

Entry

Consumer Behaviour and Food Waste in Greece: Insights from 2012 to 2024

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Definition: Food waste is a significant challenge for modern societies, leading to environmental, social, and economic consequences. In developed countries, including Greece, food waste primarily occurs the final stage of consumption, making consumer behaviour a key factor in addressing this issue. This entry aims to highlight consumer behaviour regarding to food waste in Greece from 2012 to 2024 by synthesizing and evaluating published and unpublished research. Using a systematic review approach, this entry identifies the key trends, behavioural patterns, and determinants of food waste among Greek consumers. The findings highlight the impact of socioeconomic characteristics, economic conditions, and consumer awareness on food waste behaviour. Notably, financial constraints during economic crises have influenced waste reduction, while a growing awareness of food labelling and meal planning has emerged as a consistent trend over time. Additionally, segmentation analyses reveal distinct consumer groups based on their waste-conscious behaviours, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions. This entry contributes to the literature by offering a comprehensive overview of consumer behavioural trends over a 12-year period, identifying knowledge gaps, and proposing strategic directions for future research and policy-making. Understanding these behavioural patterns is essential for developing effective measures to reduce food waste and promote sustainable consumption practices.

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1. Introduction

Several studies indicate that in developed economies, the majority of food waste occurs during the final stages of the food supply chain, particularly in households [1–5]. As a result, food waste most commonly occurs during food purchasing, in food service sectors, and in households, largely influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors made by both producers and consumers [6]. As highlighted in the international literature, food waste occurring in the final stages of consumption is closely linked to consumer behaviour. The practices associated with food waste are complex and due to various factors [3,7]. Therefore, understanding the factors contributing to food waste among consumers is of vital importance [8]. Previous research has indicated that understanding household habits is directly related to comprehending consumer behaviour towards food waste [8–10]. Given that consumer purchasing habits are often routine-based [11] and that excessive food purchasing is a common practice [9,12], such habits contribute to food waste generation.

Another significant factor leading to increased food waste—combined with the purchase of large quantities of food—is the preparation of excessive meals. Consequently,

reusing meal leftovers can contribute to reducing food waste [9]. Additionally, household habits related to meal planning and shopping routines also play a crucial role [8].

In developed countries, people purchase more food than in the past, and the quantity of food available for consumption has significantly increased over the past decade. These increases result in both overconsumption and heightened food waste [13]. The rise in household income, coupled with the decline in product prices and the abundance of food to meet consumer demands, has led to a general disregard for food waste. Consequently, food waste has increased, particularly in developed countries [2,13]. Large households [10] and those with high incomes [8] tend to waste the most food, while the role of age in food waste remains a topic of debate, as studies present conflicting findings [8,9]. Demographic factors affecting households have been shown to influence their behaviour towards food waste; however, this remains a subject of ongoing discussion, as there are studies supporting both perspectives.

The consequences of food waste require further attention, necessitating a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour. Preventing food waste generation appears to be the key response to this critical issue [14–16], as it is feasible, and there are numerous possibilities for reducing food waste—by more than 63%—particularly at the consumption stage [17]. Since consumers are generally opposed to food waste [18], their attitudes are expected to influence their behaviour regarding food waste. In the Decade of Action for achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is crucial to make progress at regional, national, and international levels. This is especially urgent, given that the data indicate significant work remains to be done in Greece [19]. Therefore, studying consumer behaviour is essential to provide answers and solutions to the issue of food waste.

The primary aim of this paper is to examine and synthesize research conducted in Greece between 2012 and 2024 on consumer behaviour and food waste. This entry identifies key behavioural patterns, the influence of socioeconomic and economic factors, and the effectiveness of various waste reduction strategies. By analyzing both published and unpublished studies, this research offers a broad perspective on how consumer attitudes and behaviours toward food waste have evolved over time.

