

RepairMonitor

Analysis of results 2018

Summary

Preface

The Repair Café International Foundation has analyzed the data entered in 2018 in the RepairMonitor, the online tool in which Repair Café volunteers keep track of their repair data. In this monitor, volunteers of 34 Repair Cafés (30 from the Netherlands, 2 from the US, 1 from the UK, 1 from Australia) entered data on a total of 7,857 products in 2018. This report analyzes how and how quickly products break down and which factors hinder a successful repair. The aim of this research is to identify what needs to be done to make products more repairable so that they fit better into the circular economy.

Analysis

The ten products most offered for repair are: coffee makers, vacuum cleaners, lamps, bicycles, trousers, sewing machines, clocks, coats, irons and laptops. The ten most common brands in the Repair Café are Philips, Sony, Bosch, Tefal, Samsung, Miele, HP, Nespresso, Gazelle and Braun.

The success rate of the repairs carried out is generally quite high: 65%. This is lower for repairs of electrical/electronic products (56%), and considerably higher for products without an electrical system (85%). Approximately 70% of all repairs were electrical/electronic products.

The problems with which visitors come to the Repair Café are very diverse. Not always is an item really broken; often there is only a flaw: a coffee machine is leaking, a vacuum cleaner cord no longer rolls up automatically, the yarn in the sewing machine always breaks off, a bicycle doesn't run smoothly, a pair of trousers is too long...

Repairers identify various reasons why repairs do not succeed: parts are not repairable, not present on site, not available or too expensive. Sometimes repair is too difficult or too dangerous, or it is impossible to open a product without breaking it.

In approximately half of the cases it is indicated how old a product is. Of these items, 6% is at most two years old, more than a quarter at most five years, another quarter five to ten years. Of the ten most common products, laptops are, on average, the least old when they are brought to the Repair Café, followed by printers and coffee machines. Clocks are, on average, the oldest, followed by sewing machines and radios.

Repairers appear to make little use of repair information. It is not always clear from the RepairMonitor whether this is because they did not search or because they did

search but did not find any information. In less than 6% of the repairs in the monitor it is indicated that the repairer did use repair information. This information rarely comes from the manufacturer; it is usually provided by other repairers.

Conclusions and recommendations

Repair always the first step

Of all the repairs described in the RepairMonitor, 65% was successful. This shows that repairing makes sense and should always be the first step when something breaks.

More emphasis on maintenance

Many of the problems described in the RepairMonitor are the result of poor maintenance: cleaning, descaling, lubricating, tightening... Apparently, the public is not sufficiently aware of the need to perform maintenance. Repair Cafés make their visitors aware of this. A public campaign could help. Producers and retailers must also emphasize the importance of maintenance more.

More repair knowledge needed with the public

The relative simplicity of problems described in the RepairMonitor demonstrates the lack of repair knowledge among the general public. More attention for repair skills and working with your hands in education can help solve this problem. Repair Café volunteers can be deployed as supervisors/coaches.

Producer must actively support repair

According to the RepairMonitor, if repairs are unsuccessful, this is often because products cannot be disassembled, parts cannot be repaired, there are no replacement parts and there is hardly any documentation for a repairer to rely on. The transition to a circular economy requires producers to change this. Especially the reparability of electrical/electronic products must be improved.

Governments must stand up for repairable products

Together with the Dutch environmental organisation Natuur & Milieu, the Repair Café International Foundation has also formulated recommendations for municipalities, governments and the European Union:

- Make the provision of repair manuals by producers mandatory;
- Require the use of standard screws and other fixing materials and prohibit the gluing together of parts;
- Require longer warranty periods;
- Require that batteries and other critical, rapidly aging and vulnerable parts can be replaced by consumers themselves;
- Require manufacturers to keep spare parts available for consumers and repairers;
- Increase taxes on raw materials and reduce taxes on (repair) labor;
- Inform consumers of the financial and environmental benefits of repairing and where to turn to for repairs;
- Make sure that Repair Cafés, thrift stores, waste collection station and other local organizations that can play a role in extending the lifespan of products can benefit from each other in the best way.