

# Understanding Gen Z attitudes and behavioral intentions toward food-sharing apps

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Food waste represents a serious threat to the sustainability of our planet. According to the FAO, almost 30% of the global food production is lost or wasted along the entire food supply chain (Source: FAO, 2012), leading to significant economic, environmental, and social problems. The need to reduce food waste has opened a series of opportunities for green and digital technologies that are increasingly being used to prevent, reuse and recycle food (UNEP, 2021). Among these solution, food-sharing platforms are becoming increasingly popular due to their ability to enable digital connection between suppliers and beneficiaries of edible food, while having social impacts related to reducing waste (Ciulli *et al.*, 2020; Michellini *et al.*, 2018, 2020). In the past few years, various food-sharing applications and online platforms have emerged, each featuring distinct business models (UNEP, 2021 Michellini *et al.*, 2018). Among the most widespread types of platforms, there are those operating in the B2C market, allowing retailers (restaurants, cafes, bakeries) to post their excess products online, which would otherwise be discarded, and sell them at a discounted price (such as Too Good To Go and Karma). Food sharing platforms are nowadays recognized as a powerful tool to increase food saving (Vo-Thanh *et al.*, 2021; De Bernardi *et al.*, 2022; Michellini *et al.*, 2020). However little is known about the key determinants

fostering its usage. Extant literature on sharing economy adopting a consumer behaviour perspective has mainly focused on some relevant industries such as mobility, hospitality and fashion, while food sharing remains still largely unexplored (de Almeida Oroski and da Silva, 2022; De Bernardi *et al.*, 2022).

This study aims to analyze the main psychosocial drivers of consumers' use of food sharing apps within the theoretical framework of Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991) and of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). The choice to combine the two frameworks stems from the specificity of these platforms where the technological component plays a significant role. Since existing literature suggested the importance of using generational cohorts in behavioral research (Juma-Michilena *et al.*, 2024), the study focuses on Generation Z as they represent the future decision-makers, they are more comfortable with technology and tend to be more socially and environmentally conscious (McKinsey, 2023).

The following variables are considered: a) Perceived Usefulness (PU), and Perceived Ease of Use (PEU) of food sharing platforms; b) Environmental Concerns c) Attitudes, Subjective Norms, Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC) and Behavioural Intentions of food sharing platforms; d) App usage and socio- demographics. All the items have been selected from empirically validated measurement scales and adapted to the specific objectives of the study.

According to the theoretical background analysis we propose the following hypotheses:

*H.1 PU will be positively associated with attitude towards food sharing apps*

*H.2 PEU will be positively associated with the perceived behavioural control towards food sharing apps*

*H.3 Food waste concern will be positively associated with attitude toward food sharing apps*

*H.4 Attitude towards food sharing apps will be positively associated with behavioural intentions towards food sharing apps*

*H.5 Subject norms towards food sharing apps will be positively associated with behavioural intentions towards food sharing apps*

*H.6 Perceived behavioural control towards food sharing apps will be positively associated with behavioural intentions towards food sharing apps*

*H.7 Behavioural intentions towards the use of food sharing apps will positively influence the food sharing apps usage*

A sample of 1077 participants completed an online survey. The age range of the participants varied from 18 to 25 years, with a mean age of 21.26 years (SD = 1.782). Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used in data analysis.

Consistent with previous studies in the field (Fraccascia and Nastasi, 2023) the statistical finding supports all the hypotheses. Theoretical and practical implications of results are discussed.

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