

Consumer Buying Behaviour towards Sustainable Packaging in FMCG Market: A Study among High Income Earners in Colombo

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Abstract: -This study seeks to understand the relationship between consumer buying behaviour and sustainable packaging among high income earning residents in Colombo areas in Sri Lanka. Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) market was chosen as the level of consumption as the frequency of purchasing them are very high. The two specific objectives were to identify the association of each dimension of sustainable packaging towards consumer buying behaviour and to identify the most significant dimension that affects the consumer buying behaviour. Consumer inspection on secondary packaging (Consumer Inspection), consumer awareness on sustainable packaging (Consumer Awareness) and willingness to pay for sustainable packaging (Consumer Willingness) were identified as the dimensions through previous studies. The sample comprised of 200 respondents selected under the multi-stage cluster sampling method according to the income level and age between 18 to 60 years. Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to achieve the first specific objective and a multiple regression was carried out to achieve the second specific objective. The researchers discovered a strong positive correlation in each dimension towards consumer buying behaviour. Among these, consumer willingness recorded the highest strong positive correlation, followed by consumer awareness and consumer inspection. Consumer awareness was recognized as the most significant dimension that affects the consumer buying behaviour. The implications of this study formed awareness into buying behaviour towards sustainable packaging which can be used by FMCG businesses in Sri Lanka when designing and marketing product packages.

Keywords: Consumer Buying Behaviour, Sustainable Packaging, FMCG market, Consumer Inspection, Consumer Awareness, Consumer Willingness

I. BACKGROUND

Organizations and consumers are increasingly concerning about sustainable business practices due to the consequences of global warming, climate changes, and environmental pollution. Business and environmental sustainability don't always mix, particularly in product packaging. Landfilling is the majority of European and Asian countries' first choice for this waste plastic package issue. The primary problem with this circumstance is that these packets stay in the environment for a very long time, severely harming the environment (Madushanka and Ragel, 2016). As a result, companies come up with creative ways to reduce their negative

effects on the environment. One of them is sustainable packaging, that is gaining popularity with both consumers and businesses. Organizations follow sustainability practices to get rid of waste and non-value-adding activities, cut back on resource utilization, and gain a competitive edge (Arca, Prado-Prado and Garrido, 2014; Meixell and Luoma, 2015).

The 3R concept has been applied by the organizations to build a framework for their operations and to showcase their efforts to the consumers with the adoption of sustainable packaging. Reduce, reuse, and recycle are referred to as the 3Rs in manufacturing and consumption processes. Most Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies use sustainable packaging as a marketing tactic to strengthen their competitive position using such concepts. Many global FMCG firms, including McDonald's, KFC, and Kellogg's, have recently declared that they are switching to sustainable packaging by adopting a variety of steps (Cotton, 2019). These businesses typically eliminate the use of plastic, use recyclable materials, encourage recycling of product packaging, and employ paper-based wrapping.

However, switching from conventional packaging to green packaging is an expensive, risky decision for manufacturers. This extra cost will typically fall on the consumer. The consumer then expresses doubt about the willingness to pay a higher price for goods that come in environmentally friendly packaging. Despite this concern, consumers are unable to recognize sustainable packaging or had a vague understanding about what sustainability packaging entailed (Lindh et al, 2016). Overall, consumer views of different kinds of packaging materials, like paper and plastic, are inconsistent, showing that consumers are unable to tell the difference between packaging that is less eco-friendly and that is more eco-friendly (Nguyen et al, 2019).

The idea of sustainable packaging is well-known among big companies worldwide, however owing to numerous internal and external factors, Sri Lankan brands do not embrace it. Only a small number of companies employ and promote sustainable packaging, like Milo, which serves paper straws and encourages recycling, and Dilmah, which substitutes paper canisters for tin caddies. However, some other well-known businesses employ plastic-based packaging as their main form

of protection. South Asian nations are the main contributors to global pollution (World Bank, 2022). Hence, the South Asian countries are currently concentrating on Sustainability Development Goals (SDG) to enhance livelihood and environmental impact. Sri Lanka, a developing nation trying to concentrate more on exports, has to adopt sustainable packaging which could be used as a marketing tactic, to fulfill international standards, and to compete with companies from other countries.

