HANZE UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES  
School of Communication & Media Hanze University Groningen  
Hanze Honours Talent Program  

Research Proposal - Food Waste Project  

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Executive Summary

In the past six months, seven Honours students from the School of Communication, Media & IT and the Eurest account manager for the Hanze University have joined their efforts in fighting food waste at the Hanze University. Starting from scratch, we had to gather information on how the food supply at Hanze is organized, which actors play a role in the process, and how an intervention can be executed.

The result of this information gathering process revealed that the issue is of a much greater complexity than we had expected. Through desk research, interviews, observations and conversations, we learned that a number of parties are involved in the supply of sandwiches, muffins, lunches, drinks, and other snacks, and all of them need to be on board with the project in order for us to start analysing empirical data on the issue. We pitched our idea of fighting food waste at Hanze to Paul van Wijk, member of the director’s board of Hanze, and Peter van der Well, managing director of the Facility Department of Hanze. Both employees were enthusiastic about the idea and assured us their support for the project. We therefore have the three main parties involved in the catering services at Hanze on our side:

- The Director’s Board
- The Facility Department
- The caterer

As it was not easy to make appointments with the former two, and we had to gain an overview of how catering works at the Hanze University, we did not manage to take this project as far as we would have liked to. This, however, opens up a door for future honours to continue working on the fight against food waste at our very own university. All the necessary permissions have been given by the respective authorities, and the path for continuing this project has already been laid out for them as well.

This document will give you all the information you need to step in our footsteps and carry out the next steps of this remarkable project. On the following pages, you will find contact details, research results, a step-by-step guide, and much more.
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1. Project Context

We are seven Honours students of the faculty of Communication, Media and IT who are currently working in close cooperation with Dick Schievels, the Account Manager of Eurest, in order to drastically reduce food waste at Hanze University of Applied Sciences (“Hanze”). Food waste is a topic that is often overlooked or covertly ignored in mainstream media and the general public. We are using this opportunity, which is being provided to us by Eurest and the Honours Talent Program, to bring this topic to the attention of the staff and students at the Hanze University.

Eurest provides the Hanze University with cafes, cafeterias, and a catering service. The cafes and cafeterias are successfully lead using a push strategy, in which, as research has shown, few amounts of food are being wasted (roughly 1.4 %). In cooperation with Dick Schievels, the Account Manager of Eurest, we established that the largest amount of food is being wasted through the catering service used by many staff members of the Hanze University on a daily basis. Food and drinks ordered via the intranet are often ordered in large quantities for meetings, workshops, presentation, etc. The amounts ordered are purely based on estimations by the staff. This is the crucial point in which food waste takes place. This is not only an ethical or moral issue, but a financial burden for the Hanze University as well.

1.1. General information and importance to the Hanze University

Reducing food waste and implementing improved consumer behaviour can be beneficial for the Hanze University for a number of reasons. Firstly, in doing this, Hanze can demonstrate corporate social responsibility and thus improve their corporate image. Secondly, wasting less as a result of less food being ordered can result in saving the Hanze University financial resources.

We need the authority to talk with the people involved in the ordering and delivery of food for “educational purposes” in the broadest sense; e.g. conferences, workshops, client meetings, etc. This target group includes lecturers, assistants, support staff, and Eurest employees. We will also need to monitor the ordering process through which staff usually go when placing their order from start to finish to unveil any underlying patterns that could be affecting food waste at the Hanze University. Finally, we would also like to gain information about the official policies regulating the ordering of food for Hanze staff members (e.g. for
which purposes they are allowed to order food; are they solely responsible for what they order; etc.).

