Recycling As A Main Concern For The United Kingdom

Introduction

Over the past decade, recycling has become the main concern for the United Kingdom with the main conundrum being how do we as a community become pro- recycling. A recent article states that ‘’ Recycling rates in the UK have come a long way in recent years and continue to grow year on year. For example, in the year 2000, only 13,000 tonnes of plastic bottles got recycled; the UK now recycles over 350,000 tonnes a year’’ (Dickenson G,2013). this means that in just under two decades recycling rates have increased by 2592% significantly decreasing both water and air pollution. However, the main concern that comes with plastics I the recovery due to the fact in 2017, 46.2% of total packaging wastage of plastics were recovered and recycled (Government Statistical Service,2019) as seen in figure 1. Nevertheless, this statistic shows that the UK recovery is very good as the EU expected recovery rate is of plastics is 22.5%.

Figure 1 Packaging waste and recycling/recovery, split by material, UK 2017

PET Plastics

Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) plastic is a durable thermoplastic with tough resistance to chemicals. This plastic is most commonly used for making both water and soft drink bottles which accounts for a large percentage of plastic waste.

LDPE Plastics

Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE) is both soft and flexible which also shows good chemical resistance. LDPE plastics are very commonly found in paper bags which around the world has had the most controversy due its reputation of harming marine life.

Figure 2 Number of authorities in each region showing an increase in their recycling rate of 0.1 percentage point or more in 2017/18 compared to 2016/17

Figure 3 West Midlands 2014/2015 Waste & Recycling Statistics (Luke M,2015)

As seen in figure 2 and figure 3, the west midlands have been struggling to become more pro-cycling with there being a small increase of 9% with authorities in the region. Due to the fact that Coventry was ranked 26 in west midland for recycling rate ‘’ Coventry City Council is planning to pump almost £11 million into a new recycling facility in the city, which it says will help cut existing costs in half.’’ (Davis T,2019). This is highly beneficial for Coventry due to the fact that the city is growing (figure 4)

Figure 4 Highest ranking and most improved cities (by TTWA1) in the Demos-PwC Good Growth Index, 2015-17

Methodology

when it comes to the design of the research both quantitative and qualitative design was chosen due to the fact that the group could numerically count the number of bins however could not get an accurate umber of plastic litter that were in these bins. When carrying out the quantitative data team 1 would count the number of bins inside the site and secondly count the number of customers using recyclable materials for example plastic water bottles. When looking at these bins it is very important to look at the type of bins they are and how pro-recycling are they bins that were most important as team 1 could see if people were putting litter in the allocated bin (figure 5).

Figure 5

For the qualitative data external data was collected where team 1 would label the level of litter inside the bins as low, medium or high level of litter, once this has been done the bin is given a number based on the level it has been given for instance a low rating is 1-3, a medium is 4-6 and high is 7-3. This would therefore help the group understand the types of materials that are being used inside the site and also help the team compare the different bins around the site if there are multiple. Secondly team 1 would look outside shops to analyse the level of litter/waste and try to find a correlation between the exterior and interior of the shop. In addition, with external data would allow team 7 to analyse if there are local environmental impacts. This data collection lasts for three weeks every Wednesday as weekdays are the days where data is most reliable due to the CU Coventry being open to all students on these days therefore making our data collection more realistic and reliable.

Results & Discussion

Recycling bins are used more often than waste bins with the average rating of recycle bins being 5.67 whereas waste is 2.88. This is most likely due to the fact that almost all of the materials used in the CU Coventry building being recyclable; secondly due to the recycle bin hole being larger compared to the waste hole, this statement is further proved by a women team 7 questioned saying “it mentally makes you want to recycle more”. Secondly the results also shown that bin 3 was the most used bin out of the 8 with an average of 6.83, the data also shows that 20% of recycling and general waste is being put in this bin over the three weeks. The reason for this may be as the bin is located in the canteen (site 1) as this site is also the most densely populated out of the five sites viewed with the canteen having an average population of 32 people. However, team 7 were surprised to find that there was an anomaly in the data collected as bin 1 also located in the canteen (site 1) with bin 1 having an average of 2.67. when doing further analysation into this anomaly team 7 came to the conclusion that due to the location of where bin 1 is compared to both bin 2 and 3, its understandable why bin 1 is not used very often.

Whereas bin 4 located on the second floor (site 3) had the lowest average over the three weeks with an average of 3.5; a difference of, this can also be due to population density as in this location there was an average of only 4 people therefore proving that there is a correlation between population density and the fullness of a bin.