Due to the high inflation rate and limited purchasing power, the Sri Lankan market, and the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in particular, is mostly driven by price rivalry (Kodituwakku and Kanagasaba, 2009). Additionally, the majority of consumers are unaware of the detrimental effects on the environment and are indifferent to environmental issues. As a result, the majority of Sri Lankan consumers are uninterested in many sustainability initiatives, including green products, which are typically more expensive than non-green ones (Asela, Jayatilaka and Jayawickrama, 2013). Hence, the purchasing power and income level are also a concern in the purchasing intention.

The problem statement of the current study focuses on the relationship between factors that affect consumer buying behaviour towards sustainable packaging in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the key objective of this study is to identify the relationship between the dimensions of sustainable packaging and consumer buying behaviour and provide recommendations to the organizations in the FMCG market in Sri Lanka. To achieve the main objective, the researchers have developed the following specific objectives.

- i. To identify the association of each dimension of sustainable packaging towards consumer buying behaviour in FMCG market in Sri Lanka
- ii. To identify the most significant dimension that affects the consumer buying behaviour in FMCG market in Sri Lanka

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Packaging

A stakeholder-based organization, the Sustainable Packaging Coalition (SPC) describes sustainable packaging as being sourced responsibly, designed to be efficient and safe throughout its life cycle, meets market criteria for performance and cost, is made entirely using renewable energy, and once used, is recycled efficiently to provide a valuable resource for subsequent generations (Sustainable Packaging Coalition, 2011). Sustainable supply chains connect all parties involved, including suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and customers, with the goal of maximizing resource allocation, improving production, packing, storage, and distribution efficiency with minimal environmental impact (Yongan and Menghan, 2011), and causing the least amount of harm to society and the environment possible (Xu X, Gursoy 2015). Companies used to focus on the 3R concept (reduce, reuse, and

recycle), but now they emphasize the 6R concept, which includes recover, redesign, and remanufacture (Jayal et al, 2010).

Packaging materials, production technique, and market position, as per Creswell (2009), are the three main characteristics that can be utilized to describe consumers' attitudes of eco-friendly packaging. These categories can be used by producers and sellers of packaged food products to design packaging that customers will find appealing.

Consumer Buying Behaviour

A study on sustainable packaging was conducted in Romania by Orzan et al. (2018) using a sample of 200 people between the ages of 18 and 64 who are high-income earners. With regards to purchasing frequency of goods in sustainable packaging, motivations behind these preferences, knowledge of green packaging, and readiness to pay more, many dimensions have been employed to assess sustainable packaging. According to research, Romanians favour materials like paper, glass, and cardboard because they believe they can be recycled or reused easily. The authors contend that even if there is a concern about sustainable packaging, presently it is not possible to address sustainable purchasing practices based on survey results.

Van Birgelen, Semeijn and Keicher (2009) conducted a study on beverages and discovered that environmental consciousness and an eco-friendly mindset are associated to beverage disposal decisions and eco-friendly purchase. Furthermore, a positive relationship is observed with sustainable packaging against purchase decision. Likewise, Spence and Velasco, (2018), state different consumer purchasing behaviour is influenced by sustainable packaging. According to Petljak et al. (2019) when buying items with green packaging, consumers take the environment's influence and their health into account. The authors have observed a positive relationship between the consumers' concern on packaging with sustainable packaging. Furthermore, a positive relationship was observed against the concern on environment impact.

Consumer Inspection on Secondary Packaging

Spence and Velasco (2018), demonstrate how container colours affect consumer purchasing. The study demonstrates how unique colour combinations unquestionably make things stand out on the shelves. Furthermore, they highlight the value of colour coordination when designing packaging for food and beverage products. However, the majority of their research's reviewed articles are from the early 2000s and the late 90s. However, Mohammad and Amin (2012) make a similar argument, arguing that product exposure through packaging might affect a consumer's thinking. Furthermore, it is stated that packaging helps to distinguish a product from competing goods, capture customers' attention, convey important product information, and position the product in their minds. Ansari and Siddiqui (2019) claim that four

package characteristics; packaging visuals, size, product information, and packaging material that are generally of interest to customers have been put to the test.

A crucial first step in developing such habits is to comprehend how perceptions in one area (such as package design) can translate to another in terms of perceived package sustainability (Cornelissen et al, 2008). In agreement with this, visual cues such package size, colour, form, label, and graphics as well as the product itself might allude to the packaging's sustainability (Magnier and Schoormans, 2015). Additionally, Pancer, McShane, and Noseworthy (2017) explain that the initial classification of a product by consumers whether or not it is environmentally friendly that determines the subsequent assessments of products in the same area.

