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Factors Affecting the Consumers' Attitude towards Eco-Friendly Packaging In Colombo District: Special Reference To Dilmah Tea Bags of Srilanka

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Abstract

This research investigates consumer attitudes towards eco-friendly packaging, specifically focusing on Dilmah Tea Bags in the Colombo District. The primary objective is to examine the factors that influence consumer attitude and their propensity to adopt eco-friendly packaging solutions. A quantitative research design was employed, with data collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to a sample of 100 respondents selected via convenience sampling. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS 27, encompassing descriptive statistics, reliability testing, frequency analysis, correlation, and regression analyses. The results indicated that environmental concern and government role are significant predictors of consumer attitudes towards eco-friendly packaging, with these factors demonstrating a strong influence on consumer behavior. Descriptive statistics revealed a generally positive consumer attitude towards eco-friendly packaging, highlighting the importance of environmental awareness and regulatory support. Based on the statistics, it is recommended that companies like Dilmah strengthen their eco-friendly packaging initiatives and work closely with government bodies to promote sustainable practices. Further research should consider a broader range of demographic variables and extend to other regions for more generalizable results.

Keywords: *Eco-Friendly Packaging, Consumer Attitude, Dilmah Tea Bag, Colombo District, Consumer Behavior, Environmental, Government*

Background of the Study

Business practices often clash with environmental sustainability, particularly evident in product packaging. Statistics from the Association of Plastic Manufacturers indicate that packaging (39.6%), building and construction (20.3%), and automotive (8.5%) sectors are the top consumers of plastics/polythene. Globalization, while fostering economic growth, has also exacerbated environmental issues, with irresponsible disposal of plastic packaging being a major concern. Most European and Asian countries resort to landfilling for plastic waste, causing prolonged environmental damage. In response, there's been a push for eco-friendly packaging solutions. These alternatives prioritize environmental sensitivity, utilizing methods such as energy efficiency, recyclable and biodegradable materials, downsizing, and reusability. However, transitioning from traditional packaging to eco-friendly options poses significant challenges and risks for manufacturers due to its high costs. The Colombo District in Sri Lanka faces significant environmental pollution, largely attributed to non-recyclable packaging materials. Surrounding water bodies and swamps exacerbate the damage caused by these materials, making it a pressing issue for the district. Consequently, there's a growing demand among consumers and manufacturers for eco-friendly packaging solutions. However, the success of implementing such strategies hinges on consumer acceptance. Dilmah, a renowned Sri Lankan tea company, is recognized globally for its high-quality, ethically produced tea products. Established in 1988, Dilmah has consistently prioritized sustainability and social responsibility in its business practices. The company's commitment to environmental conservation is reflected in its efforts to adopt eco-friendly packaging solutions. The Dilmah Tea Bags Box, a flagship product, epitomizes this commitment by integrating sustainable materials and designs that minimize environmental impact. This product is not only a staple in the Sri Lankan market but also enjoys a significant presence in international markets.

Research Problem

The environmental crisis in the Colombo District, Sri Lanka, is exacerbated by the prevalent use of non-recyclable packaging materials, which account for a significant portion of plastic and polythene usage, reaching 39.6%. Improper disposal practices further contribute to environmental degradation, particularly through landfilling, a common method of waste management. Globally, there's a growing emphasis on eco-friendly packaging solutions, focusing on energy efficiency, recyclability, biodegradability, downsizing, and reusability. However, the transition from conventional packaging poses challenges for manufacturers due to high costs and operational

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hurdles, often hindering the adoption of sustainable practices. Within this backdrop, there emerges a critical nexus between consumer attitudes towards green packaging and its potential impact on manufacturers' decisions. The success of implementing eco-friendly packaging strategies hinges crucially on consumer acceptance and demand. As such, understanding the attitudes and preferences of consumers within the Colombo District becomes paramount. By examining the factors that influence consumer perceptions of eco-friendly packaging, this research seeks to shed light on the feasibility and potential barriers to adoption faced by manufacturers. Ultimately, a comprehensive understanding of consumer attitudes will inform strategic decisions aimed at promoting sustainable practices within the packaging industry, thereby contributing to environmental conservation efforts in the region.