Methodologically, this entry employs a systematic review approach, compiling findings from multiple research studies, including academic papers, master's theses, and nationwide surveys. The synthesis of these studies allows for the identification of recurring themes, behavioural trends, and knowledge gaps in food waste research in Greece.

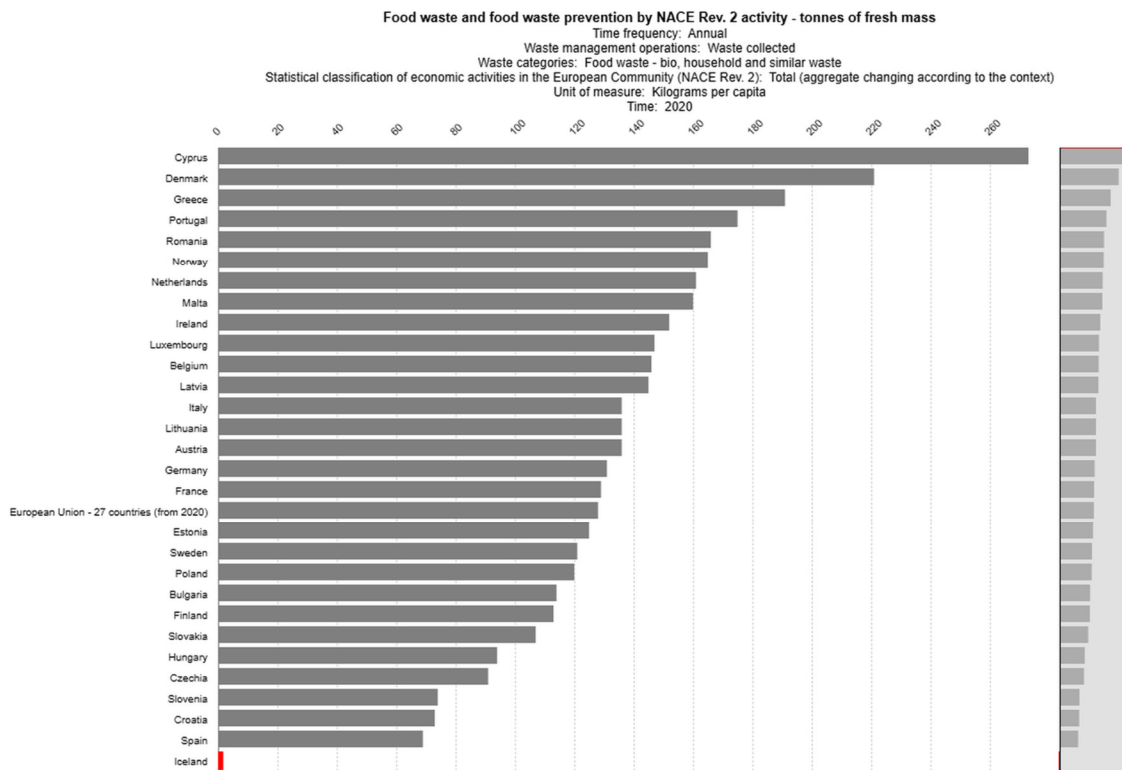
The key findings reveal that financial constraints, awareness of food labelling, and shopping habits significantly influence food waste behaviour. This entry also categorizes Greek consumers based on their engagement with waste reduction practices, providing a segmentation framework that can guide policy interventions. Additionally, this study highlights the impact of economic crises and external events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on consumer food management habits.

This entry is structured as follows: Section 2 presents a detailed overview of food waste research in Greece, outlining key studies conducted from 2012 to 2024. Section 3 examines how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced consumer behaviour regarding food waste. Finally, Section 4 discusses overall trends, challenges, and policy implications emerging from the reviewed studies and proposes directions for future research.

2. Food Waste in Greece

The issue of food waste in Greece, according to available statistical data, is particularly pronounced and requires continuous study, both in terms of the causes that lead to and exacerbate it, as well as the potential methods for its management and preven-

tion. Figure 1 presents Greece's position relative to the other EU-27 countries and the corresponding average.



