought this social and environmental food waste campaign to the same visual level as any other marketing material or other campaign pages of the company.

4.3. Ethics of food waste

The third meaning identified in the data related to the ethics of food waste. Many bloggers in the From Waste to Delicacy campaign and in interviews explained that the greatest motivation for participation was the moral and ethical perspective related to sustainability problems caused by food waste:

Interviewer: What made you participate in this campaign that focuses on food waste?

Interviewee: I think it is an issue that must be fixed, whether it is household food waste or restaurants and stores, we cannot afford globally to waste as much money to producing food nobody then eats. It is being produced, energy is being used and water is being used and raw ingredients and then it ends up as nothing. I think it is an issue that needs to be revealed and brought forward more. ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger G, interview)

In the Waste Challenge campaign, the initial plea directed at consumers also referred to their morals, especially denoting traditions of not wasting food which were learnt in childhood:

I was taught already at home that throwing food away is not okay. What you took on your plate, you had to also eat. Did you know that we Finnish people throw away about 400 million kilos of perfectly edible food every year? It means that about 15% of all food produced goes to the garbage bin. ('Waste Challenge' website, a company representative's tips for reducing food waste)

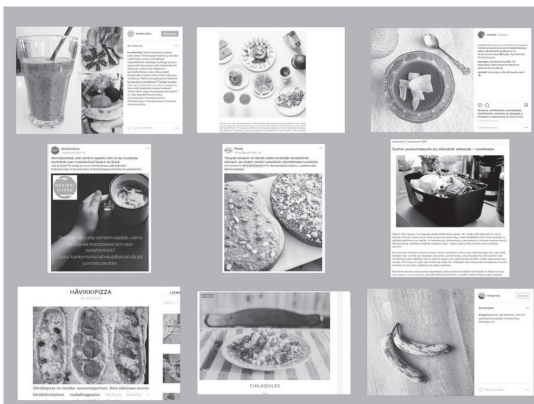However, as several researchers suggested, instead of moralising

consumer behaviour and appealing to guilt, campaigns should be directed towards more positive ethical meanings (Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2017; Gjerris and Gaiani, 2013; Hawkins, 2001). Consequently, meanings related to ethics in the campaigns also related to the appreciation of food. Bloggers in the From Waste to Delicacy campaign discussed how growing things by themselves as well as cooking the food increased the appreciation of food:

It [homegrown kale] is more precious than gold to me and it also says something about appreciating food. In part, I think that one way of reducing food waste is to cook the food by yourself. And I mean that the value of food increases when you make an effort, or if the food itself is valuable. ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger G, interview)

Hence, homegrown food was seen as more inherently valuable than something store-bought. Some pictures with the #wasteweek hashtag also represented the appreciation of homegrown food products. In these postings, home growing was mentioned in the caption. One photo had a pile of apples on a lawn, the caption indicating that these apples were now being used in different ways in the home kitchen. In another posting, a person also showed an innovative way of turning dry bread into bruschetta, using basil grown on the balcony.

A blogger in the From Waste to Delicacy campaign described how the fact that you could meet and know the people producing the food and could purchase it from them made the food feel more valuable than 'orange protein-filled food packaged in protective gas from a huge supermarket' ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger F, interview). In other words, there was clearly a hierarchy of less valuable and more valuable foods in terms of moral value. Another blogger described the whole household philosophy being 'positive towards using up waste':

Our family's food philosophy is really positive towards using up waste. Not only are we very frugal with money, we feel almost ashamed to throw away good ingredients or time spent in cooking. Similarly, we learn to use internal organs and those bits of the animal that are not so commonly used. When the animal has been killed to make us food, we think that everything should be used as fully as possible. It is not always gourmet food that is created out of leftovers, but many times the food tastes perfectly good. ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger C, blog post)

Hence, as Porpino et al. (2016) also suggested, campaigns directed at reducing food waste could focus more on saving money for the family budget by reducing waste, which would perhaps convince consumers in 'caregiver' roles.

I am happy to pay more for quality food, but I compensate by eating out less often and I am really particular about not throwing food in the garbage bin … A family of four could go eight times in the movies, visit an amusement park three times or have a spa holiday once a year with the sum that they waste. (A blogger in her post about food waste, co-operation with the 'Waste Challenge' campaign)

The above quote mentioned another meaning related to family customs in the data. This could be called 'inherited morals', describing how participating consumers and bloggers referred to their intention of not wasting food as something they had already learnt in their childhood homes (see also Watson and Meah, 2012):

I have to say that for me personally, the significance of my mum is even greater as kind of a 'conscience', because my mum is

perhaps the best killer of food waste ever, I am serious. I don't know anyone else like that. She is in all her wonderful ways almost comical. If she boils carrots, she bakes bread rolls by using that boiling water. Thumbs up for her! […] The whole waste-reduction issue was not new to me when the 'From Waste to Delicacy Campaign' was launched. It has been an issue in my life since I was zero years old. ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger G, interview)

An interesting notion from the data was that the ethical aspects were not always clearly evident in the online textual or visual data. Pictures and captions, focussed on the waste food itself, often left out the symbolic meaning of appreciation or ethics of food. However, in the interview data, ethics, food appreciation and 'doing right' represented a big part of interviewees' willingness to fight food waste, and the interviewees mentioned these themes. These themes drove anti-food waste thinking, and through positivity, such as good recipes to avoid food waste, this type of ethical thinking was communicated indirectly without blaming anyone. One blogger explained the beginning of the From Waste to Delicacy campaign:

… I felt that the interest towards the issue [reduction of food waste] increased. […] I believe in a kind of solution-orientation, that it will not change anything if you write every year that now X kilos of food goes to waste, because it is largely a question of skills and awareness. Then I thought that if we approach the issue from the positive perspective, that you go out and look for solutions to reduce food waste, practical solutions. ('From Waste to Delicacy' blogger A, interview)

4.4. Summarising discussion of key findings

This study's findings revealed the multiplicity of positive meanings related to food waste. Reducing household food waste represented an opportunity to engage in creative consumption practices and also foregrounded more positive moral considerations. Hence, the campaigns did not motivate food waste reduction through guilt but rather through more positive affective meanings like appreciation and respect. Table 2 summarises the findings related to each theme.

Even though this study did not focus on evaluating the effects of social media campaigns for household food waste reduction, it still has important insights to offer. Waste is not usually discussed or shown on social media platforms (cf. Comber and Thieme, 2013). However, online environments may provide new arenas for environmental dialogue which help create new, more sustainable consumption practices and active citizenship (Rokka and Moisander, 2009).

Social media platforms enable making the private public and the invisible visible, for instance through shared images of everyday life. The blog medium has been theorised in previous research as a way for consumers to build both social and cultural capital and act as taste leaders (McQuarrie et al., 2013). This notion was complemented by adding that bloggers and other opinion leaders, for instance on Instagram, may also operate as consumer-citizens inspiring others to change towards more sustainable consumption practices. Also, Rettie et al. (2014) suggested that showing celebrities and authority figures performing some behaviour could be effective in positioning some types of sustainable consumption behaviour as normal.

One specific feature in each studied campaign was consumers' ability to participate in the discussion. The power of transforming

Table 2
Summary of findings related to sociocultural meanings of household food waste reduction.

Theme	Sociocultural meanings related to household food waste reduction
Creativity	• Creating recipes based on leftover ingredients • Adapting recipes • Innovativeness in handling and restoring food • Food waste pledges • Creating something completely new from food waste
Aesthetics	• Beautiful visual presentations of leftover food • Aesthetic visual presentations of 'ugly things' • Transformations from waste to food • Highlighting senses of taste and smell • Professional & aesthetically pleasing campaign material
Ethics	• Appreciation of food • Childhood traditions • Meanings of thrift • Doing the 'right thing' • Sustainability and the responsibility to take care of the environment

consumers' consumption patterns was thereby moved from experts (who traditionally lead campaigns) to consumers, representing a bottom-up rather than top-down orientation. Rather than communicating about food waste reduction in a monologue from sender to receiver, social media allowed people to post their own ideas and comments and visualise how they actually approached the phenomenon in their everyday lives. In social media, new symbols, such as campaign hashtags on Twitter or tags in blogs, gathered together positive meanings related to food waste. Haider (2016) argued that hashtags could cross-connect content produced on different social media platforms and make it easier to find and create a sense of community around the sustainability issue. Similarly, hashtags used for the case campaigns helped people join the conversation. Furthermore, people could choose where they wanted to participate in the dialogue, for instance on the firms' or campaigns' websites, on their favourite food blog or in their own Instagram account. This resulted in a truly cooperative, shared communication method.

5. Conclusions

The study's objective was to investigate how sociocultural meanings of household food waste reduction were (re)negotiated in social media campaigns. The study identified three themes of sociocultural meaning used in three campaigns directed at reducing household food waste. All themes shared a positive orientation towards the issue; creativity, aesthetics and ethics of food waste included meanings that positively represented food waste reduction. The results suggested that focusing on positive aspects of reducing waste was one way to approach this sustainability issue. This perspective shifted the focus from individuals to broader sociocultural meanings of food waste.

While previous research on the food waste issue has focussed largely on determining the causes and contexts of this problem, this study's findings shed light on possible solutions. Due to the nature of the data and the focus on sociocultural meanings, however, findings cannot be generalised without reservations. Thus, further research is needed to prove the success and/or impact of similar campaigns on consumers' behaviour. Also, the study was conducted in Finland; hence, geographical location and cultural differences might have highlighted certain types of sociocultural meanings. Given these limitations, further research could, for instance, explore the actual effects of social media campaigns in the volume and nature of food waste through different methodologies, contradictions and/or negative meanings related to sociocultural meanings, or whether social media can be used to address other sustainability challenges. A potential avenue for future research

could also involve looking at different campaigns from a network perspective, focusing on different actors and their roles in the network as well as how this network changes over time.

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PUBLICATION
II

Assumptions about consumers in food waste campaigns: A visual analysis

Ulla-Maija Sutinen

Elina Närvänen, Nina Mesiranta, Malla Mattila & Anna Heikkinen (2020) (Eds.),
Food waste management: Solving the wicked problem of food waste (pp. 225–256). Palgrave Macmillan.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20561-4_9

9

Assumptions About Consumers in Food Waste Campaigns: A Visual Analysis

Ulla-Maija Sutinen

Introduction

Food waste can be regarded as a wicked problem concerning all parts of the food chain, the largest and the most significant contributor being the consumer (Stenmarck et al. 2016). There are multiple reasons behind consumer food waste, making it a very complex issue to solve (Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2017). In the tackle against consumer food waste, institutions and organisations (both for-profit and not-for-profit) can take a significant role by establishing initiatives and campaigns around reducing food waste (Principato 2018). One of the most well-known food waste campaigns is the "Love Food, Hate Waste" campaign initiated by the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) in the United Kingdom. This campaign has been suggested to be a key contributor, along with other factors such as changes to labelling and increases in food prices, to the significant reduction in food waste in the

U.-M. Sutinen (✉)
Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University,
Tampere, Finland
e-mail: ulla-maija.sutinen@tuni.fi

UK between 2007 and 2012 (Quested and Parry 2017). Similar types of food waste campaigns have been initiated around the world by different national and international institutions and organisations.

Food waste campaigns and initiatives have recently become of interest also in academic research (see, e.g., Principato 2018; Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2017). Principato (2018) identified five clusters of consumer food waste initiatives: food waste redistribution, food waste reduction, awareness-raising campaigns, food waste reuse and the sale of short-dated products. Based on research by Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2017), consumer-related food waste initiatives can also be divided into the following three categories: information and capacity building initiatives; redistribution initiatives; and retail and supply chain alteration initiatives.

Food waste campaigns and initiatives can be viewed as social marketing, and this viewpoint is adopted in this chapter. Social marketing refers to the utilisation of marketing viewpoints, techniques and theories in attempt to change consumers' behaviour for the sake of individual or societal well-being (see, e.g., Kotler et al. 2002). Although many of the food waste initiatives and campaigns have been directly targeted at the consumer, existing research has not focused on the assumptions about consumers mirrored by these initiatives. Questions about theoretical foundations of different food waste initiatives and assumptions about consumers have remained unanswered in earlier research. This chapter argues that in order to create, plan and run effective campaigns around food waste, the prevailing assumptions about consumers in the fight against food waste need to be carefully and critically evaluated.

The research reported in this chapter focuses on the assumptions about consumers in food waste-related campaign material. The main purpose of the chapter is to identify and analyse the assumptions about consumers in food waste campaign materials. To fulfil its purpose, two research questions are asked: "How is food waste portrayed in campaign materials?" and "How is the consumer portrayed in campaign materials?" In its theory section, the chapter draws on social marketing literature and its different approaches to consumer behaviour change. The research data consists of visual food waste campaign materials published in Finland and Sweden from 2012 to 2018. The analysis method is

inspired by semiotic analysis and emphasises the role of signs and their meanings (see, e.g., Ball and Smith 1992). Through intensive analysis and interpretation, six different assumptions about consumers are identified. The assumptions of economical, environmental and ethical consumer reflect the assumed orientation of consumers. The latter three assumptions, childlike, uninformed and active consumer, describe the assumed agency level of the consumer.

The research positions itself in a gap in the literature introduced by Porpino (2016), who points out the lack of marketing and consumer behaviour focus in previous food waste research, and suggests the topic of communications initiatives for mitigating food waste as an opportunity for future research. This research aims to contribute to the growing area of research around food waste reduction by focusing on the consumer perspective and viewing the campaign materials as social marketing efforts to transform consumers' behaviour towards sustainability. In addition, the research provides useful insights for food waste campaign initiators and campaign material creators; the research highlights the importance of careful and critical evaluation of the prevailing assumptions about consumers before launching any new initiatives or campaigns aiming to change consumers' behaviour.

Changing Consumer Behaviour Through Social Marketing

This chapter approaches food waste initiatives and campaigns as social marketing. The innermost purpose of food waste initiatives is to make consumers waste less food, that is, to change their behaviour. The core idea of social marketing—to "influence behaviours that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good" (iSMA 2013, p. 1)—is strongly connected to the theoretical concept of behaviour change. However, the discipline of social marketing does not aim to provide a single theory of behaviour change. Instead, it is more of a general approach to solving the troubling problems of the world (Lefebvre 2013). The main theoretical approaches to consumer behaviour change

utilised in social marketing can be roughly divided into cognitive, cona-
tive, affective and sociocultural approaches. It is important to note that
this division is not the only one presented; for instance, Brennan et al.
(2014) proposed as many as seven different theoretical approaches uti-
lised in social marketing, including a multi-theory perspective and
commercial marketing models. Next, different approaches adopted in
social marketing are reviewed. In line with the aim of this chapter, the
following approaches are based on the theoretical viewpoints as well
as the assumptions about consumers and their behaviour instead of,
for instance, strategy-level applications or methodological approaches.
To give an overall idea of how these approaches have been utilised
in the context of food waste, some illustrating case examples are also
presented.

Focus on Thinking: Cognitive Approach

The cognitive approach presents the most commonly adopted theo-
retical approach to consumer behaviour change in social marketing
(Wymer 2011). Theoretical models following this approach often have
their roots in psychology and economics. These models include, for
instance, prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979), theory of rea-
soned action (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and theory of planned behav-
iour (Ajzen 1991). The cognitive approach relies strongly on individuals
being self-reflexive, rational decision-making consumers (Spotswood
and Tapp 2013). When applied in social marketing, the assumptions
include individuals' capability to understand the risk, respond to the
message given and consciously adjust their behaviour according to
external factors (Brennan et al. 2014). Hence, the cognitive approach
depends on consumers' ability to change their behaviour after receiving
new information.

A majority of campaigns related to food waste have their roots in the
cognitive approach. For instance, Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2017) pro-
posed that a large share of food waste initiatives can be categorised as
information campaigns that share facts about the severity of food waste

problems. A well-known campaign in Great Britain, "Love Food, Hate Waste", is one example of this type of information campaign that aims at influencing consumers' behaviour regarding food waste by providing information about the consequences and magnitude of food waste (Principato 2018).

Focus on Actions: Conative Approach

The conative approach emphasises the role of the realised behaviour of the consumer and has been introduced in part to oppose the assumption of rational consumers proposed by cognitive models (Brennan et al. 2014). Within the conative approach, the focus is on the actions of consumers instead of thoughts and feelings. The approach builds upon the idea that behaviour can be changed only if the consumer does something differently. The perspective has its roots in behavioural economics. For instance, the idea of a nudge (Thaler and Sunstein 2008) relies on the conative perspective of consumer behaviour. A nudge is a perspective of behavioural economics introducing the idea that consumers can be "nudged" to make better decisions without restricting their freedom of choice (Thaler and Sunstein 2008). Within this perspective, individuals' behaviour is seen as not (always) rational, but largely habitual and unconscious instead. Furthermore, consumers are seen more as reactive than proactive (Brennan et al. 2014).

Several food waste campaigns can be seen as following the conative models of behaviour change. Some efforts have been made to ban "buy one, get two" types of discounts that often lead consumers to make excess purchases (Calvo-Porral et al. 2017). Furthermore, a research conducted in Canada found out that people do not want to see themselves as wasting more food than their peers, highlighting how comparing consumers' behaviour in relation to their peers could be a useful way to "nudge" consumers to reduce their food waste (Parizeau et al. 2015). Aschemann-Witzel et al. (2018) have suggested that the nudging approach could be especially beneficial in influencing food waste behaviour of the "least concerned" consumers.

Focus on Emotions: Affective Approach

The affective theoretical approach utilised in social marketing relies strongly on emotional engagement (Brennan et al. 2014). Within this approach, consumers are assumed to be driven (at least partly) by their unconscious emotions rather than rational cognitions (Parkinson et al. 2018) and as constantly trying to maximise the net balance between their positive and negative emotions (Brennan et al. 2014). To influence and encourage behaviour change, the key is to get consumers emotionally engaged. Evoking negative emotions, such as guilt, shame and fear, have played an important role in social marketing (Brennan and Binney 2010). The focus on negative emotions has, however, raised some critique among researchers who suggest that influencing consumers' behaviour by evoking positive feelings might actually be more effective and ethical (Hastings et al. 2004; Henley et al. 1998). In addition to emotions, theories concerning values, beliefs and norms can be positioned under this approach (Brennan et al. 2014).

In the context of food waste, some campaigns have followed this approach and have relied on consumers' feelings of guilt around wasting food by showing piles of food wasted yearly or comparing the amount of food waste with the needs of people suffering from hunger. As an opposite to provoking negative emotions, there have been some food waste campaigns aiming at evoking positive feelings about reducing food waste. For instance, in France, an award-winning campaign by a French retailer "Inglorious fruits and vegetables" displayed misshapen fruits and vegetables in a positive light to emphasise the beauty of the produce (Block et al. 2016). Furthermore, a recent study proposed that the use of anthropomorphism when selling misshapen produce triggers positive affective reactions, thereby strengthening taste perceptions and purchase intentions (Cooremans and Geuens 2019).