1.2. Process

Several steps need to be undertaken in order to successfully reduce food waste at the Hanze University. Our project will focus on firstly documenting how much food is actually thrown away, which will be done by Eurest staff. We have created a form that indicates the food that was ordered (on the left column) and how much food was thrown away after the meeting has taken place (on the right column). Please find this document in the appendix on page 17. After these data were collected, we would then like to establish a system on the ordering website that emits a warning alert if too much food is ordered for a certain amount of people. Currently, the banqueting website is designed in a way that staff can order as much as they would like to without any consequences. The website can be changed in design so this will be prevented. The idea for the website ordering process is the following:

- **Step 1:** First, staff will need to fill in details about the meeting (where is the meeting and how many people will attend).
- **Step 2:** The staff can select the foods and drinks they wish to order (not the amount).
- **Step 3:** The system calculates how much food and drinks are adequate for the meeting.
- **Step 4:** Staff can change the automated order (If the amount is significantly changed upwards, an exclamation point will appear with a pop-up asking if the selected amount of food is really needed).
- **Step 5:** Staff will pay for the order.
- **Step 6:** Staff will receive a confirmation of the order. Therefore, we actively make people aware of ordering too much food and therefore stimulate an attitude change. Additionally, we will establish a system that sends out emails to people who have ordered too much food automatically so as to proactively make them conscious of their wasting food.
1.3. Challenges & Opportunities

The students taking part in this project have a variety of other responsibilities, including writing their Bachelor thesis abroad. For this reason, the constellation of full time active students varies. This is a challenge and threat to the project and its implementation. A strong cooperation between the honours mentors as well as the honours students to recruit new team members needs to take place.

1.4. Problem Definition

At the Hanze University food is being wasted. The Eurest staff is not able to tackle this problem alone, it is dependent on the efforts and a change of behaviour of the Hanze University staff accordingly. For one, the Eurest staff and Eurest itself can make changes and improvements on their current push strategy at cafes and cafeterias, however, food waste can only be minimized in this area, if in cooperation with Hanze students and staff. Secondly, the main food waste takes place with the pull strategy of Eurest, in the catering service. Too much food is being ordered and therefore wasted.
2. Theoretical Framework/ Research Perspective

The research aspect of this project aims to provide knowledge and information regarding the food waste at the Hanze University, in general and behavioural patterns.

![Theoretical Framework Diagram]

**Figure 1.: Theoretical Framework**

2.1. Research Objective

*The research objective is to design an awareness campaign and implementation plan for a system change for Eurest to tackle food waste at the Hanze University, by gathering and analysing data about food waste at the Hanze University, how it has been tackled by other entities as well as by consulting behavioural science literature.*

2.2. Research Areas

2.2.1. Preliminary research

This is research for the food supplier of the Hanze university, Eurest. They would like to find out ways of throwing away less food to become more environmental friendly.

According to NU.nl (2015), Dutch people waste around 2.5 million euros of food annually. Consequently, every person in Holland throws away around 50 kg of food. This includes one million bread per day. That is 28 million slices of bread, if everyone ate four slices of bread per day, around seven million people could eat lunch with bread that is thrown away.
Consequently, it hurts the environment since it costs a great deal of energy and resources to produce the food, ship it, package it, etc. The food waste is as high as it is because people buy too much food and throw away food that is still eatable. Additionally, people do not know that they waste this large amount of food because 75% of the respondents of a research conducted by NU.nl said they thought they threw away less food than other people.

**Regulations**

In addition to that, a great deal of food is thrown away because the regulations in The Netherlands are really strict. It is forbidden to distribute meat, dairy, or fish when it is still good but past the date. The government set a goal to reduce food waste with 20 percent in 2015. However, this was not doable. Partly, because the government extended the abbreviated the expiration date with two days without doing actual research to this (Giessen, 2014).

**Consequences**

Food waste has many consequences. According to Mitchel van Voorbergen (2016), writer at website Natuur & Milieu, the size of the consequences depends on what type of food is wasted. Meat costs a lot more energy and resources to produce than for instance vegetables. Without food waste, every person in The Netherlands would produce 1.5% less emissions. Martine Rutten (2013) found out that if there was 50% less food waste in Europe, every European would save €153 per year and a farmland as big as Belgium would no longer be needed. She also stated that even though on the short term decreasing food waste has a negative effect on sales the long-term effect will consequently be positive.