Food waste and food waste prevention by NACE Rev. 2 activity - tonnes of fresh mass [env_wasfw\$defaultview]
 Source of data: Eurostat - Last updated date: 23/01/2025 00:00
 Disclaimer This graph has been created automatically by ESTAT/EC software according to external user specifications for which ESTAT/EC is not responsible. Graphic included.
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eurostat

Figure 1. Food waste in EU-27 (tonnes of fresh mass). Source: Eurostat [20].

This paper provides comprehensive information on studies (published and unpublished in scientific journals) focusing on consumer behaviour and food waste at the final consumption stage in Greece from 2012 to 2024. The studies are presented in chronological order, along with the key findings derived from them.

In 2012, Abeliotis et al. [21] examined the issue of food waste in Greece, as well as consumer attitudes and behaviours, using a structured questionnaire and personal interviews. The study included findings from a sample of 231 consumers. The conclusions highlighted consumers' positive attitudes towards preventing and reducing food waste, their concern regarding food waste, and their confusion about food labelling, particularly regarding expiration dates. Additionally, the study found that consumers' habits related to food purchasing, storage, preparation, and consumption closely aligned with best practices for preventing food waste. Most participants reported planning their grocery shopping by checking their cupboards, creating shopping lists, and planning meals. However, according to the study's authors, in Greece, these positive habits were driven not by environmental awareness but by necessity. One major limitation of the study, as noted by Abeliotis et al. [21], was the use of self-reporting methods, which require a certain level of self-awareness and self-monitoring from participants, posing a challenge in this type of research methodology. Finally, the authors pointed out that the positive findings of the study were

significantly influenced by the severe economic recession Greece was experiencing at the time, which heightened consumer awareness of their expenditures [21].

In 2014, a study on food waste and consumer behaviour in Greece was conducted by Zacharatos [22]. It presented the issue of food waste and its underlying causes across the entire food supply chain. The thesis analyzed various aspects of consumer behaviour related to food and food waste, as well as the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the sample and consumer behaviours. Using a structured questionnaire, 200 participating consumers were asked about their socioeconomic characteristics and their attitudes and behaviours regarding food waste. The study concluded that consumers needed more information about the issue of food waste. Additionally, it emphasized the role of the economic crisis—ongoing at the time—in shaping consumer attitudes towards food waste and examined the correlation between consumers' purchasing power and food waste. The findings also revealed a general sense of dissatisfaction among consumers regarding food waste, as well as their efforts to reduce waste at the household level. The primary motivations for reducing food waste were saving money and alleviating feelings of guilt. According to participant responses, the most common strategy for reducing food waste was consuming cooked meals over several days. Other common practices included regularly checking expiration dates, using shopping lists, preparing appropriate portions for each meal, and properly storing and preserving food. However, the study also highlighted the lack of long-term meal planning and a moderate use of shopping lists. Furthermore, the findings indicated that more than four out of ten consumers reported confusion regarding date labels on food packaging, and three-quarters of the sample stated that they avoided purchasing products with damaged packaging, even when the contents were unaffected. Finally, the study identified the types of food most frequently discarded by households, as illustrated in Table 1, with fruits and vegetables being the primary category.

Table 1. Food categories that end up in Greek households' trash cans. Source: Zacharatos [22].

Food Categories	%
Fruits and Vegetables	24.9%
Dairy products	20.1%
Bread and bakery products	19.3%
Cold meat	10.2%
Juices and soft drinks	5.1%
Pasta	3.8%
Legumes	3.8%
Meat, chicken, and fish	2.8%

Regarding the relationship between the socioeconomic characteristics of the sample and consumer behaviour, the study, among other findings, revealed a negative correlation between age and food waste, as well as a positive correlation between age and meal planning. These conclusions were consistent with findings from other studies conducted during the same period [3]. Additionally, the study indicated that household composting was not a widespread method for managing food waste, and consumers expressed a need for more information on the issue from the government, social organizations, and consumer associations [22].

