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Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Background of the Research	4
1.2 Significance of the Research.....	4
1.3 Research Problem	5
1.4 Research Aim and Objectives	6
1.4.1 Research Aim.....	6
1.4.2 Research Objectives.....	6
1.5 Research Questions	6
2. Theoretical Framework.....	7
2.1 Stakeholder Theory	7
2.2 Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Theory.....	8
2.3 Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory	9
3. Literature Review.....	10
3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Food Supply Chain	10
3.2 Food Waste Reduction and Environmental Impact	10
3.3 The Role of CSR in Profitability	11
3.4 CSR, Food Waste, and the Triple Bottom Line	12
3.5 Barriers to Effective CSR in Food Waste Reduction.....	13
3.6 Future Directions in CSR and Food Waste Reduction	13
4. Research Methodology	14
4.1 Research Philosophy: Positivism.....	14
4.2 Research Approach: Deductive.....	14
4.3 Research Strategy: Secondary Data Analysis	15
4.4 Research Method: Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis	15
4.5 Time Horizon: Cross-Sectional.....	15
4.6 Data Collection Techniques	16

4.7 Data Analysis	16
4.7 Ethical Considerations	16
4.8 Research Schedule	16
5. Expected Outcome	18
6. Potential Limitations and Contingency Plans	19
References.....	21

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Research

Global food waste is a cross-cutting issue that starts during agricultural production, and available food supply, and continues all the way to the landfill. The UK alone wastes an estimated 9.5 million tonnes of food annually which costs the economy approximately £20 billion per year (Waste Managed, 2024). The food supply chain plays a big role in creating food waste, as food gets thrown away at many points from factories to stores and even at the customer level. Supermarkets, in particular, throw out a lot of food that could still be eaten, and this often goes unnoticed. In recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become more important, as people now expect companies to earn money while also helping the environment. In the food industry, CSR is no longer just about donations or charity. Many businesses now use sustainable plans to cut down on waste. For example, Tesco, one of the biggest supermarkets in the UK, reduced its food waste by 44% between 2016 and 2020. The company's CSR plan aims to reduce food waste to zero by 2030 (Tesco, 2020). This shows how CSR can be used to improve both the environment and a company's business goals. Even though cutting food waste can save money and build a better brand image, it is still hard for many companies to balance this with staying profitable. Businesses in the UK food supply chain need to create smart and strong CSR strategies that cut food waste without losing their edge in the market. As more customers, investors, and partners demand openness and real progress, managing food waste through CSR is becoming more urgent. Successful companies will be the ones that reduce waste, help the planet, and still stay ahead in the business world.

1.2 Significance of the Research

This research is important for both business and the environment. The food industry helps the economy but also harms nature. Wasting food is a big problem because it causes about 8% of the world's dirty air (Prakash Kumar Sarangi et al., 2024). Companies can do better by wasting less food. This saves money and makes people like their brand more. It also helps the planet. It follows the SDG 12 goal from the United Nations (2025), which says we should use things wisely and not waste. In the UK, the government has set ambitious targets to reduce food waste by 50% by 2030, under the Resources and Waste Strategy (Clarke, 2024). It is crucial for companies in the food supply chain to match their strategy with these larger societal aims, as there is a legislative push and consumers are becoming more conscious of sustainability issues. Companies that take part in CSR programs including those aimed at reducing food waste, have

a better chance of reaping financial rewards in the long run. These benefits can include higher customer loyalty, more efficient supply chains, and a stronger position in the market (Porter & Kramer, 2011). From a commercial standpoint, it is critical for enterprises in the food supply chain to implement tactics that reduce waste while simultaneously increasing profitability. However, this isn't to say people are ignoring the problem of preventing food waste entirely. This research will help people understand more about how food companies in the UK can use Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to waste less food. It will look at how companies can care for the environment and still run a successful business. The study will show how these two goals including helping the environment and making money can work together. This is important for making the food industry better for the future. The results from this research can help different categories of individuals. Leaders in the food industry can use the ideas to make better choices. People who make rules (policymakers) can learn how to support businesses in doing the right thing. Also, people who care about saving the planet (sustainability advocates) can use this research to talk about better ways to reduce waste. The study will give real, helpful ideas about how to match CSR plans with business goals. This can help the UK food supply chain stay strong and sustainable for a long time.