The top 5 most wasted products according to CREM 2013 are:

1. Dairy
2. Bread
3. Vegetables
4. Fruit
5. Sauces and fats
2.2.2. Behavioural science literature regarding to food waste

Gustavo Porpino (2016) states that behavioural research can be a great help in order to know how to frame messages and change behaviour. More data concerning food waste together with empirical research helps to understand the concept better. He created the table shown below (Table 1). Of course the content has to be adapted in order for it to fit with this report (Food waste during events instead of Household food waste). Though, this table could be very handy for the next honours team when doing research. Emotions and communication initiatives can be investigated through experiments and cross sectional research, retail and marketing stimuli and consumer culture can be researched through ethnographic oriented research. The measurement validation for this project is the amount of food wasted at events instead of food waste in households. Then, behavioural economics are applied (why do people sometimes make irrational decisions? Why and how does their behaviour not follow the predictions of economic models? (Investopedia, 2017)), which – hopefully – leads to the desired scenario: sustainable consumption.

![Table 1: Framework for future research on food waste (Porpino, 2016)](image)

Research of Brenda Ellison and Jason Lusk, from the university of Illinois and Oklahoma, discovered that there is a relationship between how much the food costs and the likelihood of throwing away the food. Their conclusion is that food waste is the result of rational thought rather than just forgetting it (Porterfield, 2016). However, the people that order
food at Hanze, normally do not have to pay for the food. This can make it easier for them to eventually throw away the food. Maybe, when there would be a certain consequence when food has to be thrown away this could increase the urgency of not throwing the food away.

2.2.3 How other entities tackle food waste

**Milieu Centraal – the Dutch Government**

Milieu Centraal is a Dutch foundation which goal it is to make people aware of energy and food waste. The foundation was established by the Dutch government in 1997, by which it is mostly financed since 2005. Cooperation partners are, since 2005, the Dutch Minister of Infrastructure and Environment, the Dutch Minister of Domestic Affairs, as well as the Dutch royal family. Companies that stand in cooperation with Milieu Centraal are, among others, Oxxio, Vara, Eneco, and ANWB (Milieu Centraal, 2016). Among other national initiatives, Milieu Centraal promotes the reduction of food waste. In order to do so, the foundation provides citizens with a step-by-step plan on how to reduce waste with different helpful tips. Citizens can chose to stick Nee-Nee-stickers on their doors to avoid brochures that would go to the garbage right away in any case. Those stickers can be bought online or via the municipality. If there are people that actually want to read the brochures, they are encouraged by Milieu Centraal to do so online. Additionally, the foundation encourages citizens to do groceries in a more considerate way. According to them, people should check their store of food first and think about what they really need and only then go to the supermarket of farmers market to buy only that amount of food that is really needed. Furthermore, Milieu Centraal makes sure that citizens are aware of the fact that things such as cloths, electronics, and bycicles can be repaired and then used several times. The foundation points to so-called „repaircafés“ that help repair any kind of things. Along with that, second-hand shops are advertised and named as a good alternative to throwing things
Milieu Centraal tries to convey the considerate dealing with food waste as a fun thing to do. The foundation offers an online „food waste diary“ for citizens to document their behavior in throwing away food. Citizens are encouraged to count the amounts of food they have thrown away. With a calculator, they can measure after 14 days how much money they have figuratively thrown away. In order to make the issue of food waste more visible and easier to understand, Milieu Centraal designs infographics that depict the issue and numbers.

Furthermore, the foundation informs citizens about figures and numbers concerning food waste. Those figures are presented in a way that they are easy to grasp for the citizens. For example, the foundation indicates that, per year, each person wastes 50 kilogramms of food and that this is equivalent to around 150 € per year (Milieu Centraal, 2016). Milieu Centraal also draws the line between food waste and the environment. It informs about how food waste contributes to environmental pollution. People get informed about the energy that needs to be supplied in order to process waste. Additionally, topics such as the emission of greenhouse gas are discussed (Milieu Centraal, 2016).