It is worth noting that from 2017 to 2022, within the framework of the “MBA in Food Business Management” programme at the University of Patras, three additional master's theses on food waste and consumer behaviour were submitted. For this purpose, these studies are presented below as supplementary research to highlight their overall contribution to the research on this issue.

In 2017, Kitsara [23] submitted a thesis titled “Consumer Behaviour and Food Waste”. Using a structured questionnaire, the study collected responses from 501 consumers regarding their attitudes and behaviours related to food waste. According to the findings, the majority of consumers stated that they required further information on the issue of food waste, while 32.9% reported being aware of the problem. Furthermore, 61.3% of participants agreed that food waste affected their income and purchasing power. In terms of motivations for reducing food waste, saving money was the primary reason, followed by reducing the guilt associated with discarding food. The majority of respondents (70%) reported that using a shopping list was a regular habit, whereas meal planning for the following days was not. Regarding the types of food most frequently discarded, fruits and vegetables (30.15%) were the primary category, followed by bread and bakery products (23.5%) and dairy products (20%). Additionally, an overwhelming majority (90.8%) did not have a compost bin at home. Finally, 90.6% of respondents answered positively when asked whether more informational initiatives were needed from the government, social organizations, and consumer associations [23]. The findings of the study largely confirmed the results of previous studies [21,22].

In 2022, Grivas [24] submitted a thesis titled “Causes and Factors Leading to Food Waste and Consumer Behaviour”, collecting data from a sample of 333 consumers through a questionnaire to examine their attitudes and behaviours regarding the issue of food waste. According to the findings, 79% of respondents stated that they were aware of the food waste problem, while 77% acknowledged that food waste affected their personal income and purchasing power. A high percentage of consumers reported understanding the meaning of date labels on food packaging, with 70.88% stating that they frequently check expiration dates. The majority of participants indicated that they used shopping lists, whereas responses regarding meal planning for the following days were more varied. Additionally, the study concluded that if consumers were better informed about the cost of food waste, its environmental impact, and proper food management practices (e.g., storage), they would likely discard less food. The primary reasons for food waste, as identified by participants, were excessive portions of cooked meals, larger portions than they could consume, and promotional offers from food companies. Furthermore, 48% of consumers reported that they did not purchase food items with damaged packaging, even if the contents appeared intact. The key motivation for reducing food waste was saving money, followed by alleviating the guilt associated with discarding food. Regarding the types of food most commonly wasted in households, the dominant categories were fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and cold cuts. Lastly, although consumers were familiar with the concept of composting, they did not have compost bins at home [24].

Also in 2022, Argyraki [25] submitted a thesis titled “Food Waste and Consumer Behaviour”, examining the issue of food waste along with consumer attitudes and behaviours. For the study, an online questionnaire was distributed, gathering responses from 411 consumers. The findings revealed that 91% of participants reported an awareness of the food waste problem, although additional information on its environmental impact was deemed necessary. According to the respondents, the consecutive crises in Greece—economic, health, and energy—had negatively affected their disposable income and purchasing power. Consumers also demonstrated a high level of knowledge regarding food labelling, with 94.89% and 95.1% correctly understanding the terms “expiration date” and “best before date”, respectively. Additionally, 62.3% reported checking expiration dates when purchasing food. A significant and consistent finding of the study was that 71.8% of consumers knowingly consumed food past its expiration date. Furthermore, the study reaffirmed that shopping lists remained a popular tool for organizing household purchases, while meal planning for the following days was not as widely practiced. According

to participants, the most effective ways to reduce food waste included purchasing and preparing food in quantities that matched their needs, as well as improving food storage and preservation. The main motivations for minimizing food waste were cost savings and reducing the guilt associated with discarding food. Moreover, 77.62% of consumers avoided purchasing food with damaged packaging, even when the contents were visibly unaffected. Lastly, as in previous studies, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and bread (including bakery goods) were the most frequently discarded food categories [25].