Consumer Awareness on Sustainable Packaging

Madushanka and Ragel (2016) looked at Trincomalee area low-income earners' knowledge of sustainable packaging in Sri Lanka. The goals were to determine whether or not this concept is favourable in this area, to identify the variables influencing consumer behaviour, their relationships, and whether or not this concept varies depending on the customer demographic. The study demonstrates that residents of lower income areas had positive reactions to the idea of green packaging. Similarly, a positive relationship was observed with awareness against the sustainable packages to contribute to the good cause (Orzan et al, 2018). The studies of Tang, Wang, and Lu (2014) and Mahmoud (2017) suggest green marketing is required to create awareness that has a significant impact on buying decision of the consumers. According to Madushanka and Ragel (2016), FMCG businesses were advised to promote the idea of sustainable packaging through commercials, leaflets, and posters. For the green packaging idea to be successfully implemented, it is important that recycling and reusing knowledge is appropriately distributed across society. Similar to this, buyers must be knowledgeable about buying environmentally friendly products or be prepared to seek out information.

Willingness to Pay for Sustainable Packaging

According to Radulescu and Radulescu (2012), the price point has such a strong impact that buyers might not even think about environmental friendliness when making a purchase. The consumer will not take action to save the environment even if they have sympathy for the environment and the perceived costs outweigh the perceived advantages. The response of consumers to the cost of sustainable packaging is quite delicate. Similarly, stated that price is one of the major determining factors in purchasing decisions (Chyong et al, 2006). Price was frequently mentioned as a deterrent and influencing factor for purchase intentions in several research related to green goods and environmentally friendly packaging (Chekima et al, 2016; Martinho et al 2015). With regard to product price, opinion is the most reliable descriptive factor in forecasting customers' willingness to pay for green packaging. However, according to the studies of Tang, Wang, and Lu

(2014) and Mahmoud (2017) green price has a positive relationship with purchase intention. Likewise, according to Orzan et al, (2018), a positive relationship was observed with willingness to pay a premium against the sustainable packages.

III. METHODOLOGY

According to the research philosophy, positivism was chosen since it approaches investigation from a scientific and quantitative perspective. In terms of the research methodology, the study's goal is to test acquired data using data analytical techniques, hence the researchers utilized a deductive approach. The survey method is used when considering about the research approach, and survey questionnaires are used to collect data.

The researchers utilized a mono approach as the method of choice for the study. The study's time frame was cross-sectional in nature.

The identified dimensions were renamed for the convenience of interpretation as “Consumer Inspection on Secondary Packaging (Consumer Inspection)”, “Consumer Awareness on Sustainable Packaging (Consumer Awareness)” and “Willingness to Pay for Sustainable Packaging (Consumer Willingness)” as independent variables and “Consumer Buying Behaviour” as the dependent variable. As depicted in Figure 1, the conceptual framework is developed.

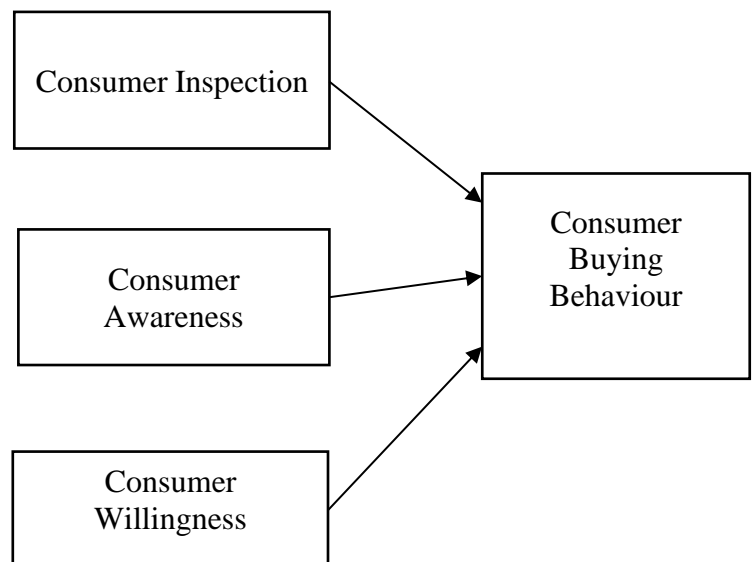


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by the Researchers based on Literature (2022)