Focus on Cultural and Social Surroundings: Sociocultural Approach

The sociocultural approach views the consumer's behaviour and behaviour change from the perspective of the individual's environment rather

than the individual themselves (Brennan et al. 2014). According to this approach, consumers' behaviour stems from larger constructs embedded in the social and cultural surroundings of the consumer. While the aforementioned approaches emphasised processes happening "inside" the consumer's head or their realised actions, this approach focuses on the sociocultural structures shaping consumers' behaviour; to change behaviour, something has to change in the sociocultural surroundings of consumers. Theoretical approaches focusing on cultural and social aspects currently play a minority role in social marketing, although they have been applied in practice and research in some cases. Theories within this approach and utilised in social marketing research include, for instance, social practice theory (see, e.g., Spotswood et al. 2017), community-based theories (see, e.g., McKenzie-Mohr 2011) and Bourdieu's theory of habitus (see, e.g., Spotswood and Tapp 2013).

The sociocultural approach to behaviour change has not been very central in food waste initiatives. Grassroot movements and campaigns engaging consumers, however, can be regarded as examples of taking a more holistic, sociocultural perspective on food waste and consumer behaviour change. For instance, a blog campaign in Finland, "From waste to delicacy", which aimed at changing the negative connotations around food waste, could be regarded as an initiative following this approach (see, e.g., Närvänen et al. 2016, 2018).

Other Theoretical Approaches to Consumer Behaviour Change Within Social Marketing

Theories of behaviour and behaviour change are the vital foundations of social marketing research as well as initiatives and campaigns in practice. Careful consideration of the role of theory in social marketing can offer valuable benefits such as stronger outcomes and savings in money and time (Brennan et al. 2014). Although social marketing is an established field of practice and research, it has been a target of critique due to several issues (Spotswood et al. 2012; Truong 2014; Wymer 2011). For instance, one critique is the narrow theoretical base of the discipline (see, e.g., Lefebvre 2011; Rundle-Thiele et al. 2019). Social marketing

has also been criticised as overemphasising consumers as drivers and roots of change while ignoring the role of policymakers and policies (Vihalemm et al. 2016). Recently, interest has increased in social marketing for social change at the macro-level (see, e.g., Brennan et al. 2016; Lefebvre 2013) with the idea of changing behaviour by changing the broader structures and environment.

Summarising the Approaches from the Perspective of This Research

As the review of previous research shows, changing consumers' behaviour is not a simple or universally agreed process. Within social marketing, the issue of changing consumers' behaviour has been approached from different theoretical perspectives; recently, even more perspectives have been introduced. The theoretical approaches all have their strengths and weaknesses, and none of them have been proven to work in every situation. However, as Brennan et al. (2014) suggest, different theories offer researchers and practitioners a way to simplify a complex phenomenon into manageable elements, and each theoretical approach can be applied only to a certain unit of analysis. The chapter will return to these approaches in the discussion section where empirical findings are evaluated in the light of the different theoretical approaches.

Material and Methods

The nature of this research is exploratory, and the research adopts an interpretive, qualitative methodology to gain new understanding of a certain phenomenon in its own context (see, e.g., Justesen and Mik-Meyer 2012): assumptions about consumers in food waste campaigns in Finland and Sweden. Reality is regarded as socially constructed, and to access these realities, one must focus on social constructions such as language and shared meanings (Eriksson and Kovalainen 2015). Different kinds of visuals are a significant part of socially constructed reality and consumers' everyday lives (Moisander and Valtonen 2006; Schroeder

2002). It can be argued that research on pre-existing images is important because it "attends to the role of visuals in the circulation of cultural meanings but also draws attention to the different – often invisible – forms and relations power infused in them" (Moisander and Valtonen 2006, p. 89). Building on these premises, this research is focused on visual images and the assumptions they reflect about the consumer.

Data

The data used in this research consists of food waste campaign materials published in Finland and Sweden, so the data is naturally occurring (Silverman 2014). The generation of the data involved three steps (see Fig. 9.1). The first step aimed at finding food waste campaigns conducted in Finland and Sweden. First, campaigns were searched for in Finland, then in Sweden. Due to the sociocultural perspective of the study, the choice of these two countries with a similar cultural background was seen as important. Both of the countries are part of the Nordic region, and they share a similar welfare model and

Step 1
• Google search for food waste campaigns in Finland and Sweden in Finnish, Swedish and English.
• 20+ food waste campaigns and initiatives were identified.

Step 2
• Narrowing down the number of food waste campaigns by leaving out campaigns initiated by commercial actors and commercial target audiences.
• Altogether 14 food waste campaigns were identified.

Step 3
• Collecting the visual materials, such as posters and social media advertisements online through Google search, websites and social media pages.
• Altogether 91 visual campaign materials were gathered.
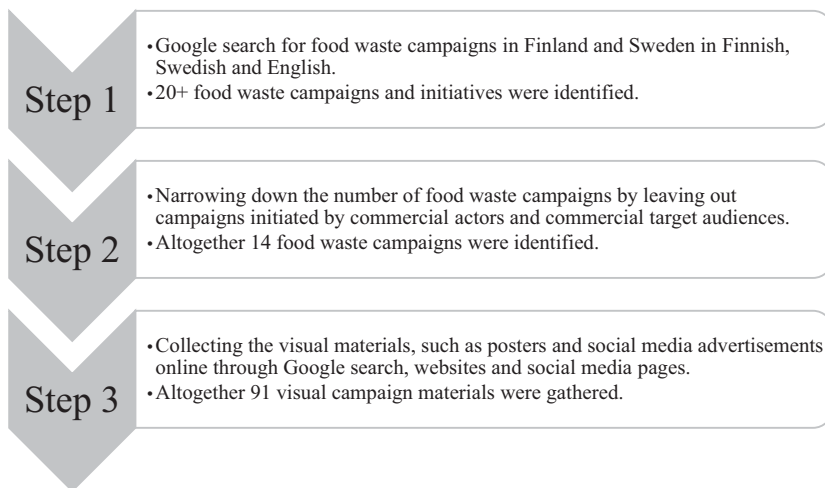
Fig. 9.1 Phases of data generation

a long history, as Finland was a part of Sweden for almost 700 years (Götz 2003). In terms of the research topic, the levels of household food waste have been estimated to be somewhat similar between the two countries; the estimated amount of annual food waste (both unavoidable and avoidable) is 63.6 kg/person in Finland and 71.5 kg/person in Sweden (Stenmarck et al. 2016). As a result of the first step of data generation, 20–30 different food waste campaigns initiated by commercial and public entities were identified.

The second step of data gathering involved narrowing down the identified food waste campaigns based on two criteria: the initiator and the target. Some campaigns were targeted specifically at commercial companies such as restaurants; these campaigns were eliminated from the data as this study focuses on consumers. The second criterion regarded the initiator of the campaign. This research is positioned within social marketing literature, and it is still debated whether for-profit organisations can be involved in social marketing (see, e.g., Hastings and Angus 2011; Polonsky 2017). Even though also several commercial actors have established initiatives around food waste, only campaigns initiated by public or non-governmental actors were selected. However, in some of the selected campaigns, there was some collaboration between public and commercial actors, which is very common in these types of campaigns (Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2017). This step resulted in identifying a total of 14 food waste campaigns: eight from Finland and six from Sweden.

The campaigns included a variety of different kinds of campaign materials. Each of the campaigns had a specific emphasis, but they all aimed to reduce food waste and targeted, either directly or indirectly, consumers and households. Campaign materials included posters, social media postings, videos, texts, logos, websites, tweets and social media shares. All of the selected campaigns had different kinds of visual materials. In the third step, these visual materials were collected online, through Google picture searches and campaigns' websites and/or social media accounts. The third and final step in the data gathering process resulted in the collection of 91 visual campaign materials (Table 9.1).

Table 9.1 Description of data

Campaign name	Country	Analysed materials (published 2012–2018)
Bäst Före 2017 (Best before 2017)	Sweden	8
Hävikkiviikko (Waste week)	Finland	32
Matsvinnet.se (Foodwaste.se)	Sweden	2
Ota iisisti (Take it easy)	Finland	4
Ruokaa vai roskaa (Food or waste)	Finland	1
Ruokahukka ruotuun (Food loss into order)	Finland	5
Ruokarahaa kuin roskaa (Grocery money as waste) as a part of "Do you pay it forward" campaign	Finland	3
Rätt i Påsen (Right in the bag)	Sweden	1
Saa syödä (Can eat)	Finland	3
Släng inte maten (Don't waste food)	Sweden	9
Stoppa matsvinnet (Stop food waste)	Sweden	2
Svinnkampen (Waste fight)	Finland	10
Tähteitä nolla (Zero leftovers)	Finland	9
Ät upp maten (Eat up food)	Sweden	2

Research on Visual Materials and Data Analysis

In this research, the campaigns' visual materials are viewed as social marketing advertisements, and data is analysed from a cultural marketing perspective (Moisander and Valtonen 2006). The visual food waste campaign materials are seen as both carriers and producers of meanings that participate in the process of constructing and/or maintaining a social reality around the issue of food waste and food waste reduction.

The analysis method draws inspiration from semiotic analysis, which emphasises signs and their meanings. In this study, semiotic analysis is used to study the signs in the material and figure out the meanings carried by these signs and the logic behind them (Ball and Smith 1992). Ferdinand de Saussure (1974) is the founding father of semiotic approach, also called as the science of signs; signs bring together an image/word (signifier) and a concept (signified) (Silverman 2014). Another well-known semiotic researcher, Barthes (1964), extends this idea by introducing two layers of meaning: denotation and connotation. For instance, a picture of a bed on a road sign (signifier) denotes an

accommodation by the road. However, this type of roadside accommodation can have several connotations such as a place for rest or a dirty roadside motel. The connotation cannot be separated from the viewer's sociocultural or personal characteristics (Fiske 1990).

In addition to images, several campaign materials also included textual elements. The significance of the text varied; in some cases, the text had a very central, dominating role, and in some other materials, the text was used as an anchor that positioned the picture in a certain paradigm and instilled the picture with the desired connotation (see, e.g., Barthes 1964). For instance, the text provided an explanation of why a certain picture was brought into the context of food waste. When analysing the textual elements within the materials, also the tone (for instance, command versus neutral) of the text was analysed as a sign signifying a particular meaning.

In this study, the food waste campaign materials were regarded as "assemblages of signs", as advertisements are often approached from the cultural perspective (Moisander and Valtonen 2006). Thus, each visual material is a composition of different signs that are connected to certain sociocultural meanings. The analysis progressed through three stages. In the first stage, the materials were carefully and thoroughly reviewed to establish familiarity with and a general understanding of the data. In the second stage, each visual material was analysed separately with the help of analytic tools inspired by semiotics (see, e.g., Rose 2016). During the third stage, all the identified meanings were grouped together, and special emphasis was placed on the meanings' connections to the portrayal of food waste and the consumer in the materials. The last stage of analysis and interpretation led to the identification of six different assumptions about consumers. To illustrate the campaign materials without compromising any copyright issues, mock campaign posters were created to reflect each assumption about consumers. First, the author sketched out these illustrations on the basis of the analysis, and then a professional graphic designer, Kaisa Eskola, designed the final illustrations. These illustrations are positioned within the next section of the chapter, which presents the findings.

Findings: Assumptions About Consumers in Campaign Materials

The intensive analysis and interpretation resulted in the identification of six assumptions about consumers in campaign materials. Three of the assumptions are strongly connected to the assumed orientation of the consumer (i.e. how consumers are seen to be driven), and the other three assumptions are related to the assumed agency of consumers (i.e. how capable consumers are seen to be). There was a rather large variance in the data since the campaigns had different perspectives and approached the issue from different angles; however, several recurring themes were identified. One intriguing notion was that despite the consumer-driven focus of the campaigns, the consumer is not actually portrayed in the majority of the campaign materials. There are few exceptions where the face or the body of a person is portrayed, but most of the materials consist of pictures of food products and other items related to food, such as cooking equipment. The dominating absence of a human made the last analysis stage focusing on the portrayal of the consumer very interesting but also challenging. The main findings of the study—the six assumptions about consumers—are presented in the following.

Assumptions Related to the Orientation of Consumers

Economical consumer. Some of the analysed campaign materials carry the assumption that consumers are driven by money-related issues. The visual materials carrying this assumption focus strongly on the current situation regarding food waste, for instance how much money is wasted yearly. The campaign materials include signs such as *banknotes, coins, shopping lists, grocery bags, trucks, numbers, roller coasters* and *trash bins*. Banknotes and coins reflect the direct meaning of money and spending. However, some of the identified signs also carry meanings related to the extent of the food waste problem. For instance, a picture of several grocery bags shows the volume of the wasted food in a

concrete manner. Not only do the pictures convey meaning, but also the text in the campaign materials includes provocative messages such as "Grocery money as trash?" ("Grocery money as waste" campaign) and "Household food waste takes 125 euros from the wallets of Finnish people each year" ("Food loss into order" campaign).

Positioning money-related signs in the context of food waste conveys a strong message of food waste as a waste of finances. The campaign materials have illustrations of food being thrown into the garbage along with money (as in Fig. 9.2), which can be seen as an extreme way to illustrate the point. In one campaign material, the issue of food waste is depicted as an amusement park, reflecting abundance. Conflicts between the signs, their meanings in the pictures and their context in food waste highlighted the absurdity of wasting food from an economical perspective. The visual campaign materials contest certain cultural conceptions such as the appreciation of money, food as a valuable

Fig. 9.2 Economical consumer: A mock-up campaign poster (illustration by Kaisa Eskola)

resource and the ability to handle money wisely (for more discussion on the Finnish ethos of economism, see Huttunen and Autio 2010). By highlighting the severity of the current food waste situation and portraying food waste as excessive and a waste of money, these campaign materials convey a strong assumption of the consumer as economical.

Environmental consumer. Some of the campaign materials reflect the assumption of the environmental consumer. Similarly to the campaign materials that assume an economical consumer, these campaign materials also focus on the current problem with food waste. However, the difference here is that the food waste is portrayed as a waste of resources from an environmental perspective and the materials highlight issues such as environmental consequences and emissions. The campaign materials include signs such as *green arrows, cars, houses, food products, numbers, green colour, packages* and *water*. The textual elements within the campaign materials provide facts about the environmental consequences such as "the environmental effect of throwing away one slice of ham is larger than the environmental effects of producing one package of ham" ("Take it easy" campaign).

In these campaign materials, the environmental consequences of food waste are in many cases compared to other types of pollutants such as cars, plastic packages and factories, which are often in the centre of environment discussion. The negative environmental consequences of one's actions are usually difficult to understand because they are not connected to the present moment but are often a matter of the future, and related issues such as CO_2 emissions or climate effects are not visible. Hence, a picture of a car or several cars in the context of food waste illustrate that food waste causes high pollution rates and is environmentally unfriendly (as in Fig. 9.3). Some of the campaign materials also include signs with more positive meanings. For instance, one of the analysed materials includes a campaign logo of a plate, knife and fork, as well as green arrows on the plate. The arrows refer to recycling and the circular economy, both of which have very positive connotations in today's society. Through this visual design, the material proposes that reducing food waste can cause the consumer to be perceived as pro-environmental. By illustrating the negative environmental consequences of food waste in a concrete manner and depicting decreases in food waste
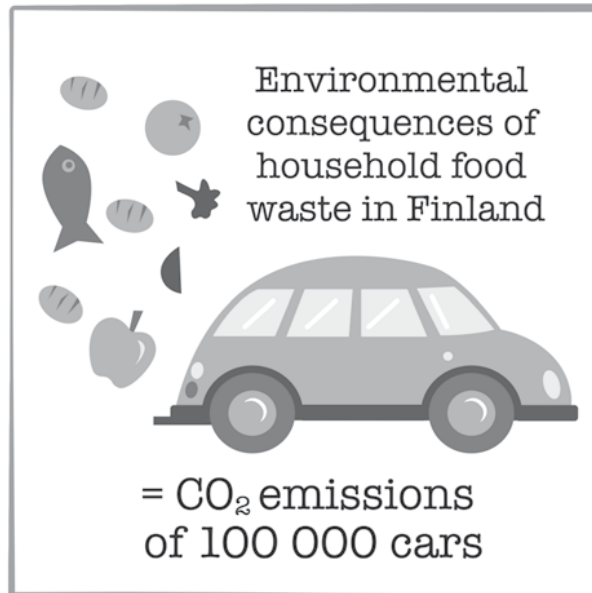
Fig. 9.3 Environmental consumer: A mock-up campaign poster (illustration by Kaisa Eskola)

with as environmentally friendly, these campaign materials assume that the consumer cares about as well as is motivated by environmental issues.

Ethical consumer. The third assumption identified in the campaign materials was the ethical consumer. Here, the word "ethical" refers to moral principles of right and wrong (Cambridge University Press 2018). Although everyone has their own perception of what is right or wrong, a person's social environment has a significant impact on these perceptions. The campaign materials carrying this assumption emphasise food waste as morally wrong and champion reducing food waste as the right thing to do. The campaign materials reflecting this assumption vary quite widely and include different ways to illustrate this assumption. The signs identified in the campaign materials include, for instance, *different food products, faces, trash bins and bags, kitchen appliances, plates* and *human eyes and mouths*. In addition, the word "right" and similar

variants are repeated. In addition, mentions about consumers suffering from hunger were identified.

The majority of the campaign materials reflecting this assumption include anthropomorphised food products. Products such as eggs, lemons and milk are given human eyes and mouths. By giving faces and voices to food products, the campaign materials connect the potential leftover food with human feelings and thoughts (as in Fig. 9.4). Although some of the campaign materials carry a rather lecturing tone, a more positive approach was also identified. For instance, in one campaign material that includes a cartoon, food products are having a conversation about "good" or "heroic" consumers who made exactly the right amount of food for a party so that there were no leftovers. In addition to humanising food products, some campaign materials bring up the reality of people starving in other parts of the world. This suggests the virtuous "duty" of the wealthy well-fed citizens to take care
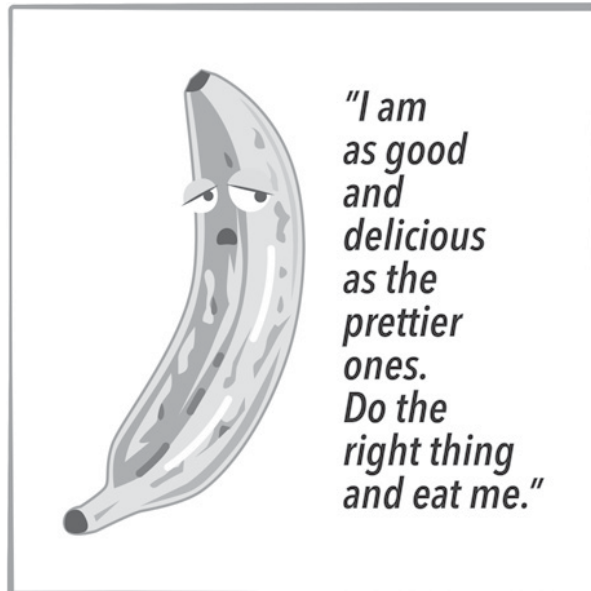
Fig. 9.4   Ethical consumer: A mock-up campaign poster (illustration by Kaisa Eskola)

of the underprivileged, an idea that is strongly rooted in the social system of Nordic countries. The campaign materials carrying the assumption of ethical consumer have a lot to do with the conceptions of right and wrong. By assuming that the consumers behave according to their moral principles and norms, the campaign materials include several signs and meanings intensifying the idea of "wrongness" and the immorality of wasting food and attempt to evoke strong emotions by appealing to the consumer's moral principles.

