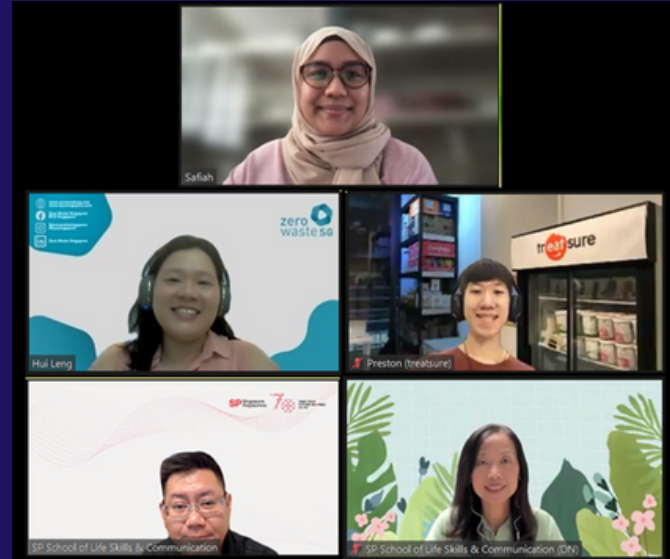


National Youth Council (NYC) x Singapore Polytechnic (SP) Webinar Series: Webinar #4 - Sustainable Consumption: Making Every Choice Count

17 July 2024 | Online (Zoom)

On 17 July 2024, 620 youth from Singapore Polytechnic (SP) gathered for a webinar on sustainable consumption which discussed: (i) the impact of rising consumerism and overbuying on global resources, and how local consumption habits affect waste disposal and Singapore's remaining landfill, (ii) existing initiatives and efforts made by the Government and community to encourage sustainable consumption; and (iii) ways youth could partner with the Government and the community. This session was co-organised by Singapore Polytechnic (SP) and the National Youth Council (NYC), and involved the following panellists:

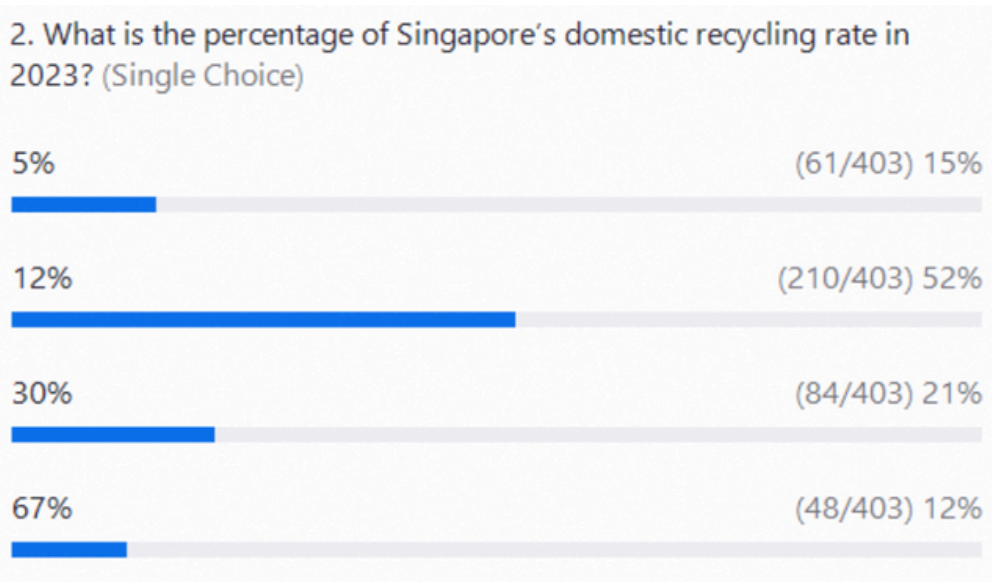
- Ms Tan Hui Leng, Executive Director, ZeroWaste SG
- Mr Preston Wong, CEO and Co-Founder, treasure
- [Moderator] Ms Safiah Binte Noorhimli, Co-Director, FiTree



To start the discussion, the participants were asked to answer ice-breaker polls:



- From the Zoom poll, the top answer was tied at 6.86 million tonnes and 36.78 million tonnes. The correct answer is 6.86 million tonnes and Ms Tan said that this was a decrease from the amount of waste generated in 2022.