With the establishment of Milieu Centraal, the government informs the public about food waste, makes it aware of consequences, and provides tips and practical hands-on information in order to reduce food waste.

**Rijksuniversiteit Groningen**

The RUG has done research in food waste and its origins. By bringing the scientific aspect of food waste to a more advanced level, the RUG is contributing to the fight against food waste. “Kromkommer” is an organization owned by two RUG students with the goal to change the food waste system. The mission of the organization is to save all fresh foods such as vegetables and fruits that would have been thrown away because of aesthetics or overproduction (RUG, 2016). The Kromkommer team holds guest lectures on a regular basis in which it informs
about food waste and its consequences. The concept of Kromkommer is to produce soups from vegetables and fruits and to sell them in shops located all over the Netherlands as well as in well-known online shops such as the Body & Fit Shop (Kromkommer, 2014).

2.3. Research Questions

The following section will contain the central and sub research questions that will provide descriptive knowledge. According to Verschuren & Doorenwaard, descriptive knowledge is for the researcher “who wants to produce descriptive knowledge intends to describe a certain object, phenomenon, situation, event or development as accurately and comprehensively as possible” (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010).

In order to answer the research objective, the researcher needs to determine “the knowledge that is useful or necessary to achieve the research objective” (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010) by formulating a set of research questions.

1. **What can the current awareness about food waste in the Netherlands, tell us about how to tackle food waste at the Hanze UAS?**
   a. What raises awareness among people?
   b. Which strategies are used to raise awareness?
   c. Who has been successful thus far and can be used as an example?

2. **What information can be implemented in the pop-ups of the Catering Website?**
   a. What makes a pop-up successful?
   b. What makes a pop-up unsuccessful?
   c. What can be implemented in the Hanze pop-up?
3. Research Strategy and Research Methodology

According to Verschuren & Doorewaard three key decisions have to be made in order to develop a research strategy (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010):

1. **Breadth** vs. **Depth**
2. **Qualitative** vs. **quantitative research**
3. **Empirical** vs. **desk research**

Based on this model the strategy of this research is designed. The desk research will include the broad, qualitative research approach. It will give an overview of the required information to understand the general topic of food waste. Having gained that understanding it is possible to set up a project for an educative campaign at the Hanze. The desk research enables the thorough analysis of information from online media and offline publications, such as books. The research questions will be the basis to ensure a valid research result. They will constantly be consulted, hand in hand with the research objective. The research content and outcome will be compared to the objective and questions regularly. The framework of the consulted material is to be assessed in accordance to the given objective and research questions. The findings will be presented in a summarized manner, in order to ensure easy understanding and relation to the given context.

4. Data Collection

4.1. Eurest Staff

For the collection of food waste, we have developed a form that should be handed out to Eurest staff. The employees will note how much food has been ordered for which occasion, and how much of it was actually consumed. These data have to be collected over a period of at least one semester, preferably an entire academic year. This will result in the most accurate measurement of average consumption per person and include special periods such as weeks without lectures, large events, etc. If the data is only collected for a short period of time, it will likely not reflect the actual average amount of products that are consumed, and the algorithm on the ordering website would calculate incorrect amounts of food. This would lead to Hanze staff not trusting the mechanism and all of our work would turn obsolete.

The form that is to be handed out to Eurest staff can be found in the appendix on page 17.
4.2. Hanze Staff & Students

Interviews with teacher’s assistants, Hanze staff in general, actively using the Catering Website are to be conducted. Students will be interviewed regarding their knowledge of food waste in general. Interview examples can be found in the appendix on page 23-24.