Elaborating on the Orientation-Related Assumptions

The campaign materials assume that the consumer is driven by economical, environmental and/or ethical influences. The materials vary in their overall orientation towards the issue of food waste, thus answering the question of how consumers are assumed to be driven. One of the reasons food waste is considered to be a "wicked problem" can be traced back to its multidimensional nature, in connection with economic, environmental and social problems (see, e.g., Papargylopoulou et al. 2014). As the issue of food waste can be approached from multiple viewpoints, also the orientations of the consumers can vary. Table 9.2 summarises the identified assumptions related to consumer orientation and drive. The identified assumptions are reflected with the help of the two research questions: "How is food waste portrayed?" and "How is the consumer portrayed?"

Table 9.2 Assumptions related to orientation

Assumption	Food waste as …	Consumer as …
Economical consumer	A waste of money	Rational money saver
Environmental consumer	An environmental problem	Responsible for the environmental consequences
Ethical consumer	Wrong or bad	Ethical actor who cares about food and others

Assumptions About the Consumer Related to Agency

Childlike consumer. It was identified that certain campaign materials reflect the assumption of childlike consumers who have limited agency and capability to change their behaviour. The signs of this assumption include *plates, trashcans, chefs, people, police and anthropomorphised food products and animals*. The campaigns' text uses different tones including commands such as "take as much as you can eat" ("Zero leftovers" campaign) as well as jokes and wordplays (not always even related to the issue of food waste).

Two broader meaning categories were identified in the campaign materials carrying this assumption. First, there are signs that reflect some kind of an authority. The materials include commands or direct guidelines, such as how much food one should put on their plate. In this way, the materials act as authority figure that has the power to tell consumers what they should do. Explanations of "why" are absent. The other broader meaning is connected to the "active agents" in the campaign materials. Some of the materials portray anthropomorphised food products or animals that act like human beings. This kind of representation resembles children's books, which often tell stories with anthropomorphised animals as main characters. Furthermore, the materials include amusing elements (jokes and wordplays) similar to children's books and shows (as in Fig. 9.5). These campaign materials reflect the assumption of a naive, reactive childlike consumer. The consumer is treated as though they will change their behaviour regarding food waste based on what they are told to do or with the help of a funny story.

Uninformed consumer. The uninformed consumer refers to the assumption that consumers do not know enough about the issue of food waste. The focus is strongly on the current food waste situation and the consequences of it. These campaign materials include signs such as *numbers, infographics, food products, trash bins* and *trash bags*. The tone is quite neutral and the focus is on the facts such as "every tenth piece of bread, potato or fruit ends up in waste" ("Waste week" campaign) or questions such as "Do you know what the best before date means?" ("Best before 2017" campaign).

Fig. 9.5 Childlike consumer: A mock-up campaign poster (illustration by Kaisa Eskola)

Textual elements play a central role in these campaign materials. Sometimes the picture, an apple for instance, is depicted in the background while the text constitutes the most important part of the campaign material (as in Fig. 9.6). The presented numbers and percentages highlight meanings related to the severity of the food waste situation. The textual elements' neutral tone used in the materials also reflects a "news-like" approach of sharing facts. The campaign materials reflect the assumption that consumers are not aware of the real quantities or consequences of food waste and just need more information in order to change their behaviour. Most of the materials do not give much information on what could or should be done differently.

Active consumer. The sixth and the final assumption identified in the campaign materials is the active consumer. The campaign materials reflecting this assumption portray the consumer as capable of and motivated to change their behaviour if the tools and inspiration for

Fig. 9.6 Uninformed consumer: A mock-up campaign poster (illustration by Kaisa Eskola)

change are provided. The signs within these campaign materials include *food products, pictures of consumers, dishes* and *human hands*. The textual elements within these campaign materials consist of recipes, concrete tips on reducing food waste, that is, "using clean spoons in jars lengthens the life of pesto, olives and salsa et cetera" ("Don't waste food" campaign) and inspirational quotes directed at consumers such as "be creative, challenge yourself and acquire cooking skills" ("Waste fight" campaign).

The signs are connected to the concrete actions of what the consumer could do to reduce food waste. Overall, the campaign materials reflecting this assumption convey fairly positive meanings related to the appreciation of food and active, motivated nature of the consumer. The materials focus on the possibilities of future action instead of the current situation or the negative consequences of food waste (as in Fig. 9.7). The portrayal of potential food waste in a positive light,
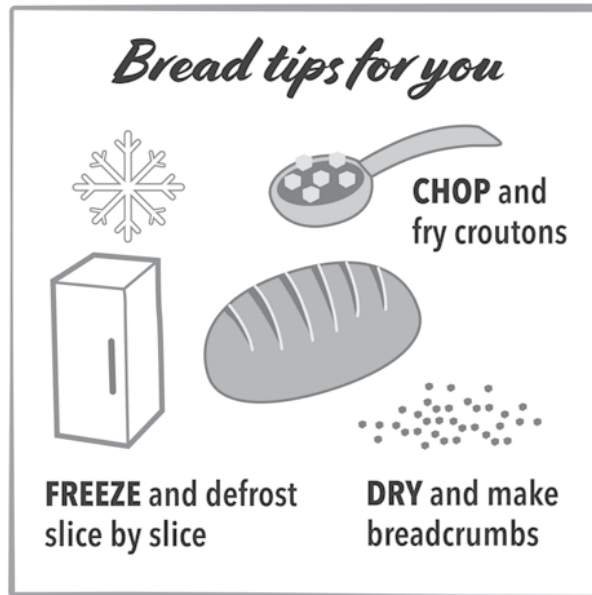
Fig. 9.7 Active consumer: A mock-up campaign poster (illustration by Kaisa Eskola)

emphasising the beauty and aesthetics of leftover food, can also be seen as a renegotiation of the typically negative connotations of food waste. This assumption that consumers are active and involved is strongly connected to the consumers' concrete behaviour and focuses on how they can reduce food waste in their everyday life. In addition, this assumption is connected to broader sociocultural meanings regarding food waste and food waste reduction. Consumers are assumed to change their behaviour related to food waste when inspired and motivated, and broader sociocultural meanings around the issue make the tone and portrayal more positive.

Summarising Agency-Related Assumptions

Childlike, uninformed and active consumers differ from each other in their assumed level of agency. The level of agency here refers to the

Table 9.3   Assumptions related to agency

Assumption	Food waste as …	Consumer as …
Childlike consumer	Not allowed	A reactive actor
Uninformed consumer	A significant problem	Unaware of the consequences and amount of food waste
Active consumer	An opportunity	Eager to "take charge" if given the right resources

ability to act in order to reduce food waste. While the orientation-related assumptions focused on how consumers are seen to be driven, the agency-related assumptions reflect the capabilities and knowledge level of the consumers. Table 9.3 illustrates the assumptions by focusing on the two research questions "How is food waste portrayed?" and "How is the consumer portrayed?"

Discussion: Tracing the Foundations of the Identified Assumptions

As the findings suggest, the analysed visual campaign materials reflect different kinds of assumptions about consumers as viewed from two perspectives: orientation and agency. Although these six assumptions are introduced by highlighting their specific features, it is important to remember that these assumptions also overlap. The assumptions do not necessarily rule each other out, but sometimes even complement one another. For instance, the assumption of the uninformed consumer was often identified along with the assumption of the economical or environmental consumer. However, the assumptions of the childlike consumer and the active consumer were not identified in the same materials since their overall idea of agency is so different. Some assumptions pair better with other because of their theoretical foundations, as each assumption can be viewed in the light of the broader theoretical approaches to consumer behaviour change reviewed in the second section of this chapter.

The assumptions of an *economical, environmental* and *uninformed consumer* can be seen as following the cognitive approach to consumer

behaviour change. These assumptions rely strongly on the thinking process happening inside consumers' heads and the consumers' rationality in making a change in their behaviour after receiving new information. By emphasising facts about the current food waste situation, either from a financial or environmental perspective, the consumers' capability to change is taken for granted. The effectiveness of this approach and the consumer assumptions it reflects, however, have raised concern. Especially among Western consumers, it can be argued that consumers are well-informed about the environmental, social and economic issues around food waste (Evans 2012). However, the consumers' knowledge has not lowered levels of consumer food waste in the developed countries.

The assumption of an *ethical consumer* can be connected to the affective approach. Emotional appeals (both negative and positive) often play a significant role in social marketing campaigns (Hastings et al. 2004). However, as discovered in earlier research, wasting food is already connected with feelings of guilt; therefore, evoking guilt and other negative emotions might not lead to the desired outcome when it comes to food waste reduction (Evans 2012; Gjerris and Gaiani 2013). The conative approach, on the other hand, is connected to the assumption of a *childlike consumer* (particularly the campaign materials carrying authoritative meanings). The conative approach has been criticised due to its "paternalistic" ideas of policymakers and marketers as "nudging" consumers towards a desired outcome (see, e.g., Hausman and Welch 2010). It is important to take this criticism into consideration when choosing to implement the conative approach in a campaign.

The sixth assumption, an *active consumer*, is slightly more challenging to connect with the broader approaches to consumer behaviour change in social marketing. The assumption focuses not only on the behaviour of the consumer—following the conative approach—but can also be traced back to the sociocultural approach. For instance, in representing the skills, meanings and materials around food waste reduction, this assumption can be viewed through the practice-theoretical lens of behaviour (see, e.g., Närvänen et al. 2016). It can be argued that the assumption of an active consumer takes a shift up from the individual level to everyday societal practices and sociocultural meanings around

the issue. The importance of positive sociocultural meanings around food waste and the agency of the consumer have also been introduced in earlier literature. In their article, Närvänen et al. (2018) suggest that taking a more positive stance towards food waste and food waste reduction, and also providing space for consumers to participate and contribute to the discussion, could offer fruitful way to create novel ways to approach food waste reduction through campaigns and initiatives.

Building upon different theoretical approaches to consumer behaviour change, the identified assumptions about consumers reflect certain ideas of how consumers can or should act. For instance, the varying assumptions related to consumers' agency allow different kind of space for human action. For instance, the assumption of a childlike consumer does not take into consideration the consumers' willingness to think by themselves and make decisions without persuasion. The assumption of an uninformed consumer, however, speaks to the consumers' rational side and does not attempt to provoke action based on feelings or the social environment.

Conclusions

The purpose of the research was to *identify and analyse assumptions about consumers in food waste reduction campaign materials*. As a result of intensive analysis and interpretation, six main assumptions were identified. The identified assumptions reflected either the assumed orientation of consumers or the assumed agency of consumers. These assumptions also reflected different theoretical approaches to consumer behaviour change adopted in social marketing research.

Although initiatives and campaigns have gained increased interest among food waste researchers (see, e.g., Principato 2018; Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2017), their focus has differed from the purpose of this study. Instead of focusing on the characteristics or aims of the campaigns, this research has taken a closer look at the visual materials of different campaigns and has emphasised the consumer, the target of the campaign materials. Taking a close look at the visual campaign materials, it was possible to identify different assumptions reflected by them.

The assumptions about consumers have not previously been evaluated within food waste literature although the assumptions are directly connected to the ways in which consumers can be persuaded to change their behaviour.

The findings of this research reflect an emphasis on the cognitive approach that focuses on the rational perspective of consumer, an approach that is typical of social marketing research (see, e.g., Brennan et al. 2014; Spotswood and Tapp 2013). However, as the findings from previous research show, the problem of consumer food waste is seldom connected to the lack of knowledge (see, e.g., Evans 2012). Thus, other perspectives and approaches are needed in order to facilitate change. To date, food waste reduction has remained a narrowly researched phenomenon within social marketing with few exceptions (e.g. Pearson and Perera 2018). By drawing on theoretical foundations of social marketing and consumer behaviour change, this research contributes to this under-researched area and highlights recent food waste campaigns' approaches to consumer behaviour change.

This research illustrates how each visual material, even if small, aimed at reducing consumer food waste can carry several meanings that reflect different kinds of assumptions about consumers. Following the constructionist perspective, these kinds of recurring assumptions about consumers shape the reality around the food waste issue and steer the consumer's position in the fight against food waste.

Implications for Food Waste Campaign Initiators

In addition to its contribution to academia, the purpose of this chapter was also to provide "food for thought" for practitioners. Both the assumed orientation of the consumer and the agency of the consumer should be critically evaluated when establishing any type of new initiative or campaign targeted at consumers. Different assumptions arise from different perspectives on consumer behaviour change, all of which having their strengths and weaknesses. Instead of copying ideas from existing campaigns, each initiator should think about their own perspectives and more detailed aims. For instance, while price-centric

consumers typically report low levels of food waste (Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2018), grounding the entire food waste initiative in the assumption of an economical consumer may not turn out to be very successful.

Furthermore, it is important for campaign initiators to know and understand their target audiences. The power, the sources of information and media literacy of consumers are currently better than ever before. Although many of the campaign materials analysed in this study did not include direct representations of the consumer, it was possible to make conclusions about the assumptions of the consumer beyond the campaign material by identifying their different signs, meanings and their connotations. Conveying strong assumptions about consumers can easily raise neglection or even resistance towards the issue if consumers do not feel related to the assumption. As has been suggested in previous research, initiators should understand consumers as a heterogeneous group of people with differing standpoints on food waste; to effectively approach different groups of consumers, the initiator should adopt different strategies and viewpoints on behaviour change (Aschemann-Witzel et al. 2018).

The underlying reasons for food waste are very complex and connected to different issues. It is easy to say that the problem will be solved when consumers stop wasting food. However, it is not enough that consumers are simply told to stop wasting food or told that wasting is wrong. There is a plenty of research focused on the causes of consumer food waste (see, e.g., Evans 2011, 2012), and some research has also been interested in the ways consumers have been able to reduce food waste (see, e.g., Närvänen et al. 2016; Mattila et al. 2018). These studies offer fruitful foundations for campaign initiators in planning and anchoring their campaigns.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

The findings of this research are based on food waste campaign materials published in Finland and Sweden, so it is important to notice that certain themes and issues elaborated here may be strongly related to Finnish and Swedish cultural contexts. The assumptions about

consumers might look different if the same type of data was collected and/or analysed in another cultural context. Furthermore, due to the analysis method, the data utilised in this research consisted only of visual materials for food waste campaigns that were available online. This means that the analysis did not reach the multiple events, videos or websites connected to these food waste initiatives. If other materials were also included in the data, more assumptions might have been identified. This research did not focus on the specific target audiences of the analysed campaign materials. However, different assumptions are likely to resonate with different groups of people so it is possible that the campaign materials reflecting a certain assumption have targeted a specific segment of consumers.

This research opens up several avenues for future research, both within food waste research and social marketing. Future research could explore the assumptions about consumers viewed from the consumers' perspective by interviewing a group of consumers, for instance, using photo elicitation techniques (see, e.g., Harper 2002). While the success of different kinds of social marketing programs is difficult to measure, this kind of approach could offer rich, qualitative information about how consumers feel about or relate to different types of assumptions. A greater focus on the entire journey of a food waste campaign from the founding idea to the final outcome could also offer interesting insights about the ways in which the idea and assumptions change during the process through negotiations among different actors such as campaign planners, campaign designers and coordinators.

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PUBLICATION
III

Constructing the food waste issue on social media:
A discursive social marketing approach

Ulla-Maija Sutinen and Elina Närvänen

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Constructing the food waste issue on social media: a discursive social marketing approach

Ulla-Maija Sutinen and Elina Närvänen (iD)

Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the paper is to examine how market actors participate in the socio-cultural construction of the food waste issue through social media. The paper draws from practice theory and adopts a research approach combining netnography and discourse analysis. The data consist of postings within a vivid social media discussion during a social marketing campaign. The findings shed light on how different market actors construct the food waste issue through discourses of explanation, exhibition and appeal. These discourses differ in their focus, tone and, most importantly, their potential for practice change in the context of food waste. The study emphasises the importance of understanding the discourses of complex sustainability issues and acknowledges the role of social marketing in maintaining and/or transforming these discourses.

Introduction

In 2011, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) estimated that one-third of all food produced goes to waste in some stage of the food supply chain (Gustavsson et al., 2011). Since then, reducing food waste has gained political attention and has been set as a target in the Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 by the United Nations (United Nations, 2018), as well as by the European Union (European Commission, 2017). Food waste is a problematic sustainability issue, as it means the loss of resources such as energy and water, accelerating climate change and underlining global inequality between the affluent and the poor (Närvänen et al., 2020). According to recent estimates, the biggest portion (61%) of food waste comes from households and the problem seems to be similar across countries with different income levels (UNEP, 2021). Edible food is lost or wasted across the food chain, from farm to fork, and several market actors thus contribute to the problem (Parfitt et al., 2010). In recent years, food waste has become an important topic for interdisciplinary research (Porpino, 2016), and it has also gained interest among marketing researchers (e.g. Aschemann-Witzel et al., 2018; Gollnhofer, 2017; Närvänen et al., 2018). Within the field of social marketing, which focuses on the use of marketing techniques, tools and approaches when aiming for social change (iSMA, 2013), the topic is, however, still rather under-researched despite the field's high potential for accelerating change in the context of food waste (for exceptions see Hodgkins et al.,

2019; Kim et al., 2019; Kim, Rundle-Thiele, Knox, Burke et al., 2020; Kim, Rundle-Thiele, Knox, Hodgkins et al., 2020; Pearson & Perera, 2018).

We argue that in order to create change regarding the problem of food waste, more research efforts should be put into understanding the socio-cultural level where food waste-related practices are constructed (Cappellini & Parsons, 2012; Evans, 2011, 2012; Närvänen et al., 2013; Sirola et al., 2019; Warde, 2014). Here, the focus should not only be on consumers as the main change agents but on several other market actors in different roles – as decision makers, employees and opinion leaders, for instance. More research is required on how these different market actors create and negotiate meaning and make sense of the issue, and in this way participate in the construction of broader food waste issue discourses. This research endeavour is important, as meanings and discourses contribute to practices around food waste and have the potential to steer changes within them, for instance, in terms of their normality, acceptability and desirability – creating social pressure to address the problem (see, e.g. Gollnhofer, 2017; Halkier, 2020).

The current study focuses on the meaning-making of the food waste issue by market actors in a social media context. Previous research has shown that sustainability issues, such as food waste, are increasingly discussed and debated online (Närvänen et al., 2018; Pearson et al., 2016). Furthermore, communication campaigns on social media have a possibility to engage a large number of social media users, encouraging them to post their own content, including expressions of their opinions and views that give insights into current market phenomena. Thus, social media offers a good context for studying meaning-making by different actors. Our study focuses on a social marketing campaign, 'Food Waste Week', in Finland, which is an annual event organised by a non-profit organisation. The purpose of our study is *to examine how market actors participate in the socio-cultural construction of the food waste issue through social media*. The research questions are:

(1) What kinds of market actors participate in the discussion of the food waste issue on social media?
(2) What kinds of food waste issue discourses can be identified?
(3) What kinds of potential do the different discourses have to change practices in the context of food waste?