1.3 Research Problem

The food industry creates a lot of food waste, and in the UK, this is a big problem. It hurts both the environment and the economy (Move For Hunger, 2015). Even though people are talking more about food waste, they still don't know enough about how food companies in the UK can reduce waste and still make money. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is one way that businesses try to help. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) means that companies try to do the right thing, like caring for the environment and helping people. When companies use CSR, customers often trust them more and feel better about buying from them (Vaess and Witte, 2024). This study will look at how food companies in the UK use CSR to waste less food. It will also check if these actions help the companies do well in business. The goal is to see if CSR can be good for both the environment and for making profits. The main question is whether these good actions help businesses grow or if they cost too much and make it harder to earn money. This research will help people understand if using CSR to cut food waste is a smart and balanced way for food companies in the UK to succeed.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

1.4.1 Research Aim

This research seeks to discover how UK food supply chain companies could successfully combine CSR initiatives to lower food waste while increasing profitability.

1.4.2 Research Objectives

The key objectives of this research are as follows:

- To identify and assess the CSR strategies adopted by UK food supply chain companies to reduce food waste.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of CSR strategies in achieving both environmental sustainability and profitability.
- To examine the challenges faced by food businesses when implementing food waste reduction strategies within the framework of CSR.
- To recommend best practices for balancing CSR with profitability in the food supply chain.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions corresponding to the objectives are as follows:

- I. What CSR strategies are currently being employed by UK food businesses to reduce food waste?
- II. How do these CSR strategies influence the profitability of UK food businesses?
- III. What are the challenges faced by food businesses in implementing food waste reduction strategies through CSR, and how do these challenges impact their profitability?
- IV. How can UK food businesses enhance their CSR strategies to effectively balance food waste reduction with profitability?

2. Theoretical Framework

This research will use three prominent theories to help understand how CSR, food waste, and making money are connected in UK food companies. These ideas will help look at how well CSR plans work. They will also help show if these plans are beneficial for business or not.