Concluding this entry of research conducted as master's theses on Greek consumer behaviour and food waste, it is essential to highlight that studies following the research of Zacharatos [22], despite minor modifications to the original questionnaire, offer valuable insights. These studies generate long-term conclusions and reveal specific trends, such as the following:

- A gradual increase in consumer awareness of the food waste problem.
- A growing understanding of food labelling, particularly regarding expiration dates and best-before dates.
- Recognition that food waste affects disposable income and purchasing power.
- The need for more information on both the impact of food waste and best practices for food management.
- An increasing reliance on shopping lists as an effective household organization tool, rather than meal planning for the upcoming days.
- The demand for more food packaging options to better suit consumer needs.
- A tendency to discard food items with damaged packaging, even when the contents remain safe and intact.
- The two strongest motivations for reducing food waste: saving money and alleviating the guilt associated with discarding food.
- Conscious consumption of food beyond its expiration date.
- The most commonly wasted food categories, fruits, vegetables, dairy products, bread, and cold cuts, persist over time, although their order of prevalence may vary.
- The continued lack of composting bins in households.

Closing this parenthesis, we return to the broader discussion of food waste research in Greece and its evolution over time.

In 2016, Abeliotis et al. [26] published a study on consumer behaviour and food waste in Greece, conducted in the metropolitan area of Athens during the spring of 2012, with a sample of 231 participants. The study employed a structured questionnaire to examine food waste-related behaviours in relation to the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of approximately 40 questions covering topics such as food waste awareness, attitudes and causes, knowledge, shopping habits, food storage, preparation, and consumption behaviours, as well as demographic data. The statistical analysis of the results identified three key factors that contributed to food waste prevention: active involvement in cooking, the emotional discomfort associated with food waste, and the level of education. However, the study acknowledged certain limitations, including the non-representative nature of the sample—since participants were solely from Athens—and the issue of self-reported responses [26].

In 2017, Ponis et al. [27] conducted a study involving 500 households, emphasizing the importance of purchasing habits, dietary preferences, and food management practices in addressing the food waste problem. The study also highlighted the impact of Greece's economic crisis and the refugee crisis of 2015, revealing a paradox: while there was an increased need for food security and state support for citizens' nutritional needs, food waste remained prevalent. The findings suggested that consumers exhibiting impulsive purchasing behaviours—such as frequent unplanned purchases—were more likely to

waste food. Conversely, individuals who regularly prepared meals at home generated less food waste compared to those who frequently dined out or ordered ready-made meals. Additionally, consumers who were actively involved in meal preparation demonstrated more effective food management practices, including proper storage and preservation techniques. One of the most significant causes of food waste, according to the study, was the tendency to cook or serve larger portions than needed. Lastly, the authors acknowledged the limitation of self-reported data as a potential bias in the study's findings [27].

In 2019, Aitsidou [28] submitted her doctoral thesis titled "Household Food Waste: Socio-Ecological Dimensions Between Rural and Urban Households in the Municipality of Eordea". This thesis explored attitudes and behaviours regarding the phenomenon of "thrown-away food" (sic), specifically household food waste. According to the results of the research, findings regarding the social and ecological issues of food waste are well developed, while its perceptions are incomplete and/or incorrect, leading to a "neutral" attitude that exacerbates various socio-ecological problems, such as household food waste. Regarding socioeconomic characteristics, the author concludes that the place of residence, gender, age, educational level, and monthly income influence or shape the socio-ecological awareness of household food waste. Furthermore, cognitive abilities are more prominent than perceptual abilities, especially among women and individuals with higher incomes. The main cause of household food waste is leftover meals, with the primary causes being the lack of proper organization, planning, and management of food purchases, meals, and the food stored on household shelves. According to the author, the absence of this organization is more intense among younger individuals and members of rural households. Finally, the economic crisis, according to the research findings, affected consumer patterns and dietary habits, contributing to the reduction in/prevention of household food waste, while the willingness for a reduction in, prevention of, and further education on food waste issues presents an optimistic message from this particular study. Regarding the limitations of the research, the author stated that it is a specific case study, and its conclusions cannot be generalized at the national level; the issue of self-reported data as a potential bias was also noted [28].

