The Establishment of Deposit on Single-Use Beverage Containers in Germany:
A Case of Policy Resistance

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In 2003, the German government introduced deposit on disposable single-use beverage containers in addition to the already existing deposit on reusable beverage containers. Politicians meant to enhance and stabilize the use of reusable beverage containers by lowering the attractiveness of beverages in single-use containers through a high deposit. After the new law was introduced, the usage of reusable beverage containers increased, but then it continued to decrease. This unexpected behavior can be explained by the fact that unclaimed deposit counts as profit for retailers and production companies. In that way, the container deposit made beverages in single-use containers less attractive for the consumers but, in turn, increased the profit per unit for the retailers. That led to a higher supply of beverages in single-use containers and a massive shortfall of beverages in reusable containers. Consumers substituted their demand by available beverages in single-use containers. Surprisingly, most of the discussed policies to enhance the usage of reusable beverage containers appear to be ineffective after testing them in the present model.

References