2.1 Stakeholder Theory

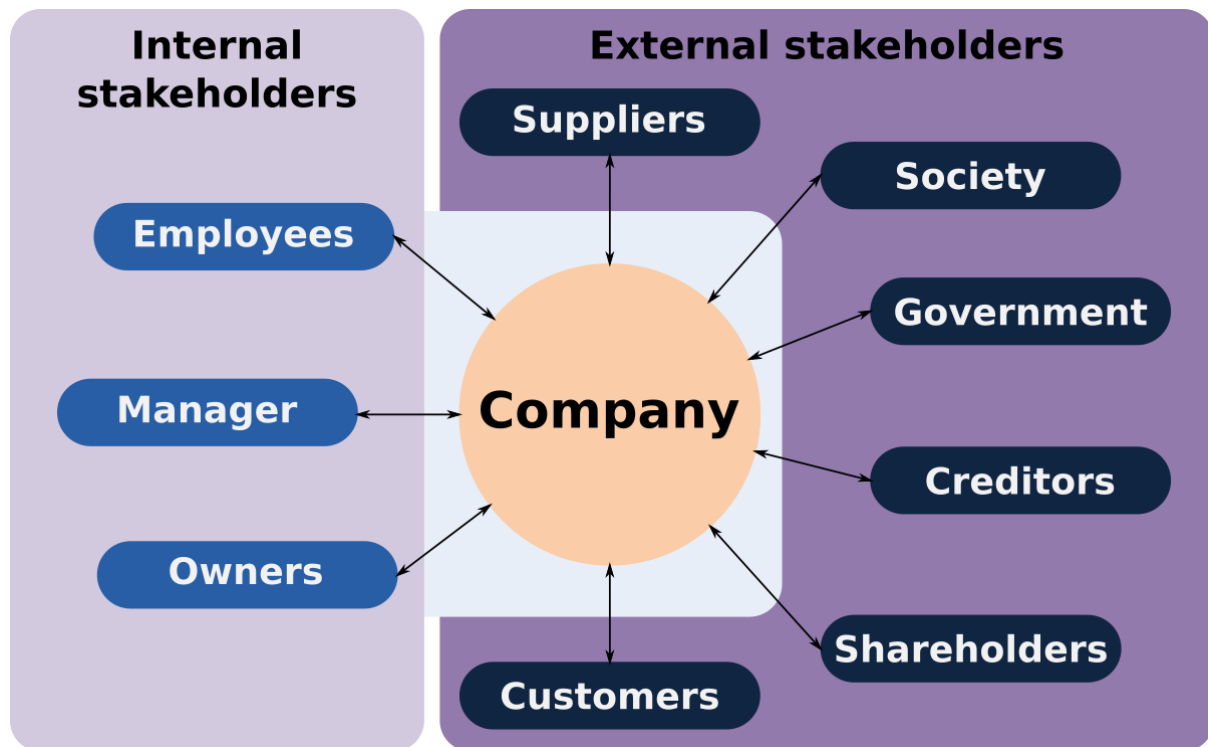


Figure 1: Stakeholder Theory Source: (Marketing91, 2025)

Stakeholder theory examines the ethical considerations, moral principles, and values pertinent to the management of stakeholders associated with a project or organisation. The objective is to enhance relationships with stakeholders which leads to increased efficiencies across the project or organisation. R. Edward Freeman came up with the Stakeholder Theory in 1984 (Stakeholder Theory, 2024). This idea says that businesses should care about all the people and groups that their work affects. This includes owners, workers, customers, suppliers, local people, and even the environment. For food companies, using CSR like reducing food waste can help make better relationships with these groups. Throwing away less food makes customers happy because many people care about the planet and want companies to be kind. It also makes the company look good and builds trust with suppliers and local people who see the company as fair and caring (Rastogi, Agarwal, and Gopal, 2024). In this research, Stakeholder Theory will help to see how food companies in the UK can use CSR to waste less

food and make all groups around them happy. By doing this, the company can grow stronger and do well for a long time. It shows that when businesses do the right thing for everyone, not just for money, they can still become successful. This makes CSR not just a good idea but also a smart business move.

2.2 Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Theory

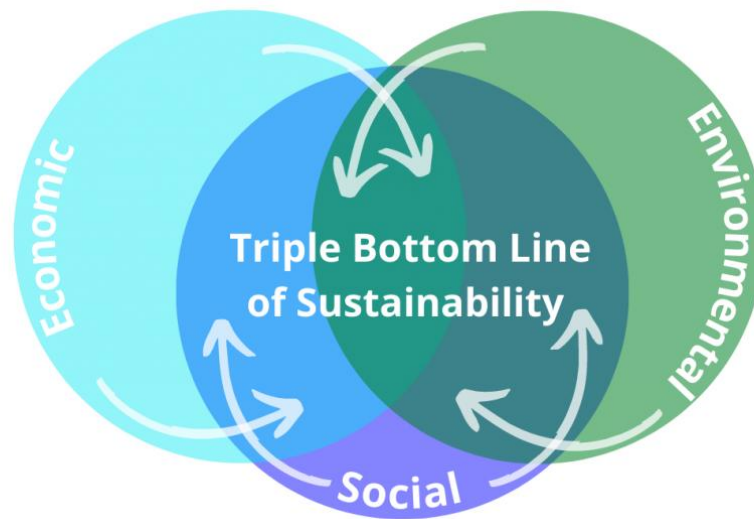


Figure 2: Triple Bottom Line of Sustainability Source: (Martínez-Conesa et al., 2017)

