

The Danes' attitudes and values towards waste management

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[The report](#) was made with the purpose of providing factual knowledge on the behavior, needs, motives and barriers of citizens to the ones responsible for waste management in Denmark. This was important to motivate Danish citizens to get better at sorting their waste.

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The analysis answers the following four questions:

1. What are the Danes' behavior, motives and barriers?
2. What are the companies' brand image, strengths/weaknesses?
3. Benchmarks: How good are the companies nationally and regionally?
4. What types of customers (personas) exist in Denmark?

The 11 main results

Danes are idealists.

They are very open to sorting more/better – many believe there is not enough sorting and recycling in Denmark. Therefore, there is **a large potential for strengthening source separation.**

Danes are different

The Danes' needs are different. Therefore, there is need for **differentiated solutions to different segments**, if you want Danes to get better at sorting their waste.

Four waste personas

In terms of value, the Danes can be divided into **four segments** that are different from each other in terms of waste management and recycling:

- 1. Ida & Ivan Idealist (30 %)**
 - “Recycling is good!”
 - Wants to make a difference
 - Lack of opportunities
 - Mostly women over 50, own house, long education, high income
- 2. Christina & Claus Convenience (23 %)**
 - “Convenience & convenience”
 - Wants to make a difference
 - Feel it is difficult
 - Make every day easier
 - Mostly women under 40, rental apartment, income and education vary
- 3. Poul & Pernille Pragmatist (36 %)**
 - “I do what I am asked to do”

- Change behavior if needed
- Tell us what to do
- Mostly men, over 60, own house

4. Lasse & Linda Lige glad = Indifferent (12 %)

- "I don't care"
- Access is important
- Lack of will
- Easy and intuitively
- Mostly men under 40, rental house, short or now education, lower income

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Convenience

Convenience is important to everyone and trumps almost everything – it must be easy, easy, easy!

Black box

The waste's journey through the value chain is a black box and the effect is unknown. The missing knowledge is a great barrier in affecting behavior.

Nobody wants to pay more

There is a **VERY limited will to additional payment**. It is considered illogical and morally wrong to pay more to sort more.

Positive attitude towards waste professionals...

The ones responsible for waste management **appear qualified in delivering what is seen as a core competence**; waste collection and the operation of recycling centers. The southern Danish customers are the most satisfied.

But they are invisible

The ones responsible for waste management **lack visibility in terms of communicating** important messages and alternative options.

Waste mode

There is a need for getting to the customers while they are in "**waste mode**", with a more **meaningful**, individualized and user-oriented communication.

Common sense is dead

Common sense does not work. There are several gray areas for sorting, in which it is not known what correct behavior is.

Differences are no good

There are **very different rules and communication** in terms of sorting in Denmark. It probably has a negative impact on the effect.

The ideal solution

The ideal waste solution (seen with the eyes of the customer):

1. is **ultra-convenient**
2. **does not affect the economy**
3. proves that you are **making a difference** when sorting
4. makes you **feel good** about your own effort

5. gives recognition for the effort you are putting into it

Seven central dimensions, listed in the prioritized order:

1. Idealism
2. Convenience
3. Focus on price or waste fee
4. Knowledge and needs
5. Aesthetics
6. Other motivators
7. Satisfaction

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From this emerges the four segments/personas.

Distribution of the segments in the Danish regions

- The capital region has fewer Pragmatics and more Convenience-oriented customers compared to the national average.
- Zealand has a bit fewer Convenience-oriented and most in the Indifferent-segment compared to the national average.
- Southern Denmark has most Pragmatics and more Idealists than the national average, and far fewer customers in the Indifferent-segment.
- Central Denmark Region has a bit more Idealists and Pragmatics than the national average, and fewest Convenience-oriented customers.
- The North Denmark Region has significantly fewer Idealists and Pragmatics, but significantly more Convenience-oriented customers, and a bit more in the Indifferent-segment.

Sorting in and outside the home

- The analysis also included qualitative visits at the homes of the customers. These showed that there are no standard solutions to indoor sorting except from a bucket under the sink.
- You make your own indoor waste managing systems and staging points for pragmatic reasons (room/space, aesthetics)
- The most energetic, environment-oriented participants source separates down to 7-9 different subgroups.
- The least tenacious sorts regular kitchen waste and what you can get rid of in the outdoor buckets (because they are right outside your door).

Significance of the property type

- The more space you have the less inconvenient it is to have the opportunity of source separating.
- House owners experience source sorting more inconvenient than those living in the country side, although the quantitative analysis shows no big difference in sorting percent.
- Tenants do not have influence on outdoor solutions, and experience a limited space or room for sorting. Here, the owner plays an important role in affecting the tenants' sorting behavior.

Knowledge on the waste process

- It is considered extremely important to know what happens with the waste, because there is a need to know that it has an impact and thereby that it makes sense to sort your waste.

- All have stories or distrust to the waste being mixed up again after you have sorted it. All over the country, people have heard stories of how “everything just goes down in the same hole. Such experience is highly demotivating.

The analysis indicates that there can be sorting gains in thinking more uniformity across municipal borders.

There are two areas in which the Danes in general knows what to do with their waste. That is when it comes to **paper and newspapers** as they are to be sorted from kitchen waste, and when it comes to **batteries**. In these two instances, the same message has been communicated for a number of years, the paper buckets are very visible and easy to get to. Lastly, the sorting is done relatively uniform throughout the country.

Source:

In Danish: Dare2. (2013) Danskernes affaldshåndtering, -holdninger og -værdier. Kvantitativ analyse gennemført for Dansk Affaldsforening.

In English: Dare2. (2013) The Danes' waste management, -attitudes and -values. Quantitative analysis carried out for Danish Waste Association, April to August 2013.

<https://www.danskaaffaldsforening.dk/publikationer/undersogelse-danskernes-holdninger-og-vaerdier-til-affald-og-sortering>