Our study makes three theoretical contributions. First, we utilise a practice-theoretical lens (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2014), paying attention especially to the discursive aspects that underlie practices and act as 'resources for practices' (Keller & Halkier, 2014). Even though we do not study the food waste-related (consumption) practices directly, practice theory provides for us an ontological worldview where the social world is seen to consist of practices and hence, social change can happen only through a change in practices (Schatzki, 2016; Warde, 2005). In doing so, we introduce a practice theory-informed discursive approach to social marketing related to complex sustainability issues, such as food waste. We argue that discourses are valuable resources for fuelling and facilitating practice changes as well as reinforcing the status quo, and thus, this approach has a lot to offer for social marketing researchers and practitioners. Our approach focusing on discourses broadens the already existing practice-theoretical approaches presented within the social marketing domain (e.g. Spotswood et al., 2017). Second, we contribute to the

literature on social marketing by identifying several market actors and discourses related to the sustainability issue of food waste. In this way, we continue the research avenue opened up by social marketing researchers emphasising the importance of understanding the social and cultural elements of behaviour when creating change (e.g. Brennan et al., 2015; Collins et al., 2010; Kemper & Ballantine, 2017; Spotswood & Tapp, 2013). Third, our findings highlight social media as a context for conducting social marketing, which has implications in terms of participation by multiple market actors. Our study is also important for practitioners planning social marketing campaigns on sustainability issues, as the findings give insight into how market actors make sense of sustainability issues and how they construct meanings for them.

Accelerating change in the context of food waste through marketing

Marketing accelerating change towards sustainability

Marketing has been accelerating changes since its beginning, and its influence in the economies and societies across the world is undeniable (Webster & Lusch, 2013; Wilkie & Moore, 1999). For several years, the focus of the discipline has been on rather small systems, often the dyadic relationship between a company and consumer, and less attention has been paid to the influences that these small-system actions and ways of thinking may have on the wider system and society (Webster & Lusch, 2013), such as issues connected to overconsumption, addictions, financial inequality and sustainability. During recent years, researchers have called for marketing to elevate its focus to include the complex problems facing markets and society, and to take a broader view on sustainability, quality of life and standard of living (McDonagh & Prothero, 2014; Webster & Lusch, 2013). The notion of marketing's function as bringing value to society at large is also included in the latest definition of marketing from the American Marketing Association (American Marketing Association, 2017).

The role of sustainability in the marketing field has varied over the years, ranging from the exploration of sustainability-related behaviour theories to the introduction of concepts such as 'green marketing' (Kilbourne, 1998). Sustainability and sustainable development refer to 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs', as expressed in the well-known Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987, p. 43). The relationship between sustainability and marketing has been uneasy, and some people do not believe in the compatibility of marketing and sustainability (see, e.g. Jones et al., 2008), while others see the potential of marketing as a 'vehicle to realize the sustainability agenda' (Lim, 2016, p. 235) and argue that 'marketing and sustainability are inextricably intertwined' (White et al., 2019, p. 23). To date, the actual impact of marketing in delivering significant changes towards sustainability has remained scant despite the efforts to improve it (K. Peattie & Peattie, 2009). Furthermore, Davies et al. (2020) argue that one barrier in marketing's lack of influence on sustainability change to date can be traced back to its strong dependency on cognitive behavioural theories that are often insufficient for explaining and impacting this issue. On a positive note, in recent years, new approaches have reinforced marketing's potential in conducting research on sustainability and finding ways to make an impact (see, e.g. Davies et al., 2020; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019a; White et al., 2019).

Social marketing and social change

Social marketing is a specific sub-field focused on change within the marketing discipline. While the exact definitions of the concept of social marketing vary slightly (Dibb, 2014), the most recent consensus definition from the International Social Marketing Association is as follows: 'Social marketing seeks to develop and integrate marketing concepts with other approaches to influence behaviours that benefit individuals and communities for the greater social good' (iSMA, 2013). Although the social marketing's goal towards greater social good has remained the same since the term's introduction in the 1970s (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971), the perceptions of *how* to achieve the purposes have evolved. Traditionally, social marketing has focused on individual behaviour changes (Brennan & Parker, 2014), and the theories utilised have mainly been cognitive behavioural theories.

As the world's current problems have become more complex, several researchers have started to broaden the field's dominating emphasis on the individual consumer by introducing other approaches to understanding change (see, e.g. Andreasen, 2002; Brennan et al., 2014; Domegan et al., 2016; Kemper & Ballantine, 2017; Rundle-Thiele et al., 2019; Spotswood et al., 2017, 2012; Spotswood & Tapp, 2013). The importance of understanding the social context within which the change is needed has been emphasised (Brennan et al., 2014; S. Peattie & Peattie, 2003; Veeck et al., 2018). This context includes the different mechanisms, conditions, institutions and norms that may either support or inhibit certain types of behaviours (see, e.g. Kemper & Ballantine, 2017). For instance, the socio-cultural approach to social marketing in the context of alcohol consumption has acknowledged the social interaction between actors and interaction rituals within a dynamic market system (Brennan et al., 2014; Veeck et al., 2018). It is important to understand that social interactions may also take place in the online environment, as has been identified in the context of youth smoking (see, e.g. Kozinets et al., 2019). Furthermore, in addition to changing behaviour, changing the way people talk about issues and how they feel about them has been suggested as a valid pursuit for social marketing to impact social change (Spotswood et al., 2012).

Many of the large societal problems of today are connected to sustainability issues, and accelerating changes towards sustainability has taken a bigger role in social marketing as well (K. Peattie & Peattie, 2009). Researchers have, however, raised some questions about the suitability of the sustainability concept in the social marketing domain (Brennan & Binney, 2008). Many of the traditional social marketing concepts such as customer centricity, exchange and voluntary behaviour change (Spotswood et al., 2012) include some limitations when addressing sustainability concerns where the focus is on the benefit for the society or environment rather than the individual. Also, the timespan of the sustainability-related change is visible after a long time, and in some cases the change is about maintaining the status quo (for instance, keeping pollution at the same level).

Many sustainability-related issues, such as food waste, can be characterised as 'wicked problems', meaning that they are difficult to define, they involve several actors with partially conflicting aims and impacts on the problem, and the problem cannot be solved once and for all (Kemper & Ballantine, 2017; Närvänen et al., 2020). In some cases, the solution itself might be very simple on paper (e.g. food waste is solved if everyone stops wasting food). However, the path to reaching this solution is interconnected with several

issues, such as choices, motivation, influences, skills, knowledge and socio-cultural sur-roundings (Parkinson et al., 2018). Thus, the approaches taken in the quest to change the status quo of a wicked problem must take complexity into account.

Theorising change with a practice-theoretical lens

This study adopts a practice-theoretical lens to understanding reality, although practices as such are not the target of investigation. Practice-theoretical lens, however, guides our ontological understanding, which considers change arising from alterations in practices (Schatzki, 2016; Warde, 2005). During recent years, practice theories have gained an increasing amount of attention in marketing and consumer research fields (e.g. Schau et al., 2009; Skålén & Hackley, 2011). Practice-theoretical thinking has also sparked interest in social marketing research, steering the emphasis towards the context and social features connected to a topic in question (Beatson et al., 2020; Gordon et al., 2018; Spotswood et al., 2017). Practice theories have been suggested as a fruitful approach to theorising social change, especially in the context of sustainable consumption (e.g. Hargreaves, 2011; Warde et al., 2017; Watson et al., 2020).

It has been argued that in order to reach sustainability in consumption, fundamental changes to our everyday practices are needed (Watson, 2017). Practice theories com-prise a family of theoretical perspectives informed by a sociocultural orientation; hence, they aim to understand social action as meaningful and purposeful rather than as rational and utilitarian or as merely following norms (Reckwitz, 2002). Practice theory provides an ontological worldview where the social world consists of socially shared, 'specific nexuses of organised activity (practices), composed of hetero-geneous components that can be analytically separated into distinct types' (Welch et al., 2020, p. 326).

There are different viewpoints on what makes up a practice. However, several research-ers have considered practices consisting of different elements or components. Shove et al. (2012) propose a scheme of three elements that are integrated when practices are enacted: materials (objects, infrastructures, hardware, the body), meanings (the social and symbolic significance of participation) and competences (understandings and prac-tical knowledgeability). Warde (2005, p. 134) refers to main components as 'understand-ings, procedures and engagements' that hang together and are coordinated in practices. Hence, food waste-related consumption practices consist of elements including, for instance, understandings about proper food and edibility, procedures of purchasing, storing, cooking and consuming food, as well as engagements such as teleoaffective structures (Schatzki, 2002) related to feeding the family or eating in a sustainable manner (see, e.g. Evans, 2011, 2012; Sirola et al., 2019). Similarly, at retail stores, these practices may be linked to employees' understandings of what leads to waste, their training and work procedures and their work-related goals (Filimonau & Gherbin, 2017).

Practices change over time, and the changes are carried out through different mechan-isms (Watson, 2017). First, change may occur when elements (materials, meanings and competences) comprising practices change (Shove et al., 2012). In the context of food waste, a new kitchen appliance may change cooking practices and reduce food waste at home (Närvänen et al., 2013). Second, change may arise from the actors who carry the practices – meaning how well they adopt new practices (Watson, 2017). Here, some

actors – as carriers of practices – may have very central roles as opinion leaders or influencers (Meah & Watson, 2011; Närvänen et al., 2019). The third way to locate change in practices is through the re-arrangement of different practices bundled together (Watson, 2017). In the context of food waste, this might include, for instance, changes in practices of acquiring food or eating together as a family.

Even though the focus of many practice-theoretical studies has been on the concrete, embodied and routinised 'doings and sayings' involved in practices, the ideational, interactive and discursive aspects of practices are also important and should not be neglected (Halkier, 2020; Welch et al., 2020). Using food practices as an example, Halkier (2020) highlights practices' role as not only routinised and tacit but also culturally contested. Discourses and narratives can be regarded as important resources for practices, laying the groundwork for practices in society, and having the potential to maintain or challenge the practices (Gordon et al., 2018; Keller & Halkier, 2014). In this study, our main focus is on the discourses around the food waste issue, which are involved and interlinked with various practices connected to food waste. This type of viewpoint on discourses' relation to practices is similar to Keller and Halkier (2014) approach in addressing media discourses as symbolic resources for practice performances. With our perspective, we extend the existing conceptualisations on how practices change by emphasising discourses – as resources for practices – as important shapers of practices. Discourses can also be seen as connected to the already theorised locations for practice change: elements of practices, carriers of practices and bundles of practices (Watson, 2017).

Accelerating social change in the context of food waste

Consumers are often perceived as both the targets of blame and the sources of change in the context of food waste, most likely due to their major role as producers of food waste (UNEP, 2021). Thus, many studies have focused on explaining food waste behaviours and reasons for food waste emergence in households (e.g. Farr-Wharton et al., 2014; Stancu et al., 2016). In addition, in social marketing research, the main attention to the topic has been on how to get consumers to waste less food through, for instance, designing effective communication campaigns (Pearson & Perera, 2018), implementing voluntary approaches and other social marketing benchmark criteria to initiatives (Kim et al., 2019; Kim, Rundle-Thiele, Knox, Hodgkins et al., 2020) and co-designing approaches with consumers (Kim, Rundle-Thiele, Knox, Burke et al., 2020).

A stream within the food waste research field, however, has emphasised the importance of understanding food waste-related behaviours on a socio-cultural level (e.g. Evans, 2012; Mattila et al., 2019; Närvänen et al., 2018). To extend the understanding of the issue of food waste, several researchers have utilised a practice-theoretical lens. Evans (2011, 2012) has studied the domestic practices contributing to food waste in households. These practices are socially and materially organised and include themes such as 'eating properly' and anxieties around food safety, which highlight that the problem of food waste should not be regarded as an individual behavioural problem (Evans, 2011, 2012). Furthermore, Southerton and Yates (2015) have emphasised the importance of understanding the contexts where practices of provision, preparation, eating and disposal take place. Researchers have also studied practices connected to consumers' food waste reduction, highlighting their roles as temporality organisers (Mattila et al., 2019),

exploring different elements within the reduction practices (Närvänen et al., 2013; Sirola et al., 2019) and analysing the intersections between practices of reusing and revaluing food and aiming for the good of the family (Cappellini & Parsons, 2012). The practice-theoretical approach has also been applied in research focusing on fostering change, suggesting policy, business and research strategies to change food waste-related practices (Schanes et al., 2018), and highlighting the different changepoints for policymakers to tackle if aiming to create food waste-related changes (Watson et al., 2020).

In the food waste-related social marketing field, not much attention has been put on the social and cultural context or the practices connected to food waste. More research is still needed on how to address food waste issues in social marketing from the perspective of changing practices instead of changing individual behaviours. Here, the insights generated by the food waste researchers, whether focused on practices of food waste generation or reduction, could be applied. This is in line with a recent study utilising the stakeholder approach to evaluate one food waste-related social marketing intervention that calls for further research based on beyond individual theories that recognise the 'social function of food in our culture', taking into account cultural power structures in society (Hodgkins et al., 2019, p. 283). An acknowledgement of the multiple actors connected to the issue is also needed, as the complicated problem of food waste involves several organisations as well as individual consumers (Diaz-Ruiz et al., 2019; Hodgkins et al., 2019; Närvänen et al., 2020). Furthermore, broadening the scope of actors that are necessary to be involved in the change is another endeavour that a practice perspective could push forward due to its specific focus on practices rather than certain individual actors.

Research approach and methodology

Discourses constructing reality

This study adopts the constructionist and interpretive research philosophy. The reality is seen as continually constructed in people's behaviours, words and sayings, offline and online. Sustainability issues such as food waste are socially co-constructed by various actors on different platforms. Our focus is on the discourses of the food waste issue. The discursive approach is interested in the relationships between language, discourses and context (Phillips & Hardy, 2002) and 'interrogates the nature of social action by dealing with how actions and/or meanings are constructed in and through text and talk' (Nikander, 2008, p. 415). Thus, the way an issue is discursively constructed steers the institutions around it and constructs certain kinds of practices and the relations of different market actors connected to the issue (Fitchett & Caruana, 2015). Language does not merely reflect reality but actively constructs it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). As put by Potter (2011, p. 190), 'analysis of discourse becomes, then, analysis of what people do'. Similarly, Van Leeuwen (2008) defines discourses as representations of social practices and highlights their role as both drawing on practices and transforming them.

As stated by Fairclough et al. (2011, p. 358), a discourse may help in sustaining and reproducing the status quo but also support its transformation. Based on this notion, the viewpoint of our study is that the discussion of food waste is carried out through discourses, and these discourses have the potential to alter the practices and challenge

the current situation. Discourses are constantly re-negotiated over time on different platforms (Fairclough, 1992). Traditional media texts have been seen as important sites for discourse construction, as they give sense to different publicly debated questions (see, e.g. Hellgren et al., 2002). Thus, several studies have focused on discourses within them to make sense of meanings connected to different issues (see, e.g. Keller & Halkier, 2014; Vaara & Tienari, 2002). In the context of food waste, discourses (re)constructed in news media texts have been studied by Raippalinna (2020), who focused on the discourses' ability to mobilise consumers in reducing food waste. In the field of social marketing, the discursive approach has not been widely applied. However, in highly varying contexts, some researchers have utilised the approach to study, for instance, how responsible drinkers characterise their relationship to alcohol consumption (Fry, 2011; Fry et al., 2014), how social marketing campaigns may contribute to privileging some types of female bodies while excluding others (Gurrieri et al., 2013) and how human trafficking is dominantly represented in society (Badejo et al., 2019). Furthermore, social marketing research has also paid attention to narratives' role in shaping the practices (Gordon et al., 2018) as well as the framings that are contributing to system changes (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019b).

In this study, we are interested in discourses within the social media context, which allows the low-threshold participation of different actors. Kozinets (2019) argues that participating in social media discussions related to societal and political issues may be the first step for change, as 'it offers a discursive space set apart from other activities allowing anyone who is interested to play with and within the contradictions of contemporary social systems' (Kozinets, 2019, p. 80). During recent years, the amount of discussion taking place in online environments has exponentially increased, providing new types of naturally occurring data on different matters. Following this, researchers are increasingly interested in applying discursive approaches to social media contexts (Unger et al., 2016).

Methodology and data gathering

In addition to employing methods from discourse analysis, we utilised a netnographic approach to generate the data with the help of social media monitoring (SMM) tools (Kozinets, 2015; Reid & Duffy, 2018). While SMM tools provide simplified data about social media and online discussions, a 'deeper' netnographic dive into the data allows us to effectively analyse how market actors participate in the socio-cultural construction of the food waste issue.

In this study, we focus on the social media discussion during Food Waste Week in 2018. Food Waste Week is a Finnish nationwide non-profit social marketing programme initiated in 2013. The aim of the programme is to reduce food waste, especially at the end of the food chain. However, the programme involves many actors, such as consumers, food manufacturers, retailers, catering companies and other organisations. The programme includes information-sharing, seminars, research and events as well as collaborations with schools and influencers. The programme has grown over the years, and it has become increasingly well-known amongst the public. The data retrieved from the SMM tool proves that, for instance, in 2018 the public discussion on food waste matters skyrocketed during the main event of the programme, in both traditional and social media. Due to this peak, we focus on this specific time period. The data were retrieved

with the help of SMM tools, using several search words (food waste-related words and expressions in Finnish as well as synonyms), and consisted of different kinds of social media material published on Twitter, Instagram, forums and blogs, resulting in altogether 3,409 public postings published from September 10 to 16, 2018. To keep the data in a certain format, only public postings published on Twitter and Instagram were chosen for the analysis. After excluding the postings that were published elsewhere, unconnected to the topic or erased later (and not thus visible at the time of the analysis), the final data included 3,082 individual postings.

Analysis and interpretation

The data were analysed with the help of the Atlas.ti software package, allowing inductive open coding and systematic organisation of the codes. The analysis process started with one round of coding done by two researchers and a comparison of these codes. This pre-coding was done to find the best strategy for data analysis as well as to become familiar with the data. Based on the elaborations in this pre-analysis, the actual analysis process was begun. First, the data were categorised according to the market actors who had posted them. All postings were coded based on the actor, and in cases of reposting, the original actor who posted it was also coded. This was done because a substantial number of the postings were not originally created by the poster. Altogether, 88 actor codes were created, which were then positioned within three wider categories: individuals, commercial companies and non-profit organisations.

The second step of the analysis focused on the discourses constructed in the postings. While the earlier phase focused on *who* takes part in the discussion, at this phase the interest was in *how* these actors take part in the discussion. Here, we identified discursive practices and resources within each posting – that is, what was the speech act like and what kinds of metaphors and other linguistic means were used. The analysis method in this phase was inspired by a constructive approach to discourse analysis, which focuses on the processes of social construction constituting reality and takes the context into account (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). In this case, the specific conventions of the social media platform (such as the posting-length limit of Twitter) were considered. During the pre-analysis as well as the first analysis phase, researchers made initial notes about the content and style of the postings. As the analysis and interpretation required an intensive 'dive' into the data in this phase, the primary focus here was on postings published on 11 September 2018 (altogether 779 postings). The analysis was compared with the notes made in the first round of analysis to make sure no major discussion points were left out. In line with the discursive research approach, the aim was to gain a thorough interpretation of the phenomenon, not to find objective truths; thus, the data were read through several times, and some postings were given several codes. It is also important to note that the postings comprising the discussion were not viewed as objective expressions of the posters' opinions or attitudes (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Instead, the emphasis was placed on the ways how the market actors constructed the issue of food waste.