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Theory was introduced by John Elkington in 1994 (Jonker, 2023). This theory says that businesses should care about three things: profit (money), people (helping others), and planet (protecting the Earth). TBL tells us that being a good business is not just about making money. It is also about being kind to people and taking care of the environment. For example, food companies can help the Earth and support people by wasting less food. They can also give extra food to help feed hungry people (Skipshapiro, 2025). This way of working matches with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), where companies do the right thing for the world and not just focus on money. his study will use the TBL idea to look at how food companies in the UK use CSR to help in three ways: making money, helping people, and saving the planet. It will help show that companies should be responsible not just to their owners, but to everyone including customers, workers, and the community. The goal is to see if these companies can make a good difference in the world while also doing well in business. This gives a better and fairer idea of what success really means.

2.3 Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory



Figure 3: Resource-based View (RBV) Source: (Jurevicius, 2023)

In 1991, Jay Barney came up with the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory (Jurevicius, 2023). This idea says that a company can do better if it makes good use of the skills and tools it has. Some of these resources are information, creativity, and strong ways of working. When thinking about CSR, reducing food waste can be seen as a useful tool in the food business. This is because there are two underlying assumptions of the RBV theory related to the exploration of how firm-based resources generate sustained competitive advantage and why some organisations may continually outperform others by gaining higher competitiveness. Gianluca Biggi, Ludovica Principato, and Fulvio Castellacci (2024) say that businesses that properly handle food trash can save money, cut costs, and even find new ways to grow. This will become a great source to predict the fundamentals of organizational performance and competitive advantage. The RBV theory will be used to look into how UK food companies can use CSR activities, such as reducing food waste, to stay ahead of their rivals. It will also look at how these smart tactics can help them make more money and have less of an effect on the environment.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Food Supply Chain

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is when a company goes beyond just making money and tries to do good things for people, the community, and the environment (Stobierski, 2021). In the food industry, this means businesses take steps to make sure their work doesn't harm the planet or people. For example, they try to reduce pollution, treat their workers fairly, and help the local communities where they operate. In the past, CSR was mainly used as a way to look good in ads, but now it's a serious part of how many food companies work every day (Carroll, 1999). In the UK, a lot of food companies use CSR to deal with big problems like food waste and high carbon emissions. They also focus on creating better workplaces and supporting the people around them. More and more customers care about how companies treat the planet and other people, so CSR is now a key part of running a good business. It's not just about profit anymore, it's also about doing what's right. Today, companies are expected to show they are responsible and that they care. In fact, many UK businesses are using CSR to stand out from their competitors and show they are committed to making a positive difference (Edie, 2025). Tesco (2020) illustrates that numerous large grocery chains have initiated corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts to mitigate food waste and adopt more sustainable food-sourcing methods. These efforts are getting a lot of attention because they help the environment and show care for society. However, it is still difficult for companies to balance these good goals with making enough money. Trying to be both responsible and profitable at the same time can be a challenge for many businesses. The idea that CSR can necessitate substantial investments in procedures, technology, and logistics has its detractors (Margolis & Walsh, 2003). Also, companies that don't provide quick cash gains often use CSR as a cost centre, although the question of whether or not CSR actually increases profits in the long run is still up for discussion (Kotler & Lee, 2005). This discussion is crucial because food businesses, particularly smaller enterprises, might struggle to justify the upfront investment required to reduce food waste if the financial benefits are not immediately evident.

3.2 Food Waste Reduction and Environmental Impact

Food waste is an urgent issue, not only because it represents a loss of valuable resources but also due to its significant environmental consequences. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food waste is responsible for approximately 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions, which contribute to climate change (FAO, 2021). In the UK, the food supply chain