5. Potential Deliverables

By the end of June 2017, the project team aims to have achieved four main deliverables. Firstly, we will have conducted extensive research on how much food is being wasted at Hanze and created an overview of these findings. Secondly, we will have established general quantities regarding how much food is effectively necessary for an average person in various situations (e.g. how much coffee during a two-hour workshop; how much bread for a “Dutch lunch”; etc.). Thirdly, we want to create an “alert” on the website that is used by Hanze staff for ordering food. This alert should inform the person at hand that they might be attempting to order too much food regarding the purposes they are intended for. Last, but not least, we would also like to design an outline for a mobile app. This app would be managed by Eurest staff, who would send a push notification informing everybody who downloaded the app and is within a predetermined vicinity about discounts on certain products (e.g. 25% off on sandwiches or muffins that would otherwise likely be thrown away). Due to constraints regarding the time we have for this project, the actual design and implementation of this app could be taken over by another group of Honours students.
Reference list

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Appendix

Food waste evaluation form for Eurest staff

Evaluatieformulier – Voedselverspilling

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<th>Naam:</th>
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<th>Tijd:</th>
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Brief explanation of the project for interested parties

Hanze Honours Talent Program: Food Waste
A project by Vivienne Duensing, Carla van Dijk, Karolin Jambor, Franziska Säll, Jacqueline Schmitz, Philipp Santos de Oliveira

Project context
We are five Honours students of the faculty of Communication, Media and IT who are currently working in close cooperation with Dick Schieve, the Account Manager of Eurest, in order to drastically reduce food waste at Hanze University of Applied Sciences (“Hanze”). Food waste is a topic that is often overlooked or covertly ignored in mainstream media and the general public. We are using this opportunity, which is being provided to us by Eurest and the Honours Talent Program, to bring this topic to the attention of the staff and students at the Hanze.

Eurest provides the Hanze with cafes, cafeterias, and a catering service. The cafes and cafeterias are successfully lead using a push strategy, in which, as research has shown, few amounts of food are wasted (roughly 1.4%). In cooperation with Dick Schieve, we established that the largest amount of food is being wasted happens through the catering service used by many staff members of the Hanze on a daily basis. Food and drinks ordered through the intranet are often ordered in large quantities for meetings, workshops, presentation, etc. The amounts ordered are purely based on estimations by the staff. This is the crucial point in which food waste takes place. This is not only an ethical or moral issue, but a financial burden for the Hanze as well.

Importance to Hanze
Reducing food waste and implementing improved consumer behaviour can be beneficial for Hanze for a number of reasons. Firstly, in doing this, Hanze can demonstrate corporate social responsibility and thus improve their corporate image. Secondly, wasting less as a result of less food being ordered can result in saving Hanze financial resources.

We need the authority to talk with the people involved in the ordering and delivery of food for "educational purposes" in the broadest sense; e.g. conferences, workshops, client meetings, etc. This target group includes lecturers, assistants, support staff, and Eurest employees. We will also need to monitor the ordering process through which staff usually go when placing their order from start to finish to unveil any underlying patterns that could be affecting food waste at Hanze. Finally, we would also like to gain information about the official policies regulating the ordering of food for Hanze staff members (e.g. for which purposes they are allowed to order food; are they solely responsible for what they order; etc.).

What will actually happen
Several steps need to be undertaken in order to successfully reduce food waste at Hanze. Our project will focus on firstly documenting how much food is actually thrown away, which will be done by Eurest staff. We will create a form that will indicate the food that was ordered (on the left column) and how much food was thrown away after the meeting has taken place (on the right column). After these data were collected, we would then like to establish a system on the ordering website that emits a warning alert if too much food is ordered for a certain amount of people. Currently, the banqueting website is designed in a way that staff can order as much as they want without consequences. The website can be changed in design so this will be prevented. Of course we will do research but this is the idea for the change(s):

- Step 1: First, staff will need to fill in details about the meeting (Where is the meeting, how many people will attend etc.).
- Step 2: The staff can select the food & drinks they prefer (not the amount).
- Step 3: The system calculates how much food and drinks are adequate for the meeting.
- Step 4: Staff can change the automated order (If the amount is significantly changed upwards an exclamation point will appear with a pop-up asking if the selected amount of food is really needed…).
- Step 5: Staff will pay for the order.
- Step 6: Staff will receive a confirmation of the order.

Therefore, we actively make people aware of ordering too much food and therefore stimulate an attitude change. Additionally, we will establish a system that sends out emails to people who have ordered too much food automatically so as to proactively make them conscious of their wasting food.