The practical implementation of the second analysis phase started by open-coding first-order concepts with a guiding question of 'how is the issue of food waste constructed in this particular posting?' At this stage, a total of 161 open codes were created. These

codes were grouped to detect their similarities and differences, and new higher-level themes were identified. Finally, the analysis resulted in the identification of three discourses: explanation, exhibition and appeal. After this, the analysis moved on to the interpretation phase of these three discourses' connections with change. At this stage, the practice-theoretical lens was utilised to further examine the identified discourses from the perspective of their potential in enabling change in practices.

Furthermore, interrelations between the actors and the discourses were investigated. This investigation provided some tentative and interesting insights about the differing actors constructing the different discourses. The original postings have been translated into English from Finnish. Although the analysed data were and still are publicly available and the topic is not sensitive as such, the translation also offered a way to avoid direct traceability of the postings to ensure the anonymity of the actors behind the postings.

Findings

Several actors took part in the discussion of food waste during Food Waste Week 2018. Some of the participating actors are major members of the food supply chain and the aggregate marketing system – for instance, food manufacturers, retailers, households and waste management companies. However, as food waste is in some way connected to everyone, several other actors took part in the discussion as well. The identified actors were further divided into three groups: individuals, commercial companies and non-profit organisations (Figure 1).

Although different market actors took part in the discussion, their ways of participation varied. The largest part of the discussion was carried out by individual consumers. However, consumers often used their voices to share other actors' postings through reposting. While the roles of non-profit organisations and commercial companies were smaller in terms of posting frequency, their postings were often reposted by other actors, and in this way their message was often widely spread.

It is also important to note that the roughly divided actor groups overlap in many ways, and the choice of actor code for each posting was not always easy. For instance, in many cases, actors such as retail representatives and non-profit organisation representatives used their individual voices to spread or strengthen the voices of the retailer or non-profit organisation by re-tweeting and sharing something that their employer or colleague had shared. Also, overlaps were detected between the non-profit organisations and commercial companies. For instance, several unions supporting the retail or food-production industries, as well as for-profit companies owned by the government and aiming for societal well-being, took part in the discussion.

The identified market actors took part in the discussion over the food waste issue in varying ways. The food waste issue was constructed through three discourses: explanation, exhibition and appeal, which are described in detail in the following subsections.
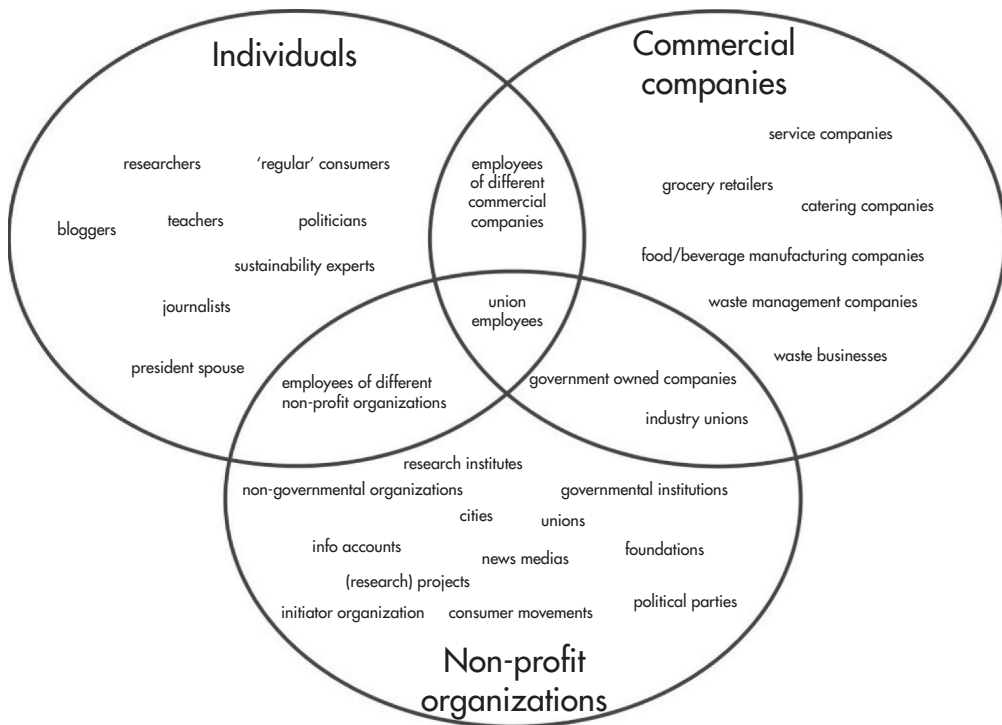
Figure 1. Actors taking part in the discussion.

Explanation discourse

Constructing the food waste issue through *explanation* had a major role in the data. Within this discourse, the food waste issue is given meaning though providing information about what it is and what is known about it. It also includes conversation about the severity of the issue, actions and behaviours that lead to food waste, and its consequences. The focus of the discourse is on the food waste issue itself. Both broader themes (such as the volume of the problem, as in the first data citation) and more detailed facts about specific topics connected to the issue (such as facts about date labels, as in the second citation) are present:

Actor: Union

Every tenth fruit, vegetable, or slice of bread ends up in the trash. Every Finn throws away 24 kilograms of edible food. This is approximately 6 percent of all food purchased by consumers. [two pictures of campaign posters]

Actor: Food/beverage producer company

Beer does not go bad even though the best before date has passed. #foodwasteweek [picture of a beer can]

Facts about food waste are central to this discourse, and several postings include objective statements about food waste as well as links to other sources (i.e. websites).

Discursive resources utilised include, for instance, numbers, statistics and percentages. Issues such as economic, environmental and social problems related to food waste are also mentioned. Mainly, the present tense is utilised. Sometimes postings also reflect the past tense, as the facts are based on research conducted in earlier years. The postings also include discussion of the roles and centrality of different actor groups in the food waste issue. The following citation, for instance, contrasts food waste with economic losses and focuses on the present food waste situation:

> Actor: Research institute
>
> Did you know that families of four people throw away food worth 500 euros in Finland? Smaller #foodwaste = bigger savings and less pollution. #foodwasteweek #responsibility

The tone of this discourse can be considered rather neutral, as many of the postings share objective facts about the issue. The voice is thus quite descriptive and passive, as the topic is approached from 'outside'. However, it is important to note that the descriptive tone can also entail certain assumptions (Sutinen, 2020) that can be interpreted as judgemental. For instance, the choice of words, such as 'throw away food', contain assumptions of wasting food as an intentional practice. Also, the emphasis on numbers and percentages especially highlights the role of households in the issue. Within this discourse, the focus is on 'it' (the food waste issue), and the actors participating in the discussion are information sharers and/or spreaders. Statements given by topic experts such as researchers, institutes and campaign initiators have a central role in authorising the information.

The potential of the explanation discourse to change practices

The explanation discourse echoes many behaviour change programmes' discursive practices, drawing on cognitive theories of change and built upon the idea that an increase in knowledge leads to elevated awareness and eventually changes in behaviours. By focusing on the facts, the explanation discourse contributes to the awareness and education level of the actors. From the practice-theoretical point of view, this can be seen as influencing how food waste is understood as an issue, and in this way shapes the understanding element of food waste practices (Warde, 2005). This may, in turn, have the potential to drive changes in practices. In the first place, the explanation discourse verbalises aspects of actors' mundane practices that are largely routine and undeliberated – by revealing how much food is actually thrown away in households, for example. As the discourse revolves around rather negative or devastating facts about food waste by, for instance, contrasting the amount of food waste to euros or highlighting the environmental effects, it can construct the issue of food waste as a severe and problematic issue that needs solving. Thus, the explanation discourse has the potential to shape the meaning of the food waste issue for different actors from insignificant to more relevant.

The risks carried by this discourse can be traced back to its assumption of rational and self-governing actors. The explanation discourse heavily depends upon only changing the understanding element of practice, which may not be enough for making broader, sustainable changes in practices connected to the issue. For instance, while actors may become more aware of the reasons and consequences of food waste, they might still lack

the skills and materials to alter their everyday practices such as planning food purchases or storing food appropriately. This concern is supported by studies that have elaborated the gap between intentions and actual behaviour (see, e.g. Carrington et al., 2010), which is especially typical for sustainability contexts. It is also important to remember that facts do not always reveal all dimensions but only a part of the problem. For instance, the published facts tend to emphasise households' role in the problem instead of a shared food-chain responsibility. This may have a consequence of shaping the understanding in a direction that undermines the urgency for changes in, for instance, retailers', policy-makers' and restaurants' practices around food waste. Furthermore, when the emergence of food waste is explained through statistics and numbers, it may legitimise wasting food instead of reducing it, as actors may perceive this as a normal occurrence.

Exhibition discourse

The exhibition discourse constructs the issue of food waste through presenting and showing what has already been done or is currently being done to fix the problem. Here, actors both exhibit their own actions and represent what other actors have done. The focus is thus on actions rather than on the issue itself, which was characteristic of the explanation discourse. Also, exhibitions of certain ways of thinking, promises of action, and announcements of participation in the campaign are included. The following citations from the data illustrate this discourse. The first post introduces a pilot started by some other actor and the second illustrates the actor's own participation in the campaign:

> Actor: Blogger
>
> A mobile application pilot is starting in four Helsinki schools in September. With the application downloaded onto one's phone, one can daily check what kind of leftovers there are, and also purchase them. #foodwasteweek #foodwaste

> Actor: Consumer
>
> I am in! I also promise to harvest from the yard and forest. Doesn't it also count as waste if they decay before they are used? #beautifullife #nature #nutrition #foodwasteweek

Actions leading to lower levels of food waste are central for this discourse. The discursive resources utilised include, for instance, concrete examples of actions (e.g. 'this is how I/we have lowered our food waste levels'), statements of how a particular product or service helps (e.g. 'using this product assists in reducing food waste') or more abstract representations of changed actions or thinking (e.g. 'we have decided to cut down our food waste'). Links to other sources and photos are also utilised. The discourse mainly focuses on the present and past tense. In the first citation, a company discusses how their product has had a role in reducing food waste in a concrete manner, while the second citation is more about praising other actors who have committed to reducing food waste:

> Actor: Commercial company
>
> <Brand name> baking paper has reduced food waste and sped up the working day of many people in many phases of work. Before, one portion's worth of food was always burnt in the dish. #goodpapers #foodwasteweek. Read more: <link>

Actor: Non-profit actor

Through <platform name> platform, many actors have already committed to lowering their food waste. For example, <tagged food manufacturer> <tagged restaurant franchise> <tagged catering company> <tagged catering company> <tagged retailer> <tagged non-profit organisation> <tagged city> <tagged non-profit organisation> are reducing #food-waste through their commitments <tagged campaign initiator> [picture of logos]

The tone within this discourse is rather positive, as the discussion revolves around actions that have managed to or have the potential to lower food waste. The voice is rather descriptive, but as the discussion is more connected to the actors, it is more personal and proactive. Within this discourse, the issue of food waste is approached 'from inside' by focusing on the actors. Here, the problematic nature and severity of the food waste issue are regarded as a shared assumption – hence, there is goal congruency (Gollnhofer, 2017). Thus, actions leading to large amounts of food waste are not described, except for a few exceptions that focus on achieved change from the past. The discourse focuses on the personal pronouns 'I' or 'we' when exhibiting examples of one's own actions or doings, or 's/he', 'it' or 'they' when pointing out other actors. Different companies and organisations seem to have a central role within this discourse, which is in line with research suggesting that companies are increasingly involved in public debates over sustainability issues on different platforms (Lahtinen & Närvänen, 2020). Individual consumers also take part, for instance, through sharing pictures of leftover meals.

The potential of the exhibition discourse to change practices

The exhibition discourse helps in making the already existing efforts for reducing food waste visible and public, which can have a normalising effect, leading to a situation where these types of practices may be a substitute for the earlier practices connected to higher levels of food waste and become normal procedures (e.g. Gollnhofer, 2017). This also echoes the social norms approach introduced in the social marketing literature, relying on the idea that people tend to act upon what they think is normal (Burchell et al., 2013). With sustainability issues, the change often begins with some actors disrupting the status quo by showing alternative practices (Baden & Prasad, 2016; Carrigan et al., 2011). The exhibition discourse highlights the practices of some actors, such as retailers and companies, as the main carriers of practices, implicitly setting an example for other actors. This has the potential to also inspire other actors, such as actors' competitors or other actor groups, to take up the same or similar practices. As Watson (2017, p. 348) put it, 'the fate of the practice depends on its success in recruiting and retaining practitioners'.

The exhibition discourse also entails some drawbacks when it comes to its potential for making changes in practices. First, by focusing on the existing actions, the discourse may construct a false idea that the issue is already taken care of. Sharing the efforts that have managed to lower the levels of food waste does not account for the relentless nature of the problem; continuous effort is needed (Närvänen et al., 2020). Our data showed that while some actors celebrated how much they have managed to reduce their food waste levels, other actors pointed out that the problem must have been very severe to begin with and that there is not enough discussion about this when results are brought forward. The exhibition discourse, mainly focusing on success, may also disregard the struggles

that these exhibited practice changes have required. The exhibition discourse also largely fails to bring forth the actions' interconnectedness along the supply chain. For instance, restaurants or retailers may be reducing their own food waste by selling surplus food at a lower price, but this may lead to more waste at the household level as price-conscious consumers may be tempted to buy more than they need. Furthermore, actors emphasising how much good they are doing and 'tooting their own horn' can also have negative side effects. For instance, it has been argued that increased ethical and green appeals among actors (also ones that seem very far from their appeals) have contributed to wider scepticism and a fear of green washing (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009).

Appeal discourse

In the third discourse, appeal, the issue of food waste is constructed from the perspective of what kinds of changes are needed to lower the level of food waste. Within this discourse, different types of appeals were made on what should (or should not) be done as well as what could be done and is not done currently. The discussion here includes statements regarding broader, even abstract changes in actions or attitudes, such as in the first citation, which highlights the importance of the appreciation of food. However, the discussion also includes more detailed postings, for instance, highlighting the actor responsible or concrete ideas for how changes could be made, such as in the latter citation, which includes concrete tips for how bread waste could be reduced:

   Actor: Governmental institute

   Appreciate your food! You should keep track of the contents of your fridge and use them in time.

   Actor: Food/beverage producer company

   Wow, 70 million slices is too much! So make use of crust and dried bread – for oven toast, croutons, breadcrumbs or even something more retro – a bread pudding! #foodwasteweek #bread #<bread brand>

Mentions about potential changes in actions are central. The discursive resources utilised include, for instance, direct commands, reminders, recommendations, suggestions, pledges and restrictions. A characteristic of the discourse is that the postings reflecting it are usually targeted at some actor(s), directly or indirectly. The temporal focus of the discourse is the present (i.e. what can be done immediately) as well as the future (i.e. what should change in the future). The discourse of appeal can be categorised as having two dimensions, one focusing on direct commands urging what should (or should not) be done, as in the first citation, and the other emphasising empowerment through, for instance, providing tips as well as highlighting everyone's important role. In some cases, the actors make pledges and encourage others to suggest their own tips, as in the latter citation:

   Actor: Restaurant

[picture of empty plate] Let's empty the plate! [smiling emoji] #<name of the restaurant> #<name of the franchise> #<name of the city> #foodwasteweek

Actor: Union representative

I challenge you to take part in the food waste week – what is your trick?

The tone within this discourse is rather normative and, in this way, differs from the explanation and exhibition discourses. Here, the discussion takes a clear stance suggesting courses of action put forth by discursive resources of imperatives and exclamation points. As in the exhibition discourse, the discussion here is not focused on the issue of food waste as such but takes the severity of the issue as a shared assumption. How the actors can make changes is being emphasised. As already mentioned, the discourse entails appeals targeted at some actor. For instance, the pronouns 'we' (i.e. what we all could/should do) and 'you' (i.e. what you should do) are utilised. However, the target is not always clear, as passive voice is often used (e.g. 'food should be appreciated more'). Quite often, however, the suggested actions lean towards actions related to consumers' everyday lives, such as cooking rather than, for instance, retail employees' work. The actors involved in the discourse are rather diverse. However, it can be noted that the discourse includes more appeals from commercial companies and non-profit organisations towards individual consumers than the other way around. Individual consumers also participate in the discussion, but their postings are often related to other consumers, for instance, through giving tips for others.

The potential of the appeal discourse to change practices

The potential for change in the appeal discourse includes several dimensions. Change is an inherent feature of the discourse. The discourse focuses on making visible the actions needed, which have the potential for making the other actors feel encouraged to change their practices. Especially when approached in a concrete way, such as giving tips, the actors' barrier to changing their practices may be lower. The discourse especially highlights the teleoaffective structures, meaning the normatively oriented ends and affective engagements (Schatzki, 2002) involved in practices of food waste prevention and reduction. The solution orientation of the discourse constructs the food waste issue as a solvable problem and reducing it as the right thing to do. The importance of this type of solutions-oriented approach has also been introduced in earlier research (Mattila et al., 2019). The discourse, in some parts, also emphasises reducing food waste as a joint endeavour, which supports the agency and role of all actors (Närvänen et al., 2020). This contributes to strengthening different actors' engagement with the issue of food waste. While the exhibition discourse was focused on some carriers of practices exhibiting their effort, the appeal discourse treats different actors as the source for broader change and invites them to make changes in their practices to reduce food waste. Furthermore, the discourse of appeal, with its temporal focus on the future, in a way constructs an image of a better situation in terms of the food waste issue. It has been suggested that this type of imaginary is an important step before changes can be made, and social media can act as a space for its formation (Kozinets, 2019).

The drawbacks of the discourse in terms of its potential for changes in practices are connected to its rather 'paternalistic' nature: the discourse is largely built upon one actor

telling another what could or should be done. It is often argued that commands may stir up undesired responses, as this type of involuntary approach may lead to community criticism (Kim et al., 2019) because actors may feel like their freedom of choice is taken away from them. The appeal discourse, while concentrating on 'doings' rather than 'meanings', and treating food waste as inherently 'wrong', does not contribute to the understanding element of practices. In addition, especially when built upon commands, the discourse can affect the power structures amongst the different types of carriers of practices, as some actors more often become the target of commands than others. In the data, many appeals were targeted at individual consumers. Furthermore, part of the discussion within the discourse was focused on rather broad solutions ('let's not waste food') at a very general level, which does not consider the complexity of the issue and may over-simplify the potential solution for the problem.

Summary of the findings

It was identified that the food waste issue is given meaning through *explanation* of the issue, *exhibition* of different actions and *appeal* for potential solutions. These discourses construct the food waste issue through different discursive practices and the use of different discursive resources. The main characteristics of the discourses are presented in Table 1.

   Based on the analysis and interpretation supported by the practice-theoretical lens, it can be stated that the discourses of explanation, exhibition and appeal constitute very different kinds of resources for practice change around the issue of food waste. The explanation discourse is heavily built upon steering changes that contribute to the understanding of the food waste issue, thus mainly contributing to this one element of practice. The exhibition discourse is more about sharing the concrete procedures of food waste reduction with the lead of certain carriers of practices. The appeal discourse's potential for practice changes, in turn, is connected to its power to alter teleoaffective structures, highlighting the norms and engagements involved in reducing food waste.