generates approximately 9.5 million tonnes of food waste each year, costing the economy billions of pounds (WRAP, 2023). Much of this waste occurs at the retail and consumer levels, where perfectly edible food is discarded due to cosmetic imperfections, overstocking, or expired shelf lives (Gustavsson et al., 2011). The environmental impact of food waste is compounded by the fact that much of this food is produced using extensive natural resources such as water, land, and energy. For example, producing food that is later wasted wastes the energy and water used in agriculture, processing, and transportation. Reducing food waste therefore not only reduces the volume of waste sent to landfills but also significantly cuts down on the environmental strain caused by overproduction. As highlighted by Williams et al. (2012), food businesses that reduce waste can play a pivotal role in decreasing their overall environmental footprint, and in doing so, they contribute positively to sustainability goals. Companies in the UK, especially those operating within the food retail sector, have recognized this challenge and are responding by implementing various strategies aimed at reducing food waste. For instance, retailers like Tesco and Waitrose have committed to halving food waste within their operations and enhancing food redistribution programs, where unsold food is donated to charities (Tesco, 2020). These actions not only help the environment but also improve the company's corporate reputation and foster customer loyalty, aligning environmental and social goals with business objectives.

3.3 The Role of CSR in Profitability

The key point for companies is to see if CSR, especially reducing food waste, can help them make more profit. Many people think CSR helps companies look good and match what customers care about. However, some studies now show that CSR can also help companies earn more money over time. Porter and Kramer (2011) explained that if businesses include social and environmental goals in their plans, they can create something called "shared value." This means both the company and society can benefit. For food companies, cutting down food waste helps save money, work more smoothly, and keep customers happy. This can lead to better profits. For example, when businesses manage their stock better, produce less extra food, and make their supply chains more efficient, they can spend less on throwing food away, storing it, and moving it around (Bansal & Roth, 2000). Also, when companies try to waste less food, more customers want to buy from them. People now care more about the planet and want to support businesses that do the right thing. That means companies that follow CSR can get loyal customers who come back again and again (Kotler & Lee, 2005). But not everything is easy. Some experts say that CSR can be costly at first. Doing things like using better farming

methods or new technology to reduce waste can cost a lot of money. These efforts might not bring in money right away (HEC, 2020). That's why some companies, especially small or medium ones, find it hard. They may not have enough money to wait for long-term benefits. The hardest part is finding the right balance between making a profit now and caring for the future (Dhaliwal et al., 2011).

3.4 CSR, Food Waste, and the Triple Bottom Line

The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) framework, created by Elkington in 1994, helps businesses understand how to balance three important goals including making a profit, helping people, and protecting the planet (Jonker, 2023). TBL tells businesses that they should not only think about making money, but also about how their actions affect people and the world. When food businesses use the TBL method, they can look at more than just their financial results to see how they affect the world. It makes sense for this idea to fit in with Corporate Social Responsibility efforts, especially those that try to reduce food waste. Cutting down on food waste helps the social and environmental parts of the Triple Bottom Line (Slaper and Hall, 2021). CSR helps take care of the earth by lowering the pollution that comes from making food and handling waste. It also does good for people by giving leftover food to those in need. This kind of work not only helps others but can also save money. By cutting waste, companies can work more efficiently and spend less (Fernandes, 2024). This supports the idea of the Triple Bottom Line, which means focusing on three things: profit, people, and the planet. Research shows that companies who follow this method often use their resources better and build stronger relationships with their customers, which can help them make more money in the long run (Martínez-Conesa et al., 2017). However, it's not always easy to balance all three goals. Some CSR projects, like waste reduction, need a lot of money at the start. Small companies or businesses going through tough times might struggle to pay for these changes. Often, there's pressure to focus on quick profits instead of long-term goals. As Atkins et al. (2018) explain, it can be really hard to keep a fair balance between making money, helping people, and protecting the environment.