The online survey was shared among the 200 participants between the age of 18 to 60 who are high income earning residents in Colombo areas who purchase FMCG such as vegetables, meat, beverages, confectionery, instant food etc. Multi-stage cluster sampling technique was used to select the sample. Munasinghe and Shantha (2021) and Orzan et al. (2018) also took into account the same technique. The sample was given a well-structured questionnaire to complete in order to obtain the primary data. Using a Likert scale, the data were

gathered for the independent and dependent variables (Strongly Agree - 5, Agree - 4, Neutral - 3, Disagree - 2, Strongly Disagree - 1). Newspaper articles, reports, and journal articles were used to gather the secondary data. To identify more thorough and dependable items to add in the questionnaire, a pilot study was carried out. Data were then exported from Microsoft Excel to IBM SPSS (Version 22) after being obtained.

To ascertain how each attribute relates to consumer loyalty, the researchers used Pearson's correlation analysis. The researchers can determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables using Pearson's correlation analysis. The Pearson's correlation coefficient, in particular, must fall between -1 and 1 ($-1 \leq \text{Pearson's correlation coefficient} \leq 1$). Correlation can therefore be either positive or negative. Positive correlation suggests that the dependent variable increases along with the independent variable. According to negative correlation, the dependent variable drops as the independent variable rises, and vice versa. For the composite dependent variable and composite independent variables to have statistical significance, the P value of the Pearson's correlation coefficient must be lower than the alpha value, which is 0.05. The correlation coefficient also shows the degree of correlation between the independent and dependent variables. When the correlation coefficient of two variables is in the range of 0.1 and 0.29 ($0.1 < r < 0.29$), it indicates a weak correlation, and when it is in the range of 0.3 and 0.49 ($0.3 < r < 0.49$), it shows a moderate correlation. Finally, a strong correlation is shown if the dependent variable's and independent variable's correlation coefficients are between 0.5 and 1 ($r = 0.5$).

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Pearson's Correlation Analysis

In order to achieve the first goal, which was to identify the relationship between each dimension and consumer purchasing behaviour, the Pearson's correlation analysis was carried out. Abbreviations were assigned to the independent variables for the convenience of data interpretation as follows. Accordingly, Consumer Inspection (CI), Consumer Awareness (CA) and Consumer Willingness (CW) as independent variables and Consumer Buying Behaviour (CB) as the dependent variable. The output is depicted in the Table 1.

Table 1: Output of the Pearson's Correlation Analysis

		CB	CI	CA	CW
CB	Pearson Correlation	1	0.537	0.557	0.571
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001	<0.001	<0.001
	N	200	200	200	200

Source: Survey Data (2022)

Correlation between the Consumer Buying Behaviour and Consumer Inspection

Between 0.5 and 1 ($r = 0.5$) is the relationship between customer buying behaviour and consumer inspection. With a correlation coefficient of 0.537, it demonstrates that there is a significant positive correlation. Consumer buying behaviour and consumer inspection have a statistically significant significant positive relationship since the P value of Pearson's correlation coefficient is less than 0.05. As a result, consumer inspection will increase by 0.537 units for every unit that consumer purchasing behaviour increases.

Correlation between the Consumer Buying Behaviour and Consumer Awareness

Between 0.5 and 1 ($r = 0.5$) is the relationship between consumer purchasing behaviour and consumer awareness. With a correlation coefficient of 0.557, it demonstrates that there is a significant positive correlation. Consumer buying behaviour and consumer awareness have a statistically significant significant positive relationship because the P value of Pearson's correlation coefficient is less than 0.05. Consumer awareness will therefore rise by 0.557 units for every unit that consumer purchasing behaviour increases.

Correlation between the Consumer Buying Behaviour and Consumer Willingness

Between 0.5 and 1 ($r = 0.5$) is the relationship between consumer willingness and purchasing behaviour. With a correlation coefficient of 0.571, it demonstrates that there is a significant positive correlation. Consumer buying behaviour and consumer willingness exhibit a statistically significant significant positive relationship because the P value of Pearson's correlation coefficient is less than 0.05. As a result, consumer willingness will grow by 0.571 units for every unit increase in consumer purchasing behaviour.