Discussion

Contributions to the literature on sustainability issues in social marketing

The purpose of the study was to examine how market actors participate in the socio-cultural construction of the food waste issue through social media. In our inquiry, we found that the social marketing campaign of Food Waste Week managed to create

Table 1. Characteristics of the discourses.

	Explanation	Exhibition	Appeal
Food waste issue as	problem	partly solved problem	solvable problem
Focus on	facts	actions	needed changes
Pronouns utilised	it	I/we or it/he/they	you/we/passive
Temporal dimensions	past and present	past and present	present and future
Tone	descriptive	descriptive	normative

a platform on social media for several kinds of actors to participate in constructing the food waste issue socio-culturally.

The findings of the study contribute primarily to the social marketing literature related to sustainability issues (Beatson et al., 2020; Carrigan et al., 2011; K. Peattie & Peattie, 2009). Our findings show that the food waste issue was constructed on social media during Food Waste Week 2018 through discourses of explanation, exhibition and appeal. These three discourses construct the issue of food waste differently, highlighting different matters with varying focus points. Most relevant from the social marketing point of view, these discourses also differ in their ways and potential for creating practice changes in the context of food waste. By scrutinising the relationship between discourses and practice changes, this study extends the practice theory-inclined work already initiated by several social marketing researchers (Beatson et al., 2020; Gordon et al., 2018; Spotswood et al., 2017). It complements this stream of research by introducing a discursive approach, with the help of which the socio-cultural context can be better acknowledged (Fry, 2011; Spotswood & Tapp, 2013). This study has highlighted how differing discourses can be regarded as being different types of resources for changes in practices, some having more potential for change than others. The study emphasises the importance of understanding 'the power of talk' (Kemper & Ballantine, 2019b) shaping the reality within which practices and practice changes take place.

Social marketers have important roles as discourse constructors, with or without intention. How issues are presented in, for instance, campaign materials or social media postings reflect different assumptions of the agency of the actors (Sutinen, 2020) and entail varying potential in terms of creating changes in practices. While, for example, K. Peattie and Peattie (2009) acknowledge that it is the role of social marketers to enrich sustainability discussions with social and emotional meanings that support behaviour change, we argue that in today's social media environments many other actors are involved in constructing these meanings as well. Hence, social marketers should not only be interested in how they themselves are addressing sustainability issues but also need to understand the existing discourses around different topics. As Kemper and Ballantine (2017) argue, a macro-level challenge for social marketing is to mobilise and shift cultural discourses that legitimise new ways of thinking, social practices and technologies for the support of social issues.

As Hopwood et al. (2005) as well as Kemper and Ballantine (2019a) have suggested in the broader context of sustainability, the different approaches employed in public debates and discussions often vary in their perceptions and interpretations of how sustainable changes can be achieved. Kemper and Ballantine (2019a) identified that sustainability in marketing research is addressed through three main discourses: auxiliary sustainability marketing, reformative sustainability marketing and transformative sustainability marketing, all of which support differing agendas for marketing's role as a contributor to sustainable development. All three discourses identified in this study can be seen as in line with the reform view of sustainability, which acknowledges that changes are needed and views the root causes of unsustainability as an imbalance of knowledge and skills (Hopwood et al., 2005; Kemper & Ballantine, 2019a). It is worthwhile to note that there were no discourses in our data that would question the whole food system or, for instance, help to prioritise different solutions to food waste in terms of their sustainability.

Furthermore, our findings address the call for social marketing to consider multiple market actors when addressing sustainability issues – beyond just the consumer (Kemper & Ballantine, 2017). When aiming at tackling wicked problems such as food waste, changes are needed not only in consumer practices but also in, for instance, retail and catering practices. The discourses of explanation, exhibition and appeal can thus be seen as enablers of change in varying types of practices, as different actors participate in the discussion. The different practices may also be connected to each other and shape each other. For example, a restaurant may start to sell leftovers from the buffet table with a reduced price during the last opening hour, or a retailer may start to offer discounts for products that are close to their expiry dates, which may start to shape consumers' practices. Furthermore, through presenting these as effective ways to reduce food waste, they may be praised by customers, or competitors may adopt the same practice.

Our findings support those of Carrigan et al. (2011) as well as Baden and Prasad (2016), who claim that the relationships between individuals and organisations are important in fostering social norms and meanings that can drive change towards sustainability. Hence, the way how individuals in our data posted and reposted as both private consumers and employees of an organisation attests to the value of addressing people in various roles – not only as consumers. Our findings provide evidence that employees working in the food industry, food retailing and waste management were especially eager to participate in the discussion on food waste on social media. Thus, the role of people as professionals and role models in their respective social networks is reinforced with our findings. Furthermore, previous research on grocery retail employees found that they are often morally concerned about the levels of food waste, as they witness the phenomenon in their daily work (Gruber et al., 2016). The same may apply to restaurant and hospitality employees as well. Thus, involving employees of relevant industries in social marketing campaigns related to sustainability may be an appropriate way to bring about change. This is an important issue to be explored further, even though sustainable behaviours do not always necessarily translate from one context to another, such as from the workplace to the home (e.g. Smith & O'Sullivan, 2012).

Participating in the social media discussion on a sustainability issue has several motives – for individuals but also for organisations, as it may be a way for them to show their corporate social responsibility efforts (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009). Carrigan et al. (2011) identify the importance of 'catalytic individuals', such as small or medium-sized enterprise owners, for sustainability. Our findings show that on social media, organisations of different sizes, as well as individuals, can become such champions by participating in the discussion. The postings are then reposted by others, increasing the relevance of the overall issue. Our findings thus extend Carrigan et al.'s (2011) research by focusing on the social media context. However, it must be noted that on social media, it is typical for some individuals and organisations to have more impact than others.

Regarding regulation as one potential solution, Spotswood et al. (2012, p. 168) have suggested that it is the role of social marketing to 'generate the social conditions that allow for regulation to be introduced in the first place'. Similarly, Kemper and Ballantine (2019b) argue that social marketers can have a role in the creation of 'landscape pressure' through framings and narratives that support the need for system change. A law forbidding retailers from throwing away food is already in place in France and Italy (Giordano et al., 2020). So far, Finnish policy makers have not enforced any laws or regulations

regarding the issue, even though Finland is committed to the European Union's targets of halving food waste at the retail and household levels by 2030 (European Commission, 2017). When considering the relationship of the identified discourses to regulation, the discourse of explanation may offer a way to establish the importance of the problem in the first place: it needs to be perceived as a problem before people are willing to accept interventions or regulations. The exhibition discourse emphasises already existing, largely voluntary measures, which is why it does not necessarily support the need for more regulation.

Our research endeavour also contributes to the call for extending the research-method repertoire of social marketing in order to gain insight into the social surroundings of the behaviour (Brennan et al., 2015; Carins et al., 2016). Understanding the context is crucial for accelerating change, which has been suggested as a weakness of many social marketing programmes (S. Peattie & Peattie, 2003). The practice-theoretical approach has been suggested as a valid and promising approach to social marketing in earlier literature (e.g. Spotswood et al., 2017). This study presents the practice theory-informed discursive approach as one alternative for social marketing research and practice. Furthermore, the benefit of the discursive approach compared to other cultural approaches is that it can be implemented on textual data generated through, for instance, social media. Thus, the discursive approach and methods of netnography can complement practice-theoretical inquiries that build on ethnographic methods, which allow for observing practices in everyday life and the offline social world. This article's findings have complemented Spotswood et al. (2017) by illustrating how the discourses that underlie people's practices are constructed on social media and how they are connected to potential changes in these practices.

Contributions to the literature on using social media in social marketing

The emergence of new media platforms in the online sphere has been characterised as the latest important stage of social marketing evolvement (Dibb & Carrigan, 2013). Several social marketers have realised the potential of social media in boosting consumer engagement, although the research on how this should be done is still scarce (Shawky et al., 2019). Especially in the context of broader social changes, social media has been suggested as a potential platform to turn social media users into vocal advocates (Guidry et al., 2014). The findings of our study illustrate how a social marketing campaign can evolve into a multi-actor discussion aiming for a similar purpose of reducing food waste. There has been a call for a more distributed sense of responsibility on the issue of food waste, as consumers are often easily blamed for the problem (Evans, 2012). Using social media in social marketing may be a step towards this, as our findings showed that a campaign can engage different types of actors, including private and governmental, or for-profit and non-profit ones.

Our study extends the existing research on the connection between social marketing and social media further by introducing the importance of understanding the discourses within the debate. Although the discourses are constructed in the multi-actor discussion, social marketers do have the potential to take part in the issue-shaping of food waste and to raise certain topics in an intriguing way to encourage engagement among actors (Bakan, 2016). Social marketers should carefully consider which discourses are in line

with their ultimate purpose and which discourses they wish to strengthen in their own statements and materials.

In the context of food waste reduction, there has been a debate on whether social media is an effective means to impact the problem. For instance, Young et al. (2017) found that traditional media was more effective in reducing household food waste compared to social media interventions. On the other hand, Grainger and Stewart (2017) criticised this view, suggesting that the potential of social media should not be underestimated. In line with Närvänen et al. (2018), we argue that social media should not be seen only as an intervention with direct, measurable effects, but rather in a social context, as a platform for interaction where discourses are shaped and mobilised to change practices around food waste. Thus, the effects of social media campaigns by social marketers are likely to be indirect and have a longer timeframe.

For many actors, participating in Food Waste Week may have been a form of 'clicktivism' (Halupka, 2014; Kozinets, 2019), which is a low-effort form of political activity on social media conducted through likes, hashtags or the sharing of postings. As Kozinets (2019, p. 80; see also Halupka, 2014) argues, clicktivism may be a way to exchange ideas and make the actors more aware of their unquestioned habits – acting as a precursor of change and offering actors a 'discursive space' for engaging with the issue. Rather than passively receiving information on sustainability issues, social media offers a way for actors to reflectively and quite spontaneously react to that information by liking, commenting and sharing it forward (Pearson et al., 2016). However, clicktivism by nature does not commit actors to changing anything directly (Halupka, 2014); hence, its impacts cannot easily be measured on the level of individuals but rather on the socio-cultural level. Our findings extend marketing research acknowledging this phenomenon of 'clicktivism', as well as recent studies on social media campaigns related to sustainability, including #buynothingday (Paschen et al., 2020), where user-generated comments reveal how consumers use the campaign to express resistance, anti-consumption and restraint-related motivations. In contrast, our study reveals that clicktivism may also be used by consumers as well as other actors for pro-sustainability actions.

Limitations and future research opportunities

The authors acknowledge that the paper has some limitations. First, it should be stated that the chosen methodology does not allow for generalisable findings. More research should be conducted in different cultural contexts to investigate the discourses related to food waste reduction around the world, as practices are always culturally embedded. Furthermore, by focusing on social media data from a restricted time period, we were not able to study the practices related to food waste reduction in the everyday life context. Our approach focuses on how people talk about these practices online rather than how they enact them. The data also does not allow us to examine whether the practices change as a result of the discourses. This would require a longitudinal approach and other kinds of research methods. Second, it is important to note that the analysed social media discussion only sheds light on one corner of the topic. Even though the social media platforms were open for everyone to participate, the participating actors reflect only a portion of market actors connected to the issue. It can also be assumed that the actors participating in the discussion on social media are engaged

in the topic in some ways, while the uninterested actors' voices are not present. Thus, the identified discourses may not reflect the full array of discourses on the food waste issue. Also, social media as a discussion platform may have influenced what kind of discourses are present, and other platforms might illustrate some additional discourses. Future research could elaborate on the differences in issue construction on different platforms.

While beyond the scope of our paper, future research could elaborate more deeply on the power structures within the discussion as well as discourses. A social network analysis could provide interesting insights into what kinds of networks of postings are being formed and which actors hold the power within different discourses. Also, delving deeper into a certain group of actors and the discourses they construct offers an interesting avenue for future research. For instance, this study made a tentative notion that certain groups of actors constructed some discourses more strongly. Approaching the topic from a corporate communications perspective would likely produce interesting insights into how commercial actors engage in sustainability discussions. Extending the findings to other sustainability contexts would also be intriguing. Can similar discourses be identified in the discussions over other sustainability issues? How do discourses evolve over time and shape practices in the longer term? These questions are some examples of topics that further research could focus on to provide more insights for social marketers working on sustainability topics.

Conclusions

The research introduces a practice theory-informed discursive approach to social marketing. The study emphasises the role of discourses in shaping and steering the practices of different actors. How an issue – food waste, in this case – is being discussed, and what types of discourses connected to it exist, provide a foundation for actors' practices. In addition to conceptualising discourses as important resources for practices (Keller & Halkier, 2014), the study elaborates the role of discourses as important shapers of change, especially in the context of sustainability, where changes are desperately needed. As scrutinised in the findings, the identified discourses of explanation, exhibition and appeal each have a different type of potential to steer changes in different actors' food waste-related practices. Today, social media provides issue arenas where different actors take part in the discussions and discourses are constructed. For social marketers, social media provides a fruitful site for initiating and fostering discourse construction and negotiation as well as a channel to gain insight about different issues.

We strongly encourage both researchers and practitioners to pay more attention to the socio-cultural context of behaviour, including social practices and the discourses underlying them. This also calls for innovative methodological approaches such as netnography. This article has provided an example of how this method can be used for generating data about discourses, both for research and practice purposes.

The practice theory-informed discursive approach introduced in this paper helps social marketers, especially in the context of sustainability, to embrace their role in maintaining, transforming or supressing discourses. As the problems of humankind become more complex and multidimensional and the need for broader changes is crucially needed, such conceptual and practical approaches can open new avenues for undiscovered

solutions.

Disclosure statement

Funding

Notes on contributors

Ulla-Maija Sutinen is Doctoral Researcher at Tampere University. Her research interests revolve around social marketing, socio-cultural level of consumer behaviour, sustainable consumption and food waste. She focuses on qualitative research methods. She has published research in *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, Journal of Cleaner Production, Sustainability* and *Time & Society*.

Elina Närvänen is Associate Professor of Services and Retailing at Tampere University and Docent of Consumer Behavior and Consumer Research at University of Jyväskylä. Her research profile is interdisciplinary, and she focuses especially on interpretive approaches to consumer and service research. Her research interests include sustainability, food waste and the circular economy, customer and consumption communities, and embodiment in consumer research. Her work has been published e.g., in the *European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Management, Journal of Service Management*, and *Consumption, Markets, and Culture.*

ORCID

Elina Närvänen http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8255-1401

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PUBLICATION
IV

Addressing food waste with a socio-cultural approach to social marketing

Ulla-Maija Sutinen

Addressing food waste with a socio-cultural approach to social marketing

Ulla-Maija Sutinen

Faculty of Management and Business, Tampere University, Tampere, Finland

Abstract

Purpose – The paper aims to elucidate the potential of a socio-cultural approach to social marketing. Drawing on a practice-theoretical understanding of change, the paper discusses how a socio-cultural approach can inform social marketing and enhance the possibilities of the field to address complex, multifaceted issues that require changes beyond the individual.

Design/methodology/approach – While the paper is conceptual in nature, it uses an illustrative example of food waste as the basis for an investigation of what a socio-cultural approach, rooted in practice-theoretical understanding of change, means for social marketing.

Findings – The paper is conceptual in nature but highlights new opportunities for social marketing connected to a socio-cultural approach foregrounding practice changes. The paper introduces potential roles that social marketers can adopt to initiate and support practice changes in the context of food waste.

Practical implications – The paper emphasises the importance of focussing on the socio-culture and practices connected to the issue in question, both when scoping for insight and when developing the ways to address it.

Originality/value – By integrating a practice-theoretical understanding of change, social marketing and food waste literature, the paper offers novel insights about the potential of adopting a socio-cultural approach to social marketing. The paper discusses a socio-cultural approach to social marketing in context, emphasising the roles social marketers can play in practice changes.

Keywords Social marketing theory, Socio-cultural approach, Social change, Strategic social marketing, Sustainable food, Sustainability, Practice theories, Sustainable food consumption

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Theory plays a central role in social marketing, guiding the understanding about reality, consumers and how (social) change occurs. Traditionally, social marketing has adopted the assumption of a rational individual who acts upon cognitions (Brennan *et al.*, 2014). This type of approach has been referred to as the "traditionalist" paradigm within social marketing (Gordon and Gurrieri, 2014), where traditional marketing models such as 4Ps have been favoured. This paradigm has been the central target of the criticism coming both from outside (Bakan, 2016) and inside the field (Lefebvre, 2012; Spotswood *et al.*, 2012), highlighting the inadequate effect of individual behaviour changes in reaching substantial social change. During its existence, the social marketing field has, however, expanded its

scope, and researchers have broadened the field with more critical reflections upon the prevailing understandings and assumptions within the discipline (Dibb, 2014; Domegan *et al.*, 2016; Gordon *et al.*, 2016; Gordon and Gurrieri, 2014; Spotswood *et al.*, 2012). This expansion of the scope can be seen in the emergence of the social ecologist and critical social marketing paradigms within the social marketing field (Gordon and Gurrieri, 2014).

Currently, we live in a world full of very complex, even wicked problems. These types of wicked problems are not only difficult to solve but also to define, as they include multiple dimensions and are connected to multiple stakeholders with varying agendas (Rittel and Webber, 1973). Here, as a discipline focussed on accelerating change towards a better future, social marketing has an important while highly challenging mission (Gordon *et al.*, 2016). To be able to address multifaceted, complex issues, social marketing has been broadened with approaches such as systems-based models of social marketing (Collins *et al.*, 2010; Domegan *et al.*, 2016), upstream social marketing (Gordon, 2013a), social movement theory (Gurrieri *et al.*, 2018) and macro-social marketing (Kennedy, 2016), to mention a few. While these are different types of approaches to social marketing, all have challenged the view of an individual consumer's mind as a black box that needs altering and instead view the pursuit of change on a different, broader level.

This paper focusses on the potential of a socio-cultural approach to social marketing. This refers to the use of theories specifically focussed on the social and cultural, and this way the paper extends the research efforts initiated by social marketing researchers (Spotswood and Tapp, 2013; Spotswood *et al.*, 2017; Spotswood *et al.*, 2021). The socio-cultural approach adopted in this paper is grounded in a practice-theoretical understanding of the organisation of everyday life (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2016; Warde, 2005). Practice theories propose that the social world is constructed through routinised, socially and culturally shared ways of doings and sayings that consist of different interconnected elements (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2016). These include, for instance, everyday practices of eating a meal, cleaning and commuting, which are carried out in a similar routine-like way. In line with practice-theoretical thinking, individuals are seen as "carriers or hosts of a practice" (Shove *et al.*, 2012, p. 7) rather than putting their agency into the centre stage. The utilisation of practice theories has gained momentum, especially in the sustainability sector, where issues need urgent actions and the current approaches seem inadequate in addressing the mundane, routine-like actions deeply rooted in the social and cultural conventions (Spurling *et al.*, 2013; Strengers and Maller, 2015; Vihalemm *et al.*, 2015; Watson, 2017; Watson *et al.*, 2020). Using practices as the main unit of focus and the primary location for change lifts the pressure from the shoulders of individuals as sole drivers for change (Spotswood and Tapp, 2013; Spotswood *et al.*, 2017; Welch, 2016), as the social change is ultimately considered to arise from practice changes (Warde, 2005; Welch, 2016). From a social marketing perspective, the initiatives aiming for some sort of change should thus be directed at transforming practices instead of individual behaviours.