3.5 Barriers to Effective CSR in Food Waste Reduction

CSR has the potential to make a big difference in cutting down food waste across the food supply chain, but it's not being used as widely as it could be because of several challenges. One of the biggest issues is the high cost of getting started. Many of the actions needed to reduce food waste—like setting up new systems, training staff, or buying new equipment can be very expensive. This is especially hard for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), who may not have the extra money or resources to invest in these changes. On top of that, the benefits of CSR projects often don't show up right away. It may take time to see results like cost savings or improved reputation, and this delay can make companies hesitate to take the risk (Kotler & Lee, 2005). There are also other barriers, like lack of awareness or proper knowledge about food waste solutions, unclear or changing policies, and not enough reliable data to guide decisions. These make it harder for CSR projects to succeed. Running these programs well usually means changing the way a business operates, which can be overwhelming without strong support or planning. Another problem is that reducing food waste involves many different people including farmers, food producers, suppliers, retailers, and logistics companies. For CSR to really work, everyone in the supply chain has to work together. But this kind of teamwork is difficult, and if even one group doesn't cooperate, the whole plan can fall apart (Bansal & Roth, 2000). Despite businesses' intentions to assist, these regulations may pose obstacles (Gustavsson et al., 2011). These challenges hinder companies' ability to achieve their objectives related to environmental and societal contributions.

3.6 Future Directions in CSR and Food Waste Reduction

In the future, food businesses need to find smart and new ways to deal with the problems of food waste and make CSR work better. One good idea is using the circular economy. This means not treating food waste as trash, but using it again in helpful ways. For example, food waste can be turned into energy or compost instead of going to the landfill. This helps the environment and can also give companies new ways to earn money (Martínez-Conesa et al., 2017). Another important step is for all parts of the food supply chain to work together more closely. If farmers, suppliers, stores, and others share information and plan better, they can find places where waste happens and fix the problems. A clear and connected supply chain makes it easier to stop waste before it happens. As Atkins et al. (2018) explain, food companies should not try to do this alone. They need to work as a team to find solutions that help both the planet and their business.

4. Research Methodology

The following research onion method will be applied to cover the research methodology.

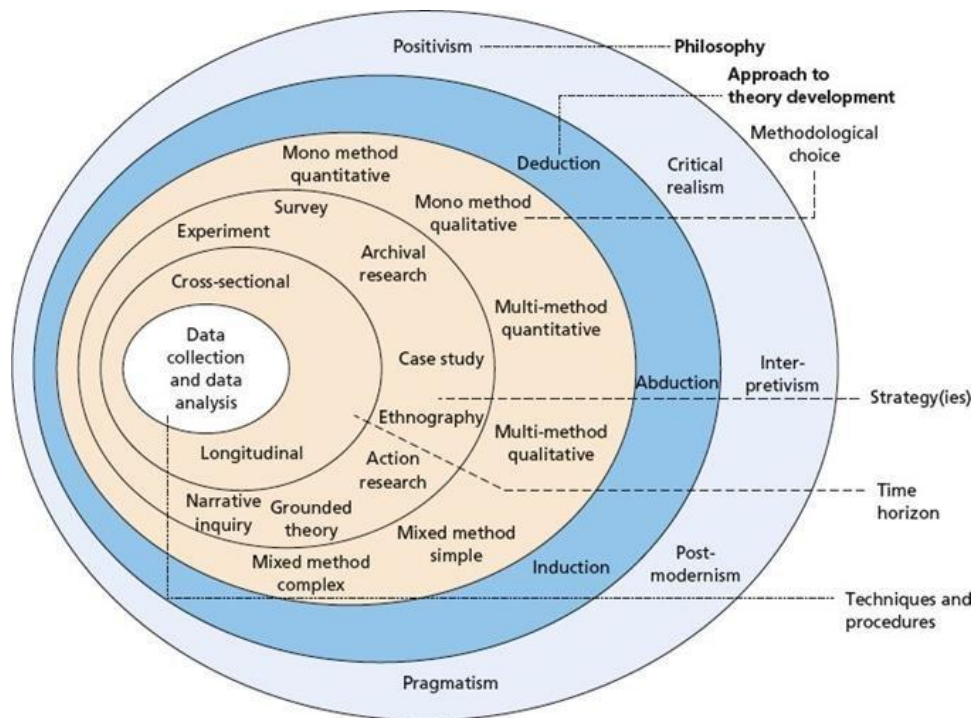


Figure 4: Research Onion Source: Saunders et al., (2019)

4.1 Research Philosophy: Positivism

This research will use the positivist philosophy, which focuses on facts that can be seen and measured (Bryman, 2016). Positivism believes that real knowledge comes from data that can be observed and tested. This approach fits well with this study because it uses secondary data from trusted sources including academic papers and industry reports (Turner, 2024). Using this kind of data helps avoid personal opinions and makes the research more reliable. It also allows other people to check and confirm the findings, which makes the study stronger and more trustworthy.