- From the Zoom poll, the most selected option (52% of participants) was 12%. The answer is 12% and the panellists said that it was important to uncover the factors behind the low rate of domestic recycling.

(i) The importance of sustainable consumption and impact of local consumption habits.

1) *The moderator asked panellists to define sustainable consumption and how youth could contribute to it.*

- Mr Wong said that the term “sustainable consumption” was borrowed from the United Nations Sustainable Development Group’s (UNSDG) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #12, which emphasises sustainable consumption and production patterns by advocating for the efficient use of resources.
- Ms Tan highlighted that sustainable consumption practices should be customised to the country’s circumstances, e.g. using biodegradable plastics might not have a significant impact in Singapore’s context as Singapore incinerates its waste. She suggested that youth could also examine how to reduce their carbon footprint.

2) *Participants asked (via Zoom Webinar QnA) about the impact of overconsumption in Singapore and how it would affect youth.*

- Ms Tan said that it was urgent to start adopting sustainable consumption habits as overconsumption had accelerated the global depletion of resources.
- Mr Wong said that overconsumption would have the largest impact on youth as its effects would only become apparent in the future. He also said that space and amenities would have to be sacrificed for additional waste disposal facilities if the Semakau landfill ran out.

(ii) Current initiatives and efforts encouraging sustainable consumption.

3) A participant asked (via Zoom Webinar QnA) about the challenges businesses faced in adopting sustainable consumption habits in Singapore and what were some available opportunities for innovation and collaboration.

- Mr Wong said that food security was one of the biggest challenges that Singapore faced. He said that businesses had to balance the lack of demand for local produce with adopting sustainable practices, which could increase production costs, and hoped that the Government could provide more support to help businesses transition towards being environmentally conscious.
- Ms Tan said that businesses could align their interests with consumer behaviour, such as by introducing sustainability-related initiatives to attract a new consumer pool. She called for more collaborations between the Government, industries and the community to shift mindsets towards a circular economy.

4) Participants asked (via the Zoom Webinar Q&A) about challenges in processing e-waste and packaging-waste and how to encourage more responsible waste management.

- Ms Tan said that living in a hyper consumerist society, where producers practised planned obsolescence by encouraging consumerism through introducing multiple iterations of a product (e.g. different mobile phone iterations), existing frameworks and laws such as the Extended Producers' Responsibility (EPR) system were helpful in putting the onus on producers to cut down on e-waste.
- Mr Wong shared that the Government was currently looking at a Packaging EPR system and encouraged participants to voice their concerns surrounding packaging waste through dialogue sessions or Governmental consultations. He also shared that companies in the logistics industry were currently required to produce a 3R report under the Mandatory Packaging Reporting scheme.

(iii) Ways youths can contribute to enhancing sustainable consumption in Singapore.

5) Participants asked (via Zoom Webinar Q&A) for tips to help individuals on a budget make more sustainable lifestyle choices.

- Ms Tan said that individuals could integrate sustainable consumption choices into their lifestyle habits, e.g. using tiffin carriers to takeaway meals. She added that simple behavioural changes could encourage individuals to adopt sustainable consumption habits.
- Mr Wong shared that there was a “Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO)” mindset present in today’s consumerist environment and that individuals might feel a sense of dissatisfaction or loss even after purchasing new products. He encouraged youths to be mindful of their consumption habits, and not feel pressured to constantly follow the latest trends.

6) Participants asked (via Zoom Webinar Q&A) for advice for youth who were passionate about sustainability but unsure about how they could be involved.

- Mr Wong said that collaboration and advocacy were important to encourage sustainable consumption habits amongst Singaporeans. He cited the example of Youth Panels⁴ and encouraged youth to participate in the Youth Policy Forum organised by NYC if they were interested in shaping policy or engaging in dialogues surrounding the topic of sustainability.
- Ms Tan shared that the ZeroWasteSG was looking for volunteers to conduct data gathering and encouraged youth to reach out if they were interested. She also advised youth to “go for it” given the collaborative and helpful culture within the environment and sustainability and climate change space.

Conclusion

- The moderator thanked the panellists and said that youth had the power to effect changes through the numerous platforms and opportunities that were available, and encouraged them to be more mindful of their consumption habits and try integrating sustainable practices into their lifestyles.