The purpose of this paper is to strengthen social marketing's contribution to social change. Continuing and extending the conceptual work started by Spotswood *et al.* (2017) and Spotswood *et al.* (2021), this paper elaborates how change occurs from a practice-theoretical perspective, what this type of approach means for social marketing and what kinds of roles social marketers can adopt in practice changes. In line with the critical stream within social marketing (Gordon, 2018), the purpose of the paper is, thus, to broaden the field's scope and enhance its possibilities to foster social change by utilising a theoretical lens that could help with overcoming some challenges within the field. This type of endeavour to expand social marketing to achieve broader results has been called for in earlier literature (Dibb, 2014; Gordon, 2013b; Lefebvre, 2012).

Although conceptual in nature, this paper uses food waste as a case through which a socio-cultural approach to social marketing is illustrated. While food waste has gained some interest among social marketing researchers (Hodgkins *et al.*, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2019; Pearson and Perera, 2018), these studies have not specifically focussed on the topic as a socio-cultural phenomenon. Research on food waste campaigns have indicated that existing food waste campaigns and programmes are still heavily focussed on capacity building through information sharing (Aschemann-Witzel *et al.*, 2017), thus following the traditionalist approach of social marketing by focussing on cognitive aspects. The illustrative example presented in this paper aims to highlight the importance of understanding food waste as a socio-cultural phenomenon and draws its notions on socio-culturally inclined food waste research with a practice-theoretical lens (Evans, 2012; Närvänen *et al.*, 2018). With the help of the illustrative case of food waste, the paper also provides concrete examples of the roles social marketers can take when initiating changes in practices.

The structure of this paper is informed by the work of Jaakkola (2020) and MacInnis (2011), who discussed the role of conceptual developments in the field of marketing. First, the theoretical approach of the research is defined. To guide the introduction of a socio-cultural approach to social marketing, the paper uses a practice-theoretical lens, which works as a "method theory" (Jaakkola, 2020) that is used to amend the social marketing approaches. Then, with the help of an illustrative case example of food waste, the paper discusses what kind of revising (MacInnis, 2011) in the field of social marketing this type of approach requires. The paper places significant attention on justifying practices as the main level of analysis (Jaakkola, 2020). Furthermore, it is discussed what this type of shift in the focus means for social marketing, especially when scoping insight about the issue and developing social marketing actions (Spotswood *et al.*, 2017). The paper concludes with a discussion of the main contributions this research has for theory and practice.

Defining a socio-cultural approach to social marketing

The theoretical approach adopted in this paper highlights the importance of the social and cultural context when addressing behaviours and change. The field of marketing and consumer research has experienced a growing interest in studying phenomena from a socio-cultural perspective (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Fitchett and Caruana, 2015; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). In the social marketing field, however, socio-cultural approaches are still rather uncommon. Although social marketing has not neglected the social and cultural context, aspects connected to the socio-cultural context (e.g. social class) have been regarded as factors influencing consumers' behaviours, rather than being studied or focussed on as such (Spotswood and Tapp, 2013). In the approach adopted in this paper, the role of socio-culture is seen differently: as constantly produced, reproduced, negotiated and contested among market actors (Hall, 1997). Thus, the members of a socio-culture are not only influenced by their surroundings but also constantly produce, represent and shape it through their actions. During recent years, different types of social and cultural theoretical models and approaches have been adopted in social marketing, highlighting their potential to strengthen the rigour and relevance of the field (Spotswood *et al.*, 2017; Spotswood and Tapp, 2013). Studies have, for instance, highlighted the social norms of motorcycle speeding behaviour (Duong and Parker, 2018) and discourses of alcohol consumption (Fry, 2011).

While cultural theories all grasp action and social order by "highlighting the significance of shared and collective symbolic structures of knowledge", there are varying understandings about the "social" and the "cultural" in different forms of cultural theories (Reckwitz, 2002, pp. 245-246). (Reckwitz, 2002). The theoretical lens in this paper is based on practice-theoretical thinking, which considers that "human activity is primarily the

performance of social practices" (Welch, 2016, p. 237). While practice theories are plural, they all challenge the idea of the sovereign individual and share an understanding of social order and action taking place through social practices (Schatzki, 2002; Warde, 2016). A practice can be described as a routinised way of doings and sayings, consisting of elements that are connected to each other (Shove *et al.*, 2012; Warde, 2016). They are considered normal, socially accepted ways of life that are enacted in everyday activities (Shove *et al.*, 2012). Thus, for instance, consumers do not make a rational decision to have lunch at work with colleagues at the work cafeteria around noon, but it is rather a practice that is just carried out like that. Adopting a flat ontology (Schatzki, 2016), practice theories locate the social in the practices, and thus do not emphasise either agency or structure over each other (Reckwitz, 2002). Thus, a practice is the central unit of analysis (Welch, 2016). Individual market actors are, however, seen as important carriers or hosts of practices (Schatzki, 2002).

While practice theories can be used to understand and analyse everyday life as "it is", they also provide an interesting account of change. Change is an inherent part of practices, and different mechanisms contribute to these changes (Watson, 2017). Shove *et al.* (2012) provide probably the most extensive theoretical conceptualisation of practice changes. They introduce practices consisting of elements of materials, meanings and competence and present how changes to these elements can lead to changes in the practices (Shove *et al.*, 2012). For instance, introduction of new technological appliance (material) may change practices of storing food (Shove and Southerton, 2000) . In their policy intervention-focussed approach, Spurling *et al.* (2013) build upon this perspective of practice change and refer to it as "recrafting practices". They also present "substituting practices" and "changing how practices interlock" as other fruitful framings for practice change (Spurling *et al.*, 2013). These practice-based framings, to be used as a tool to shift the focus of policy interventions on everyday practices instead of individual behaviours, have guided the sustainability change approaches recommended for policy but have not yet been elaborated further in social marketing.

It has been suggested that adopting a practice-theoretical lens provides not only new information about the issue in need of change but also novel targets for programmes and interventions (Welch, 2016). Thus, when applied to social marketing, the primary focus on change should thus be on changing practices, as "sources of changed behaviour lie in the development of practices themselves" (Warde, 2005, p. 140). During recent years, researchers have emphasised the potential of practice-theoretical approaches at the policy level (Hampton and Adams, 2018; Spurling *et al.*, 2013; Watson *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, researchers have elaborated the possibilities of practice-theoretical approaches with various interventions in different contexts – for instance, in energy consumption (Gordon *et al.*, 2018b), commuting (Cass and Faulconbridge, 2016) and health (Maller, 2015). While still downplayed in social marketing research, some steps have already been taken to implement practice-theoretical thinking into the field. There are examples of studies that have mainly contributed to offering new types of insight about, for instance, green consumption for social marketing (Beatson *et al.*, 2020). However, more concrete ways to target practices in different contexts have also been elaborated; the most significant of which is the framework presented by Spotswood *et al.* (2017), which integrates practice theories and the social marketing planning process model (French *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, Spotswood *et al.* (2021) have elaborated the ways how practice theories can disrupt social marketing. This paper joins this research path and continues the discussion of the potential of practice-theoretical understanding in social marketing.

Connecting and differentiating from other social marketing approaches
The socio-cultural approach adopted in the paper should be regarded as a theoretical perspective on understanding the organisation of everyday life and change. The approach can be considered as joining the critical stream within social marketing. Earlier characterised as a stream of literature focussing on the harmful effects of commercial marketing (Gordon, 2011), the current critical social marketing has started to address issues about and within social marketing (Gordon *et al.*, 2018a). For instance, deeper reflections upon the field's ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives (Gordon and Gurrieri, 2014; Gurrieri *et al.*, 2013) as well as the use of a broader set of theories, have been called for to realise the field's full potential to enable social change and social good (Dibb, 2014).

The emphasis on the socio-culture in general, and practices in detail, differentiates this paper's approach from some of the other broader established approaches within social marketing. However, it is important to note that the socio-cultural approach adopted in this paper has some connections to, for instance, macro-social marketing and socio-ecological social marketing. For instance, macro-social marketing builds upon the idea that reality has different layers, and shaping the social context of behaviour is crucial when aiming for change (Kennedy, 2016). Similar to the macro-marketing understanding of reality, the social ecology framework highlights the importance of understanding the different systems and layers – including the macrosystem, exosystem, mesosystem and microsystem – influencing behaviours; it assumes they are in hierarchical relation to each other, and that changes in the "higher" system are likely to create broader changes (Collins *et al.*, 2010). While this paper shares a similar view on the need to address change beyond the individual, the main difference is that a socio-cultural approach grounded in practice-theoretical thinking locates the social within the practices and, in this sense, only focusses on one "level". Thus, the ontologies of these approaches are substantially different. However, from a more pragmatic viewpoint, there are ways how practice-theoretical thinking could potentially open up opportunities for macro-social marketing and socio-ecological approach. As stated by Kennedy (2016), many paths are open for creating this macro-social change, and here a socio-cultural approach could be regarded as one potential avenue. On a similar note, Gordon *et al.* (2018a, 2018b) discuss that while, for instance, a social marketing programme might adopt a socio-ecological model for its overall structure; it is likely that other theories are needed to guide understanding and actions on different levels, as one single theory is seldom enough to give guidance on multiple levels. For instance, in their study on energy efficiency, Gordon *et al.* (2018a, 2018b) approached domestic energy use with a practice-theoretical lens, although the overall perspective of the study was system-based.

Wicked problem of food waste: challenges from the social marketing perspective

Currently, there is no question about the unsustainability of the levels of food waste. It has been estimated that approximately one-third of food is wasted throughout the food chain (FAO, 2019). The biggest portion of food waste is created in the later parts of the food chain, in households, and the problem seems to be similar across countries with different income levels, although earlier narratives regarded household food waste mainly as a problem of more affluent countries (UNEP, 2021). What makes household food waste, especially problematic from the sustainability perspective, is its position at the end of the food chain; thus, the resources (e.g. water, land, nutrients) used at the earlier points end up in the waste bin. In recent years, international institutions, governments and the public have faced the unsustainability of the food waste situation, and it is addressed in several national and

international sustainability agendas, such as in the United Nations' Sustainability Development Goals, and has been the subject of an increasing amount of research in different fields.

Food waste and marketing can be considered as having an uneasy relationship. At least part of the food waste problem can be traced back to marketing (Aschemann-Witzel *et al.*, 2015), boosting the excessive purchase of food products, leading to food ending up as waste. Yet food waste offers a great opportunity for marketing field to demonstrate its managerial, public policy and societal relevance, and in the recent years, the topic has gained momentum among marketing and consumer researchers (Porpino, 2016). Recent food waste studies published in the marketing field have, for instance, studied the ways in which existing campaigns have approached the topic so far (Sutinen, 2020), elaborated how different stakeholders are held responsible for the issue (Mesiranta *et al.*, 2021) and examined how consumer movements can shift the marketplace (Gollnhofer, 2017; Gollnhofer *et al.*, 2019).

The number of studies around the topic of food waste has exponentially grown during recent years (Giordano and Franco, 2021). However, the topic has only recently drawn attention in social marketing studies. Furthermore, while several initiatives and campaigns have been established around the issue, only few of them identify as social marketing (Kim *et al.*, 2020a). In social marketing research, the topic has been approached from different perspectives. In their review, Kim *et al.* (2020a) focussed on best practices for food waste campaigns and reviewed food waste initiatives on the basis of social marketing principles, suggesting that those including the most components, such as targeting and marketing mix, are more likely to succeed. Based on a social marketing campaign pilot intervention grounded in the benchmark criteria, Kim *et al.* (2020a, 2020b) have illustrated the potential efficacy of social marketing in reducing food waste. Suggestions directed at practitioners for communication have also been studied and introduced by Pearson and Perera (2018). Similarly focussing on communication, Septianto *et al.* (2020) have proposed effective ways to frame food waste in social advertising messages. Effort has been made to understand consumers' perspectives on food waste campaigns (Kim *et al.*, 2020b). Furthermore, stakeholder inclusion has been introduced as a potential strategy to broaden food waste social marketing, calling for future research to approach the topic "with theories that extend understanding further beyond the individual or recognises the individual operating within a system involving a multitude of actors" (Hodgkins *et al.*, 2019, p. 283).

While the existing social marketing studies focussing on food waste have taken important steps to seize the potential of social marketing for solving this severe sustainability concern, they do lack a critical reflection about the overall compatibility of the social marketing approach with a sustainability problem of food waste. When addressing food waste through social marketing, there are several concerns that need to be acknowledged and thought through. First, food waste can be considered a *wicked problem* (Närvänen *et al.*, 2020), which refers a problem that is multifaceted and complex, and can be understood in different ways, making it hard to solve (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Närvänen *et al.*, 2020). In the context of social marketing, it has been argued that the multidimensional nature of sustainability issues is very open to misinterpretation, potentially causing misguided social marketing approaches, focussing on only certain aspects of the issue (Beachcroft-Shaw and Ellis, 2019). With a similar perspective, Carvalho and Mazzon (2019) argue that due to its tendency to use a rather narrow theory base, social marketing might be able to achieve results and solve some small parts of the problem but fail to tackle the cause itself. While households are often presented as the biggest contributors to the food waste problem, the problem has its roots in the wider food system (Närvänen *et al.*, 2020). Thus, social marketing only focussing on individual consumers, framing them as the responsible

ones and the main drivers of change (Mesiranta *et al.*, 2021), might miss the opportunity to address the issue on a wider level.

Furthermore, food waste is a good example of a concern raised by Spotswood *et al.* (2012) about social marketing *balancing between societal and individual needs*, providing no clear solution for what to do when these are not aligned. Social marketing can be considered to have a dual purpose, aiming to increase well-being and social good for both individuals and society at large. The latter purpose of social marketing, contributing to societal well-being, has been largely based on the idea that enhancing individual consumers' well-being will eventually lead to enhanced societal well-being as an increased number of consumers adopt individual behaviour changes (Andreasen, 2002). This idea, however, becomes contested in situations where tackling societal issues is not directly connected to individual well-being, which is also the case when considering food waste: wasting less food does not directly enhance the well-being of individual consumers who should be making changes in their behaviour but is still crucial for the society at large. This also connects to a concern for the suitability of the concept of *conscious exchange*, grounded upon the calculation of costs and benefits and leading to voluntary behaviour change. The concept of "exchange" has had a central role in social marketing throughout the field's existence and is still a key principle of social marketing (Tapp and Rundle-Thiele, 2016). When covering topics such as smoking cessation, the concept of exchange has worked as a valuable tool for identifying and communicating the benefits of behaviour change. When reaching for sustainability changes such as reducing food waste, the adaptation of the concept becomes more difficult. For instance, some food waste campaigns foster food waste reduction by emphasising, for instance, the benefit of saving money (Sutinen, 2020). Focussing on one specific benefit might, however, over-simplify a complex problem and overlook other important dimensions of it. In sustainability related concerns, the gained benefit is often very abstract or even over-generational: the change is needed to ensure the well-being of the environment or future generations to come. Spotswood *et al.* (2012) presented this type of situation, where the informed exchange is very unclear, largely problematic from a social marketing perspective. Concerning food waste, overt emphasis on conscious exchange restricts social marketing's potential to address the issue.

As the described concerns show, addressing food waste through social marketing is not a straightforward task. Instead, there are several concerns that should be reflected. These include reflections on how to address the complexity of the issue, how to balance between individual well-being and societal well-being and how to deal with the blurry or even impossible "conscious exchange". While all these concerns mirror the issues related to the individual-focussed behavioural theories widely adopted in the traditionalist paradigm of social marketing, a profound shift in the overall social marketing approach is needed to tackle these concerns. Here, one potential avenue is a practice-theoretically based socio-cultural approach, which allows for addressing food waste as an issue arising from practices, not from individual behaviours. This shift in the focus, however, requires some changes in the social marketing planning process. Extending the work done by Spotswood *et al.* (2017) suggesting a multi-phased process planning outline for practice-based social marketing, the following sections discuss what adopting a socio-cultural approach based in practice theories means for the phases of scoping and developing in the context of food waste.

Scoping the problem at a socio-cultural level: understanding food waste with a practice lens

Individual consumers have often been blamed for the food waste problem (Evans, 2012), being mentioned as the main contributors of food waste in statistics. The situation has a

resemblance with wider issue of consumer resposibilisation emphasised by the neoliberal ideology (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). The tendency of focussing on individual consumers is also evidenced in food waste campaigns, most of which share an emphasis on individuals, for instance through awareness-raising campaigns (Aschemann-Witzel *et al.*, 2017; Sutinen, 2020). In addition to this type of cognitive approach, food waste initiatives have also adopted emotional approaches as well as conative approaches such as nudging (Sutinen, 2020). However, the everyday life of households and consumers goes beyond individual choices of deciding whether to waste or not. Regarding this, a growing group of researchers have highlighted the importance of addressing the food waste issue from the socio-cultural perspective (Blichfeldt *et al.*, 2015; de Carmo Stangherlin *et al.*, 2020; Närvänen *et al.*, 2018).

Practice-theoretical understanding provides a way for studying food waste not arising from the individual consumer behaviours nor from the social structures, but from between them; from everyday practices. A practice-theoretical lens to food waste has been utilised to identify practices causing household food waste (Evans, 2012). The findings included themes such as "feeding the family", "eating properly", "the materiality of 'proper' food and its intersections with the socio-temporal demands of everyday life" and "anxieties surrounding food safety and storage" (Evans, 2012). Similarly, Southerton and Yates (2015) have attempted to understand food waste from a practice-theoretical angle and focussed on the "normal" practices of eating. Furthermore, Blichfeldt *et al.* (2015) present the practice of "objectifying edibility", meaning relying on external cues such as "best before" dates, connected to food waste.

In addition to understanding how food waste is generated in practices, practice-theoretical food waste studies have also offered insight into how food waste is reduced in practices. For instance, through a mobile ethnographical approach, Sirola *et al.* (2019) studied the practices of consumers reporting low levels of food waste and identified different elements interlinked with practices of planning, grocery shopping, cooking, eating and handling surplus food. Temporality-related dimensions have also been elaborated, presenting food waste reduction as "dancing with potential food waste" through practices organising temporality, namely, scheduling, pausing, stretching and synchronising (Mattila *et al.*, 2019). In their research, Blichfeldt *et al.* (2015) identify "internalization of edibility" (trusting one's own senses when assessing food) at the other end of the continuum, connected to reducing food waste.