4.2 Research Approach: Deductive

This research will use a deductive approach. A deductive approach means starting with an idea and then checking if it is true by using real data (Creswell, 2014). The main idea in this study is that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategies, like reducing food waste, can help food companies in the UK make more profit. To test this, the research will look at information and reports that already exist. By studying this data, the research will find out if these CSR actions really help companies waste less food and do better in business.

4.3 Research Strategy: Secondary Data Analysis

Secondary data will be used in this study. Secondary data is information that was collected earlier by someone else for a different purpose. Research papers, company reports, government papers, and magazines are all places where it can be found. (Marta Isabel García-Rivas et al., 2023) will use journal articles, surveys, company sustainability reports, and trade magazines for the project. If researchers want to learn about current ideas without having to do new polls and conversations, secondary data is a smart and inexpensive way to do it (Saunders et al., 2019). A lot of useful information about CSR and food waste in the food supply chain can be found this way. That's why this study should use it.

4.4 Research Method: Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis

This study uses a mixed-methods approach. This means it uses both words (qualitative data) and numbers (quantitative data) to understand how CSR and food waste reduction work in the UK food supply chain (Ahmed, Pereira and Jane, 2024). The qualitative part will look at reports, case studies, and research articles. This helps find common ideas and good practices that companies use to waste less food and still do well in business. It shows what is working and how companies support both the environment and profit. The quantitative part will focus on numbers and facts from company reports and surveys. It will use these numbers to see if there is a link between CSR actions and making more money including saving costs by throwing away less food and improving business performance. By using both kinds of data, this research will give a full picture. It helps us understand what companies are doing and gives real evidence that CSR can work well (Kaur et al., 2022).

4.5 Time Horizon: Cross-Sectional

This study uses a cross-sectional time horizon. This means it looks at data from one specific time, not over a long period. The research will use recent data to see how food companies in the UK are using CSR strategies (Alamgeer, 2023). A cross-sectional approach is helpful because it gives a clear picture of what is happening right now with reducing food waste through CSR (Saunders et al., 2019). It also helps to quickly find the current trends and problems that food businesses face while trying to make money and take care of the environment at the same time.

4.6 Data Collection Techniques

Most of the data for this study will come from reliable secondary sources including academic papers, company sustainability reports, government records, and surveys of the industry (Ajayi, 2017). The main goal is to find out how UK food companies use CSR tactics to cut down on food waste. The study wants to find reports and case studies that show what these businesses are doing, how much food waste they are reducing, and how this helps them make money. When study uses secondary data, it can cover a lot of ground without having to gather new data.

4.7 Data Analysis

This research will use thematic analysis to study the data. Thematic analysis is a method used to find and understand patterns and themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research will also charts and graphs to visualise the data collected from different secondary sources. It will be used on the secondary data collected including reports and case studies to discover common ideas and trends about CSR strategies, food waste reduction, and business profits. This method will help the study show how CSR actions connect to better financial performance and highlight which practices are working well in the UK food supply chain.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are important to keep the research honest and trustworthy. Since this study uses secondary data, it will only use information from reliable and well-known sources. All the data will come from public and respected publications, and no private or secret information will be used without permission (Carroll, 1999). Every source will be properly cited using the Harvard referencing style to make sure there is no plagiarism and to follow academic rules. The research will also stay fair and neutral, meaning the data will be looked at without any personal opinions or bias (Kotler & Lee, 2005).

4.8 Research Schedule

The proposed research schedule for the completion of the research proposal within a 12-week timeframe is outlined below.