**Bigger Picture**
The idea of this project is to establish a system that can possibly be implemented at other locations; firstly to raise awareness, secondly to reduce food waste, and thirdly to improve the image of other universities.

**Deliverables**
By the end of January 2017, the project team aims to have achieved four main deliverables. Firstly, we will have conducted extensive research on how much food is being wasted at Hanze and created an overview of these findings. Secondly, we will have established general quantities regarding how much food is effectively necessary for an average person in various situations (e.g. how much coffee during a two-hour workshop; how much bread for a "Dutch lunch"; etc.). Thirdly, we want to create an "alert" on the website that is used by Hanze staff for ordering food. This alert should inform the person at hand that they might be attempting to order too much food regarding the purposes they are intended for. Last, but not least, we would also like to design an outline for a mobile app. This app would be managed by Eurest staff, who would send a push notification informing everybody who downloaded the app and is within a predetermined vicinity about discounts on certain products (e.g. 25% off on sandwiches or muffins that would otherwise likely be thrown away). Due to constraints regarding the time we have for this project, the actual design and implementation of this app could be taken over by another group of Honours students.
Potential design of the Eurest/Hanze app (discount after 5pm)
Food Waste Project

Daily Special
25% off

Coffee Stamp Card

No more food waste! Inform everyone about the food which is offered on discount!

And also no more waste of paper!
Use the app to let students collect stamps for their daily doses of caffeine.
Interview questions for Eurest staff

1. Are you aware of food waste at Hanze?
2. Where do you think most of the food is wasted/thrown away?
3. Are you aware of the environmental consequences of food waste?
4. Do you see food waste as a problem?
5. Do you know what consequences there are?
6. Are you personally concerned about food waste?
7. Are you personally concerned about the reduction of food waste?
8. Would you be interested in using an app that notifies you about discounts of certain products?
9. Are you personally concerned about reducing food waste at the location you are working in?
10. Are you well informed by your employee about the importance of reducing food waste?
11. Do you have the feeling that you can clearly estimate the quantities of food you have to order on the ordering website?
12. Do you tend to order more than needed just to be “on the safe side”?
13. Is food waste a topic that you and your colleagues frequently talk about?
14. Would you actively promote the reduction of food waste as open places in the cafeterias such as the register or the food distribution counter?
Interview questions for Hanze stuff

1. Are you aware of food waste at Hanze?
2. Where do you think most of the food is wasted/thrown away?
3. Are you aware of the environmental consequences of food waste?
4. Do you see food waste as a problem?
5. As how integral do you consider your knowledge about food waste?
6. Do you think it is an issue in today’s society? Why/why not?
7. Do you know what consequences there are?
8. Are you personally concerned about food waste?
9. Are you personally concerned about the reduction of food waste?
10. Would you be interested in using an app that notifies you about discounts of certain products?
11. Do you see the necessity for Hanze to reduce food waste?
12. Do you think the issue of food waste is an emerging one at Hanze?
13. Would you actively support actions of reducing food waste at Hanze?
14. (For lecturers) Do you think that it is important to inform your students about the issue of food waste at Hanze?
Interview questions for students

1. Are you aware of food waste at Hanze?
2. Where do you think most of the food is wasted/thrown away?
3. Are you aware of the environmental consequences of food waste?
4. Do you see food waste as a problem?
5. Do you know what consequences there are?
6. Are you personally concerned about food waste?
7. Are you personally concerned about the reduction of food waste?
8. Would you be interested in using an app that notifies you about discounts of certain products?
9. Would you actively support actions of reducing food waste at Hanze?
10. Do you think food waste is an emerging matter in today’s society?
11. Are you aware of measures that Hanze undertakes concerning food waste and the reduction of food waste?
12. Would you like to know more about it?
13. Would you like to be actively involved in it?
14. Do you see the reduction of food waste as something that you could personally contribute to (share your leftovers with friends, think twice about how much you really need to buy in order to still your hunger, etc.)?