In 2021, Kritikou et al. [29] published a study on consumer behaviour and food waste. Their research was based on data collected in 2017 as part of a broader study that also addressed other forms of waste (e.g., plastics, electronic and electrical appliances, etc.) and methods of prevention. The data were obtained through a structured questionnaire, and the sample consisted of 921 households, the vast majority (97.07%) from the greater Athens area, with only a small percentage (2.93%) from other Greek cities. Regarding the methodology used for the purposes of the study, it was based on Ajzen's [30] Theory of Planned Behaviour. This research specifically analyzed the strength of the relationships between key variables in the model, including attitudes toward food waste, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, intention, and self-reported behaviour. It also examined knowledge about food waste prevention, general environmental awareness, food planning and purchasing patterns, and demographic factors. The findings revealed that intention was primarily shaped by general environmental attitudes, followed by perceived behavioural control, attitudes toward food waste, and the perceived outcomes of food waste prevention. Interestingly, subjective norms did not have a statistically significant impact, suggesting that both formal and informal environmental education can encourage food waste reduction through hands-on learning experiences and structured guidelines. Finally, a notable finding from the research was that many consumers considered food waste to be an inevitable and natural consequence of consumption and, therefore, did not believe they were developing environmentally irresponsible behaviour [29].

In 2022, Papamonioudis and Zabaniotou [31] published the results of a study conducted in 2021. The study's random sample consisted of 1565 consumers who responded to an online questionnaire sent to members of the academic community at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The aim of this study was to highlight food waste management behaviours among Greek citizens and how these behaviours affect the transition to the circular economy model in the country. At the same time, the study evaluated the general attitudes of Greeks towards the concept of a circular economy in order to investigate whether Greek society is ready to shift from a linear to a circular economic model that includes the recycling of food waste. The majority of participants stated that they were aware of both the issue of food waste and the concept of the circular economy, with only 9.5% responding negatively. Additionally, the majority (75.1%) of participants in the study stated that food waste was a serious problem for modern societies and that they were aware (79.8%) of the environmental and economic impacts of food waste. However, 49.1% stated that they did not know the scale of the problem, specifically that one-third of global food production is lost every year across all stages of the food supply chain. A majority (83.71%) of participants reported that they typically disposed of food waste in common trash cans. An encouraging finding from the study was that 85.9% of participants stated they would be willing to recycle food waste without any financial compensation. Finally, regarding the types of food that most often end up in the trash in households, according to the study, the first category was fruits and vegetables (57.44%), followed by cooked food (21.85%), dairy products (8.12%), bread (7.41%), meat and fish (3.71%), and sweets (1.47%) [31].

In 2024, a study by Theodoridis et al. [32] was published, conducted between 1 November 2021 and 15 February 2022 with the participation of 1238 consumers. The aim of the study was to examine consumer behaviour concerning food waste and, specifically, to categorize consumers based on behavioural and demographic characteristics.

The study identified four distinct consumer categories:

- **Informed Consumers:** These individuals are environmentally aware and actively take steps to minimize food waste, demonstrating strong eco-conscious habits.
- **Well-Organized Consumers:** Although they may not have extensive knowledge about food waste, they adopt structured habits that help reduce it, highlighting the role of household organization.
- **Careless Consumers:** This group shows limited awareness of the environmental consequences of food waste.
- **Typical Consumers:** Representing the average household, these individuals have a general understanding of food waste but do not consistently engage in efforts to minimize it.

The study highlighted significant differences among the four consumer categories, offering valuable insights that could serve as an important tool for developing targeted educational and awareness campaigns. These campaigns could promote a more responsible and environmentally conscious approach to food consumption [32].

