

Project Brief

Karma Bank focuses on parcel package waste and recycling. With the development of domestic express delivery and e-commerce, big platforms like Amazon, Taobao, Alibaba and JD use cardboard as a major packaging material to protect parcels during transportation. Therefore, the demand for cardboard is increasing year-on-year. China is the top consumer of paper and cardboard products in the world with 675 million packages delivered on the single day of the Alibaba Shopping Festival in 2019. At present, the local recycling rate of paper packaging in China is less than 50%. Nearly half of the cardboard produced in China relies on the import of wastepaper. In recent years, China is gradually reducing the categories and amount of solid waste imports and raised the import threshold. As a result, the domestic recycling rate needs to be increased to meet the high demands. Meanwhile, according to my primary research, the awareness of recycling packaging materials is yet to be improved. 41% of the interviewees don't responsibly recycle their parcels. By recycling more cardboard, we are saving more trees from being cut down and made into paper and hence making a positive effect on the environment and our future.

My project mainly aims at working class people and students, aged from 18-45, in big cities who have online shopping habits, receiving parcels constantly. Due to limited living space, cardboard often cannot be stacked in the house for a long time. Although their boxes are still in a good condition and can be recycled or reused, most of them choose to directly throw their boxes into dustbins and avoid the responsibility of recycling. In China, the efficiency of the recycling system has plenty of room for improvement. Materials like cardboard are valuable resources and should be recycled and further used in the delivery industry instead of being abandoned in unclassified bins and ending up in landfill. Besides, the rewards system of recycling is not complete or appealing at all. In China, cardboard can be sold to the recycling center or waste dealer. But it is not suitable for the working class because their work time coincides with the opening hours of recycling stations. Also, the price of used cardboard is too low to be attractive to the busy working class. Therefore, a convenient and efficient way of recycling is needed for them.

Instead of trying to solve the problem, I decided to do a speculative design project which explores a potential design of a future-recycling system. It is a credit system that provides a convenient and efficient way of recycling. It has a straightforward reward system that is linked to the consumption stage. Users can log in to Karma Bank's self-service recycling machine with an identification to recycle packaging materials and obtain credits. If a user's credits are too low, they will be defined as an irresponsible consumer, and their consumption behavior will be limited. In this way, people can connect the concept of recycling with consequences and start to let recycling be part of their lives. Through Karma Bank, I hope to make more people realise that recycling is an indispensable part of the chain of consumption that everyone should be responsible for.