According to the findings of Pearson's correlation study, all three dimensions are strongly positively correlated with customer purchasing behaviour. Further, the highest correlation is between consumer buying behaviour and consumer willingness. The lowest correlation is between consumer buying behaviour and consumer inspection.

Multiple Regression Analysis

The researchers performed the multiple regression analysis to achieve the second specific research objective of the study. It was performed by using IBM SPSS (version 22) to identify the most significant dimension which affects consumer buying behaviour in FMCG market in Sri Lanka. By conducting a multiple regression analysis, the researchers can identify the influence or effect between the consumer buying behaviour and the independent variables. It aids in determining which dimensions are most important and which ones may be overlooked and how those dimensions connect.

Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables

Variables/ Summary	Standardized Beta Coefficient
CI	.103**
CA	.307**
CW	.190**
R ²	.557
Adjusted R ²	.533
F Value	23.568

Note: Significant: *p<.05, **p<.01

Source: Survey Data (2022)

As shown in Table 2, the results of the multiple regression analysis revealed that 55.7 percent variances in consumer buying behaviour could be explained by consumer inspection, consumer awareness and consumer willingness value ($R^2 = 0.557$, $p < 0.01$). The results also unveiled that consumer inspection ($\beta = 0.103$, $p < 0.01$); consumer awareness ($\beta = 0.307$, $p < 0.01$) and consumer willingness ($\beta = 0.190$, $p < 0.01$) values were found to have significant positive influences on consumer buying behaviour. Accordingly, it can be observed that consumer awareness is the most significant dimension that affects the consumer buying behaviour in FMCG market in Sri Lanka.

V. CONCLUSION

According to the study's first objective, each dimension (consumer inspection, consumer awareness, and consumer willingness) is strongly positively correlated with consumer buying behaviour. Among these, consumer willingness recorded the highest strong positive correlation, consumer awareness recorded the second highest strong positive correlation and consumer inspection recorded the third and lowest strong positive correlation towards consumer buying behaviour. As per the second objective of the study, the researchers have identified that consumer awareness is the most significant dimension that affects the consumer buying behaviour.

According to Jayasinghe (2022), the useful and motivating information that comes with green packaging enhances the knowledge a consumer must have about environmental sustainability. As per Canio et al. (2021) customers choose responsibly packaged items when they are motivated by sustainability. Accordingly, it is evident from the impact of the inspection on secondary packaging of items that the design, particulars, and layers of packaging can have an impact on customer behaviour. This sample has a high level of package awareness, which has a beneficial effect on their purchasing habits. The purchasing behaviour is affected by consumers' willingness to pay a premium for goods that come in environmentally friendly packaging. Even though in the current study, the participants earn higher salaries, Madhushanka et al. (2016) contend that even lower income groups are concerned about the effects on the environment and

that green packaging can have a positive impact on their purchasing habits. This describes how purchasing decisions can be shifted in favour of goods using sustainable packaging at the moment of purchase. According to current study results, 80 percent of respondents were aware of market-available sustainable packaging and products. Salam (2021) explains environmental awareness influences attitude, which subsequently influences buying intentions. The younger generation and high-income earners are aware of and knowledgeable about ecological behaviour (Munasinghe and Shantha, 2021).

Brand managers and marketers are encouraged to concentrate on enhancing the product's appearance and use secondary packaging (sustainable) as a marketing strategy that also demonstrates the beneficial influence. It is necessary to carry out appropriate tactics to raise awareness. They can utilize in-store promotions, design modifications, mass media use, leaflets, and dry sampling to advertise this idea. The main focus can be on supermarkets and large-scale grocers. Manufacturers' negative views about cost increases have made them less focused on using sustainable packaging (Wanninayake and Randiwela, 2008). It is necessary for the government to play a role in promoting this idea through global innovation and material development that also supports manufacturers in making an easy transition; this includes a system to lower costs, enhanced sustainable materials, manufacturing efficiency, etc.

Due to the limited number of researches in the Sri Lankan context, the current study attempts to construct a foundation for future studies. The study's limitations must be taken into account when interpreting the results since doing so will assist the researchers recommend future research in a more fruitful way. A study's limitation may be that it was only conducted among high-income earning residents of Colombo areas in Sri Lanka. Future research may benefit from using a larger sample size that includes a wider geographic area. It is advised that surveys of high-income earners in other towns or districts be conducted to cross-validate the study's findings and make comparisons.

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