Finally, in 2024, a study titled "From Plate to Bin: Consumer Segments and Food Waste in Greece" by Zacharatos and Theodoridis [33] was published. The aim of the research was to examine the behaviour of Greek consumers by segmenting them based on demographic and behavioural characteristics. The study surveyed 1021 consumers from various regions of Greece, using an online questionnaire to gather data. It provided valuable insights into the diverse consumer behaviours related to food waste within Greek households. Through k-means cluster analysis, the study identified three distinct consumer segments:

- **Moderate Consumers**—typically younger and residing in urban areas, this group demonstrates a moderate commitment to reducing food waste. They occasionally use meal planning and shopping lists but do so inconsistently.

- **Indifferent Consumers**—predominantly young urban dwellers, these individuals show little concern for minimizing food waste. They rarely engage in meal planning or use shopping lists and tend to neglect waste management practices, making them significant contributors to food waste.
- **Conscious Consumers**—mostly older individuals living in semi-urban or rural areas, this group is highly committed to reducing food waste. They consistently plan their meals and use shopping lists, reflecting a strong waste-conscious attitude. Their behaviour aligns with previous research, suggesting that older age groups tend to waste less due to their life experience and greater appreciation of resources.

These consumer groups exhibit distinct demographic characteristics and waste-related behaviours, highlighting the necessity for customized strategies to tackle Greece's waste reduction challenges effectively. This is particularly important in urban areas where waste generation is substantial [33].

Table 2 below illustrates a summary of the presented studies on food waste and consumer behaviour in Greece from 2012 to 2024, outlining the authors, research objectives, methodologies, and main findings.

Table 2. Summary of studies on food waste and consumer behaviour in Greece (2012–2024).

Purpose	Methodology	Main Results	Reference
Examine food waste attitudes and behaviours in Greece	Structured questionnaire, personal interviews ($n = 231$)	Consumers showed awareness of food waste but confusion about food labelling; financial constraints influenced waste reduction	Abeliotis et al. [21]
Investigate consumer behaviour and food waste factors in Greece	Structured questionnaire ($n = 200$)	Economic crisis influenced consumer attitudes; financial savings were a key driver for waste reduction	Zacharatos [22]
Analyze consumer awareness and habits related to food waste	Structured questionnaire ($n = 501$)	A total of 32.9% of consumers were aware of food waste; financial savings were the primary motivator for waste reduction	Kitsara [23]
Study consumer behaviour and food waste prevention	Structured questionnaire ($n = 231$)	Cooking habits, emotional discomfort, and education level influenced food waste prevention	Abeliotis et al. [26]
Assess household food waste in Greece and crisis impact	Household survey ($n = 500$)	Impulsive buying led to higher food waste; active meal preparation reduced waste	Ponis et al. [27]
Investigate household food waste between rural and urban households	Case study, surveys	Socio-demographic factors influenced food waste habits; lack of organization led to higher waste	Aitsidou [28]
Examine determinants of food waste prevention	Structured questionnaire ($n = 921$), Theory of Planned Behaviour	Intention to reduce waste was linked to environmental attitudes; subjective norms had no effect	Kritikou et al. [29]
Explore food waste recycling and circular economy attitudes	Online survey ($n = 1565$)	A total of 75.1% of participants recognized food waste as a major issue; 85.9% were willing to recycle food waste	Papamonioudis and Zabaniotou [31]
Investigate consumer food waste behaviours	Structured questionnaire ($n = 333$)	Awareness of food waste was quantified at 79%; purchasing habits and portion sizes influenced waste	Grivas [24]

Table 2. Cont.