From a practice perspective, there are no clear practices of food waste generation or reduction. Instead, there are plenty of everyday practices connected to higher or lower amounts of food waste production. Thus, studies focussing on eating and food practices also provide important insight about practices connected to food waste. Warde (2016) has done extensive work on elaborating eating as a special form of consumption and emphasises the perks of approaching eating with a practice-theoretical lens to acknowledge its rash, habitual and even unconscious nature. Warde (2016) also highlights the importance of understanding eating occasions as well as what is on a menu, both of which are also connected to food waste. Halkier (2017, p. 148), on the other hand, has elaborated on the normalisation of convenience food, highlighting the practice of eating convenience food in Denmark as "culturally expectable, but less clearly socially acceptable". This connects to food waste, as the eating of convenience food often leads to less food waste compared to food made from scratch (Hertz and Halkier, 2017).

Developing a socio-cultural approach to social marketing: social marketers' role in practice changes towards less food waste

While research has elaborated how a practice lens could inform policymakers (Spurling *et al.*, 2013; Vihalemm *et al.*, 2015; Watson *et al.*, 2020; Welch, 2016), not much attention has

been placed on elaborating social marketing's role in fostering practice changes (for exception, see Spotswood *et al.*, 2021). When designing change initiatives and programmes with a socio-cultural focus, the "unit" of change is located in the socio-culture – in practices (Spurling *et al.*, 2013; Vihalemm *et al.*, 2015; Welch, 2016). In line with this, Spotswood *et al.* (2017, p. 165) suggest that "the particular tactics for change would be developed within the practice context and be based on understandings about the ways practices change". Thus, in its stance on how practices change, paper builds upon the understanding of practice change conceptualised by Shove *et al.* (2012) and developed further by Spurling *et al.* (2013) in policy intervention context.

In the context of food waste, the most fundamental principle is that social marketers should aim at changing food waste-related practices instead of changing individual consumers, which are usually considered the main agents in behaviour change models (for more elaboration on the differences between behaviours and practices, Vihalemm *et al.*, 2015), to waste less. Based on practice-theoretical understanding, social marketing should be seen as embedded in the system of practices rather than as an external force (Vihalemm *et al.*, 2015). Within the system of practices, social marketers may adopt different types of roles through which they can initiate and support practice changes toward less food waste. In the following, three potential roles for social marketers are presented "shapers of practices reducing food waste", "normalisers of practices reducing food waste" and "re-organisers of practice bundles connected to food waste". All these roles are based on existing theorisations on practice changes and exemplified through practice-focussed food waste studies.

Social marketers as shapers of practices producing food waste
First, based on the idea of recrafting practices (Shove *et al.*, 2012; Spurling *et al.*, 2013), social marketers can adopt a role of "shapers of practices producing food waste". Here, the focus is on changing the practices known to be producing food waste through shaping the elements of meanings, competences and materials constituting them (Shove *et al.*, 2012). According to Southerton and Welch (2015), the key to effective interventions is to address many elements of practices at once. The focus is different compared to, for instance, education that emphasises solely competences or information-sharing initiatives that focus on the practice element of meaning (Welch, 2016).

As shapers of practices producing food waste, social marketers should take into account all elements of practices known to be producing food waste and build upon insight about them (Figure 1). In earlier research, high levels of food waste have been connected to the meanings of affection (Porpino *et al.*, 2016) and "good provider identity" (Graham-Rowe *et al.*, 2014). To shape these types of socio-cultural meanings, social marketing programmes could focus on contesting the assumption of a "good provider" as someone who purchases a lot

Figure 1.
Social marketers as shapers of practices producing food waste

Current situation:
A practice producing food waste

Proposed role for social marketer:
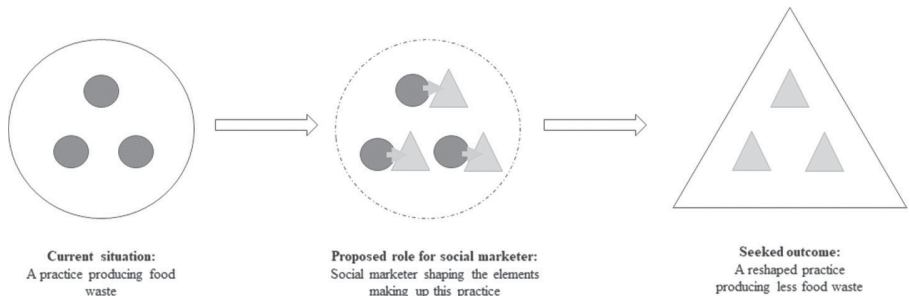Social marketer shaping the elements making up this practice

Seeked outcome:
A reshaped practice producing less food waste

of food for the family and highlight the positive meanings of leftover cooking by connecting this with meanings of, for instance, care and ethical example setting (Lehtokunnas *et al.*, 2020). At the same time, social marketers should make sure that there are adequate competences for the practice changes. For instance, food waste has been connected with difficulties in re-using leftover ingredients in new meals (Evans, 2012). Here, social marketers could focus on elevating leftover-cooking skills through, for instance, providing a recipe bank for typical leftovers at home. Furthermore, material elements need to be addressed. For instance, containers and aluminium wraps utilised for storing food are connected to procrastination practices leading to wasted food (Blichfeldt *et al.*, 2015). In terms of this, social marketers could support better use of them and/or support switching them into transparent ones.

Social marketers as normalisers of practices reducing food waste
Second, extending the framings of recrafting practices and substituting practices (Spurling *et al.*, 2013), another proposed role for social marketers is that of "normalisers of practices reducing food waste". Here, instead of focussing on shaping the practices leading to higher level of food waste, the emphasis is put on supporting those practices that are connected to lower levels of food waste, by normalising them (for more research on practice normalisation processes, Gollnhofer, 2017). As a desired outcome, a food waste reducing practice that used to be uncommon would become more "normal", and eventually substitute the practices producing food waste.

When adopting this role, as Figure 2 illustrates, social marketers should build upon insight about the practices that reduce (or even avoid) food waste and focus on elevating and supporting the elements within them. Like in the previously described role, social marketers should take into account all three elements of the practices but instead of shaping them, the purpose in this role is to make these elements more visible, salient and accessible. For instance, to normalise leftover cooking from earlier days' scrapes, social marketers should address meanings, competences and materials making up this practice. Social marketers could emphasise positive socio-cultural meanings, such as creativity, aesthetics and ethics in connection to leftover cooking (Närvänen *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, a competence highly relevant to the avoidance of food waste, the ability to assess the edibility through looking, smelling and eating (Blichfeldt *et al.*, 2015) is something that social marketers could aim to foster, for instance, through workshops or in co-operation with educational institutes. The focus should also be on the materials, such as certain appliances, such as blender, freezer and toaster, which often have central role in food waste reduction (Närvänen *et al.*, 2013). Regarding this, social marketers may make the food waste reducing procedures related to the use of a kitchen appliance more salient.
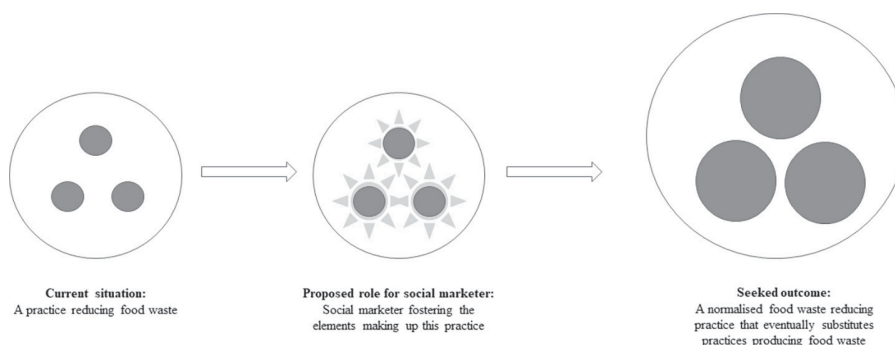

Current situation:
A practice reducing food waste

Proposed role for social marketer:
Social marketer fostering the elements making up this practice

Seeked outcome:
A normalised food waste reducing practice that eventually substitutes practices producing food waste

Figure 2.
Social marketers as normalisers of practices reducing food waste

Social marketers as re-organisers of practice bundles connected to food waste
The third potential role, grounded in the framing of changing the interlocks between different practices (Spurling *et al.*, 2013), is that of "re-organisers of practice bundles connected to food waste". In this role, the attention is put on fact that practices connected to food waste occur as bundles and are performed through certain temporalities and sequences (Mattila *et al.*, 2019; Vihalemm *et al.*, 2015). This role takes a step away from the elements within the practices and instead focusses on the linkages between different practices all connected to food waste (Spurling *et al.*, 2013; Watson, 2017).

Figure 3.
Social marketers as re-organisers of practice bundles connected to food waste
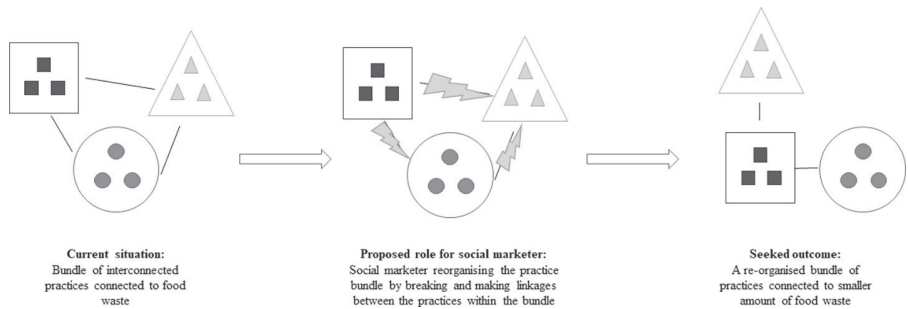
As depicted in Figure 3, here social marketers attempt to initiate practice changes by re-organising the linkages between the practices that are directly or indirectly connected to food waste. Adopting this role requires a holistic understanding on the different bundles of practices around food waste and the ways how they are shaped by each other. Temporalities are especially important when assessing food waste that can be seen as a consequence of the mismatch between foodstuffs' inevitable decay and rhythms and schedules of everyday life (Evans, 2012). In this role, social marketers should aim to disrupt these mismatches by, for instance, building upon the Mattila *et al.*'s (2019) elaboration on the practice bundles of scheduling, pausing, stretching and synchronising as ways to order temporality in food waste reduction. Social marketers could, for instance, focus on the bundle of scheduling, with an attempt to avoid food waste through focussing on re-organisation of the planning for purchases and meal plans and regularising shopping trips. In line with this, food waste is a matter connected to sequences of food-related practices or moments of action (Watson *et al.*, 2020). These include, for instance, planning, grocery shopping, cooking, eating and handling surplus food (Sirola *et al.*, 2019). To re-organise the sequences of interconnected practices, social marketers need to break some of the existing linkages and to create new ones between the practices. This might mean social marketer aiming to reduce household food waste might focus on, for instance, changing grocery shopping practices.

Discussion
This study aimed to illustrate the potential of a socio-cultural approach in social marketing using the illustrative case of food waste. Grounded in practice-theoretical thinking, the paper presented social marketers' potential roles in changing the socio-culture through steering practices. Extending and going beyond the work of Spotswood *et al.* (2017) introducing practice-theoretical ideas into the social marketing domain, the paper proposes three concrete roles social marketers could adopt when initiating practice changes towards less food waste. Based on studies explaining practice change (Shove *et al.*, 2012; Spurling *et al.*, 2013;

Vihalemm *et al.*, 2015), these roles include "social marketers as shapers of practices producing food waste", "social marketers as normalisers of practices reducing food waste" and "social marketers as re-organisers of practice bundles connected to food waste".

Although this paper's main scope was limited to the case of food waste, it argues that a socio-cultural approach has a lot to offer to social marketing, especially when addressing sustainability issues. Social marketing's main purpose is to foster social good in the world (Kotler and Lee, 2008), covering both individual and societal well-being. Issues related to sustainability can be seen as falling to the latter. Although there are many examples of social marketing addressing sustainability-related issues, such as energy consumption (Gordon *et al.*, 2018b) and recycling (Haldeman and Turner, 2009), researchers have also brought up the inefficacy of social marketing when tackling sustainability issues and called for more effective ways to approach the topic (Peattie and Peattie, 2009). Especially the use of cognitive theories of behaviour when addressing sustainability matters is challenged by the broadly researched attitude-behaviour gap (Boulstridge and Carrigan, 2000). Furthermore, the assumption of relying on the idea that small changes in individual actions will eventually lead to large scale social changes has been challenged (Peattie and Peattie, 2009; Watson, 2017). Thus, being satisfied with merely achieving changes in individual actions is not adequate. Instead, sustainability demands fundamental changes to practices (Watson, 2017).

It is undeniable that sustainability-related concerns need urgent attention from researchers, and therefore, some radical shifts in thinking need to be considered within social marketing research and practice; here, a socio-cultural approach offers a potential avenue. Especially when grounded in practice-theoretical thinking, and taking practices as the main unit of focus, the approach takes the heavy burden off the shoulders of individual consumers as the main contributors and responsible solvers of the problem. Many researchers have suggested the practice-theoretical lens as highly useful in sustainability-related concerns, and especially with these issues, it also provides great potential for social marketing.

Theoretical contributions
This paper's contributions are threefold. First, the paper contributes to the emerging discussion on the potential of socio-cultural approaches and especially practice-theoretical thinking in social marketing (Beatson *et al.*, 2020; Spotswood and Tapp, 2013; Spotswood *et al.*, 2017; Spotswood *et al.*, 2021). It discusses the basic assumptions and premises of this type of approach, the most significant being the idea of social change arising from changes in practices rather than changes in individual consumers' behaviours. It is proposed that this type of shift in the unit of focus opens new ways for social marketing to foster social change (Lefebvre, 2012). Using the case of food waste as an illustrative example, the paper presents how this approach could enhance social marketing addressing a sustainability concern. The discussion presented in this paper extends the research efforts begun by Spotswood *et al.* (2017) in introducing the planning process framework, by diving deeper into the precise ways the practice-theoretical approach could inform social marketers' role in initiating change, especially in the scoping and developing phases. The discussion presented in this paper contributes to the overall evolvement of socio-cultural approaches to social marketing, highlighting the importance of social marketing in understanding and shaping the socio-culture, as it is rather than treating it solely as one of the external factors influencing consumers' behaviour. This type of approach can also be regarded as contributing to critical social marketing urging social marketing to be more reflexive

(Gordon and Gurrieri, 2014) and to critically analyse and develop the theories and concepts within the field (Dibb, 2014; Gordon, 2018).

Furthermore, the paper addresses the already established discussion on the uneasy relationship between social marketing and sustainability and the concerns related to social marketing for sustainability (Peattie and Peattie, 2009). Food waste, as a wicked problem, presents a good example of a sustainability issue that is difficult to tackle through, for instance, relying on individual-focussed theories. When viewed from social marketing perspective, the case includes concerns related to the complexity of the problem, the non-alignment of individual and societal well-being within sustainability and the unclear conscious exchange. All these issues are relevant for social marketing researchers to think about and reflect upon when addressing any type of sustainability issue. With an increasing number of sustainability issues arising and the urgency in tackling them, it is important for social marketing to be open to all types of possible approaches to create change. Although some of the change approaches might, for example, misalign with the considered principles of social marketing, they may hold great potential. In this sense, this paper continues the similar pragmatic stance on social marketing that has been represented as a strength of the field (Gordon, 2011; Spotswood *et al.*, 2012).

Last, the paper contributes to food waste research by opening new avenues to solve the issue of food waste (Närvänen *et al.*, 2020). Using food waste as an illustrative example, the paper has shown how a socio-cultural approach can be applied to social marketing in addressing food waste, thus making the practice-theoretical understanding more practicable (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014). While food waste has gained some interest in social marketing research, a socio-cultural approach has remained outside the scope of published articles. As discussed in the paper, there already is a large amount of socio-cultural insight about food waste already available in the literature that could also be used in social marketing. The paper encourages transdisciplinary approaches and urges social marketing to fully unravel what is already known about the socio-cultural context of food waste.

This paper represents insight into the possibilities of socio-cultural approach for social marketing. Although presented here from the perspective of possibilities, there is no doubt that the practice-theoretical lens also includes challenges and limitations. While this paper proposed three potential roles for social marketers in practice change, it must be noted that there are also other ways to conceptualise practice changes as well as other opportunities to incorporate practice-theoretical ideas of change into social marketing. Despite the inherent limitations, it is hoped that the discussion presented in this paper will inspire both scholarly research and social marketing practice in developing social marketing that would better acknowledge the socio-cultural sphere.

Practical implications for social marketers
This paper has sought to present the potential of a socio-cultural approach in social marketing. Although the paper focussed on the case of food waste, the possibilities of a socio-cultural approach go beyond it. As the discussion in the paper shows, shifting the focus to practices opens up many new opportunities for social marketers to focus their attention and to reframe their own role in change. It is clear that it might sometimes be difficult to detect the practices connected to a certain societal problem (Spotswood *et al.*, 2017). However, as this paper's example of food waste tried to make explicit, there usually is a good deal of existing research and insight where to start from. Furthermore, it is hoped that the concrete suggestions of the social marketers' roles in practice changes can inspire practitioners in various contexts.

When addressing issues related to sustainability problems such as food waste, it is very important for social marketers to thoroughly reflect upon the phenomenon in question and critically consider the "location" of the problem. In a traditionalist paradigm, issues are often regarded as rooted in individual cognition. However, this study has aimed to argue that this is not the only possible viewpoint. Instead, elaborating the issues from a socio-cultural approach can offer new insights about the issue in question and open new avenues for social marketing (Welch, 2016). This applies to many problems of social marketing interest, as the studies have shown; for instance, leisure time activity can be regarded as connected to social class (Spotswood and Tapp, 2013), and adolescent drinking has ties to a broader drinking culture (Tran *et al.*, 2019). With any case, this type of critical evaluation about one's own perspective and implicit understandings should be done at the very beginning of any social marketing programme or initiative.

In addition to inspiring social marketing practitioners to implement more socio-culture-focussed initiatives, the paper also has an important note for all social marketers, even when relying on more individual-focussed theories of change. Social marketers need to understand that they are powerful actors within the socio-cultural context, and the responsibilities connected to this power should be acknowledged. Social marketers are not external forces but instead embedded in the society and the complex system of practices (Vihalemm *et al.*, 2015). Thus, although the aim of the programme would not be to transform social practices, social marketers are strongly encouraged to carefully consider their own choices of words, tone and approach so that they do not unintentionally, for instance, strengthen unnecessary or even harmful socio-cultural meanings connected to the issue in question (Gurrieri *et al.*, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper aimed to discuss and show how a practice-theoretical lens can inform social marketing and strengthen the socio-culturally inclined research in the field. Due to the complexity of today's problems and social marketing's duty to pursue change towards a better future, the existing boundaries and set principles of social marketing should not stand in the way of creating change. To reach its ultimate goal of increasing well-being and social good in the world, the social marketing field needs to stay open to different theories of human behaviour and social change. Through the case of food waste, this paper has illustrated a socio-cultural approach to social marketing, grounded in a practice-theoretical understanding of change, as a promising avenue to address these kinds of complex issues. By adopting this approach, social marketing can play a bigger role in socio-cultural change. This effort can also be interpreted as a way of going back to the very roots of the field and putting the emphasis on the "social" in social marketing (Brennan *et al.*, 2014; Lefebvre, 2012).

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Corresponding author
Ulla-Maija Sutinen can be contacted at: ulla-maija.sutinen@tuni.fi