

The Chair of Corporate Management (Prof. Dr. Alwine Mohnen) is looking for master thesis candidates for the following topic:

## Exploring the Decline in the Use of Reusable Packaging Systems (RECUP, Vytal, Relevo) in Germany

### Background

Resource consumption and waste generation are increasingly problematic, with European packaging waste projected to rise from 188.7 kg per person in 2021 to 209 kg by 2030 unless further measures are implemented (European Commission, 2024). Reusable packaging systems, such as RECUP and Vytal, offer a promising circular business model for tackling entrenched single-use packaging practices in the takeaway sector, yet their uptake is limited. In Germany, the Packaging Act (Verpackungsgesetz) was amended in 2023 to introduce a mandatory reusable offering obligation (Mehrwegangebotspflicht). According to §33 and §34 of the act, food service providers selling takeaway food or beverages in single-use plastic packaging must also offer reusable alternatives to consumers ([§33 VerpackG](#)). The aim of this legislation is to promote more sustainable consumption and to reduce single-use packaging waste. Although the introduction of the law led to an initial increase in reusable packaging system adoption by restaurants, a significant share of food services moved away from RECUP, Vytal and Relevo a year after the policy's implementation.

### Research Objective, Research Question and Method

The objective of this master thesis is to investigate the reasons behind the discontinued use of reusable packaging systems by food service providers (cafés, restaurants, canteens, etc.) in Germany.

The main research question is: ***Why have food services moved away from reusable packaging systems despite initial adoption? Specifically, why have systems like RECUP, Vytal, and Relevo seen a decline in participation despite initial adoption?***

To address this question, the study will employ qualitative research methods, specifically conducting semi-structured interviews with food service providers who have previously adopted reusable packaging systems. The data from the semi-structured interviews will be transcribed and analyzed using MAXQDA to identify key themes and patterns influencing the decision to discontinue participation.

### Your Tasks

- Develop an interview guide focused on exploring the reasons influencing food services' decision to discontinue Packaging as a service (PaaS) systems
- Conduct minimum 15 semi-structured interviews with food services that were previously part of a reusable packaging system network
- Transcribe and analyze the interview data using MAXQDA

### Requirements

- Excellent academic performance in relevant fields such as sustainability, management, or business administration
- Experience or coursework in conducting semi-structured interviews
- Fluency in English (for communication with supervisors) and German (for conducting interviews).

Interested candidates are invited to submit a CV and a brief letter of motivation outlining their interest in the project and their relevant experience or qualifications to **Robert Burkhardt** ([robert.burkhardt@tum.de](mailto:robert.burkhardt@tum.de)). Shortlisted candidates will be invited to a meeting to discuss the project in more detail.

This master thesis will be supervised by Robert Burkhardt from TUM and Gregory De Boe from UCLouvain.

We are looking forward to your applications!