Purpose	Methodology	Main Results	Reference
Analyze consumer attitudes toward food waste	Online questionnaire ($n = 411$)	Awareness of food waste was quantified at 91%; financial constraints and guilt were major factors in reducing waste	Argyrazi [25]
Segment Greek consumers based on food waste behaviour	Consumer survey ($n = 1238$), k-means cluster analysis	Identified four consumer categories: Informed, Well-Organized, Careless, and Typical Consumers	Theodoridis et al. [32]
Segment Greek consumers based on demographics and behaviour	Online survey ($n = 1021$), k-means cluster analysis	Identified three consumer groups: Moderate, Indifferent, and Conscious Consumers	Zacharatos and Theodoridis [33]
Analyze food waste behaviour during the pandemic	Nationwide online survey ($n = 2025$)	Initial panic buying increased waste; later, better food management led to waste reduction	Theodoridis and Zacharatos [34]

3. The COVID-19 Period

In April 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdowns, Theodoridis and Zacharatos [34] conducted a nationwide study on consumer behaviour and the issue of food waste in Greece. The research involved 2025 consumers who participated by completing an online questionnaire. This study is the only published research addressing this specific issue during the pandemic and provides significant insights into how consumer behaviour was affected. One of the key findings of the study is that while the majority of consumers acknowledged being aware of the food waste problem, their opinions on whether food waste decreased during the pandemic varied significantly. This divergence is largely attributed to the different phases of the pandemic and the behavioural patterns that consumers developed. For instance, at the onset of the pandemic, driven by uncertainty and fear about its progression, consumers engaged in bulk food purchases and stockpiling, which ultimately led to increased food waste. Conversely, as it became evident that the pandemic would not severely disrupt the food supply chain, consumers abandoned panic buying. Additionally, the increased availability of free time allowed consumers to manage their food more effectively and develop cooking skills, both of which contributed to a reduction in food waste. Another significant conclusion of the study is the segmentation of consumers based on their behaviour (and demographic characteristics, such as age) concerning food waste. The study identified seven distinct consumer categories, classified as either Food Waste Fighters or Food Wasters, with clear behavioural differences between these groups [34].

4. Conclusions

From the analysis of the studies above, it becomes evident that over the past 12 years, research on food waste and consumer behaviour in Greece has intensified. Most studies have relied on consumer surveys and the analysis of their responses, adopting methodologies from the international literature. Beyond merely documenting and explaining consumer behaviour, it is crucial to delve deeper into the underlying causes and factors influencing these behaviours.

The findings of this entry highlight the importance of targeted policy interventions. The categorization of consumer types based on their food waste behaviours provides a useful framework for food managers and policymakers to design tailored campaigns and tools that address the specific needs and habits of different groups. For example, interventions addressing younger or urban populations may differ significantly from those targeting older or rural consumers.

Moreover, this entry offers valuable insights for the design of public policies related to food management. Evidence from the analyzed studies suggests that economic conditions and government-led initiatives can substantially influence consumer attitudes toward food waste. As such, any national strategy aiming to reduce food waste should consider integrating educational campaigns, improved food labelling regulations, and incentives for responsible consumption.

While educating consumers remains an essential component in the broader effort to minimize food waste, it must be complemented by structural changes at the institutional and policy level. Public authorities have the capacity to influence food waste outcomes through legislation, information dissemination, and the development of infrastructure for food redistribution or composting.

Additionally, increasing the number of studies that incorporate real-world experiments is essential to better understand consumer decision-making processes regarding food purchasing, consumption, and disposal. Analyzing consumer behaviour in real-life dilemmas can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. By developing diverse methodological approaches, a robust body of research can be established, supporting all stakeholders in the food supply chain in designing policies and strategies to mitigate food waste.

Given the dynamic nature of the modern economic and social environment, significant and unexpected changes—such as the COVID-19 pandemic—can have profound effects on consumer behaviour and food waste patterns. For these reasons, ongoing research on food waste remains vital to ensure that data are regularly updated and that strategies for addressing the problem are continuously refined. Finally, understanding and addressing food waste is not only a matter of individual responsibility, but also a challenge for collective governance, requiring coordinated action across multiple levels.

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