Research phases	Week											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Introduction												

Literature Review												
Research Questions												
Research Methodology												
Data Analysis												
Results and Discussion												
Writing and Drafting												
Review and Feedback												
Final Writing and Editing												
Submission												

5. Expected Outcome

This research wants to find out how food companies in the UK can help the planet and still make money. It looks at how companies use Corporate Social Responsibility, or CSR. CSR means doing good things like throwing away less food, helping people, and taking care of the Earth. The study will look at what food companies are doing now. Some companies try not to waste food, buy food in better ways, or give extra food to people who need it (Atkins, Deranek and Nonet, 2018). The research wants to see if these good actions help companies save money. When companies waste less food, they don't have to pay a lot to throw it away or store it. This can help the company work better and spend less. It can also make people like the company more. Many people today want to buy from companies that care about the world. So, doing good things can help a company grow. The research will also look at how CSR helps companies get more customers. When companies do the right thing, people trust them and buy more from them. This can help the company get more sales. But the study will also look at the problems companies have. Some companies don't have enough money to start these good plans. Some rules make it hard to give away food. Sometimes, companies don't work well with others like farmers or shops (Biggi, Principato and Fulvio Castellacci, 2024). The study will give some ideas to help companies fix these problems. It will tell them how to waste less food and still do well in business. The research wants to show that helping the planet can also help a company make money. In the end, this research will help business owners, teachers, and leaders understand that CSR is a smart idea. It is not just about being nice, it also helps companies to flourish in their respective industry (Maloni and Brown, 2006). This study will give good examples and advice so more food companies can follow the same way. Helping people, saving food, and making money can all happen at the same time.

6. Potential Limitations and Contingency Plans

This research wants to give useful ideas about how food companies in the UK use Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to reduce food waste. But there are some problems that might affect how much we can learn. One big problem is that the research will not use new data collected from people. It will only use secondary data sources including reports and studies (Manning, 2013). This means there might not be enough detail, especially if companies don't share everything about their CSR work or how much money they save by wasting less food. Because of this, it might be hard to know how well certain CSR actions really work. To fix this problem, the research will use many different trusted sources. It will look at reports from the food industry, academic articles, and company reports on sustainability. If some information is missing, the research will use case studies and good examples from well-known food companies to help explain the ideas. Another problem is that the results from this research may not work for every place or business. This study looks only at food companies in the UK. So, what works in the UK might not work in other countries or for other types of businesses (Atkins, Deranek and Nonet, 2018). Also, big supermarkets often have more money and help, while small food businesses might have more problems. This means the results from big companies may not show what smaller companies go through. The research will explain this clearly and say that its findings mostly help people understand CSR in the UK food market. Even with these limits, the research will try its best to show helpful ideas that can support better food waste reduction and smart business decisions. It will use trusted data and examples to make the results clear and useful. Also, a comparative analysis will be used, where possible, to provide broader insights and make recommendations that could be adapted to other markets or industries. This research has some limits that need to be explained. One problem is that the information used comes from other people's reports. Sometimes, even trusted reports from companies only show the good things and not the bad parts. They might not talk about problems or mistakes (Devin and Richards, 2016). To fix this, the research will use different trusted sources and compare them. This will help give a fair and honest picture. It will also check if the information is different or unclear, so the study can use only good, true facts (Gold and Heikkurinen, 2013). Another problem is that CSR ideas keep changing. Companies are always finding new ways to waste less food and help the planet. Because of this, some older data might not show what is happening now. To solve this, the research will use the newest data and also look at reports that talk about what will happen in the future. This will help the study stay useful and up to date (Smith, 2008). One more hard part is finding out how much money CSR really

helps a company make. When a company wastes less food, it can save money. But it's not always easy to see how much money was saved right away (Atkins, Deranek and Nonet, 2018). To help with this, the research will use financial numbers, like how much companies save by wasting less and how happy their customers are. It will also use ideas from experts and reports to understand how CSR helps businesses. This will give a full picture of how helping the planet can also help companies do well.

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