Research Questions

- What is the impact of product characteristic on Consumer's attitude towards Eco-Friendly packaging?
- Find out the significant impact of environmental concern on Consumer's attitude towards Eco-Friendly packaging?
- What is the significant impact of government's role on Consumer's attitude towards Eco-Friendly packaging?

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the impact of product characteristic on Consumer's attitude towards Eco-Friendly packaging.
- To find out the significant impact of environmental concern on Consumer's attitude towards Eco-Friendly packaging.
- To identify the significant impact of government's role on Consumer's attitude towards Eco-Friendly packaging

Literature Review

Consumer attitudes towards green packaging influence their shopping decisions and overall preferences. According to Blackwell et al. (2006), consumer attitudes reflect their likes and dislikes, with environmental attitudes having a considerable influence on product choices. Mansaray and Abijoye (1998) emphasise that consumer knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and activities play an important role in defining environmental quality. Thøgersen (1999) emphasises the relationship between environmental concern and consumer attitudes, arguing that customers may actively contribute to environmental solutions by recycling and purchasing ecologically friendly items and packaging. Consumer attitudes towards green packaging are influenced by a variety of factors, including demographics, product qualities, environmental awareness, and government legislation on environmentally friendly packaging. Understanding consumer attitudes towards green packaging is essential for businesses and policymakers aiming to promote sustainability in the marketplace. Research in this area can provide insights into consumer preferences, motivations, and barriers related to green packaging adoption, facilitating the development of targeted strategies to meet consumer demand for environmentally responsible products and packaging solutions. The government plays an important role in environmental protection, with an impact on people's attitudes and behaviors towards sustainable practices. Abdul, Abustan, and Karwi (2000) emphasise the need of government intervention alongside industry and finance in creating positive attitudes towards environmental conservation. Government actions and policies can effectively influence consumer behaviour, particularly by encouraging the purchase of environmentally friendly items.

Research Methodology

The sampling process involved several key steps. These steps included defining the population, which encompassed all potential respondents meeting the selection criteria; convenience selection, where individuals were chosen based on their availability and willingness to participate; and data collection, where selected participants were contacted and invited to complete the questionnaire, ensuring voluntary participation and informed consent. This convenience sampling method helps the study gather a variety of consumer attitudes toward eco-friendly packaging, offering valuable insights into what influences these attitudes, even though there may be some selection bias.

Data Analysis

There is a strong positive correlation between Product Characteristics (PC) and Consumer's Attitude Toward Eco-Friendly Packaging (CATEFP) ($r = .538$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that better product characteristics are associated with more positive consumer attitudes. Environmental Concern (EC) shows a very strong positive correlation with Consumer's Attitude Toward Eco-Friendly Packaging (CATEFP) ($r = .721$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher environmental concern is strongly associated with more favorable consumer attitudes. Government Role (GR)

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demonstrates a very strong positive correlation with Consumer's Attitude Toward Eco-Friendly Packaging (CATEFP) ($r = .732, p < 0.01$), suggesting that government involvement positively influences consumer attitudes. There are also significant positive correlations among the independent variables themselves: Product Characteristics (PC) and Environmental Concern (EC) ($r = .588, p < 0.01$); Product Characteristics (PC) and Government Role (GR) ($r = .411, p < 0.01$); and Environmental Concern (EC) and Government Role (GR) ($r = .616, p < 0.01$). These results suggest that all three independent variables have significant positive relationships with the dependent variable, warranting further exploration through regression analysis to understand the predictive power of each factor.

The F-statistic (63.794) is the ratio of the mean square regression to the mean square residual, indicating the model explains a significant amount of the variance in the dependent variable. The significance ($p\text{-value} = .000$) indicates the probability that the observed F-statistic would occur by chance. A $p\text{-value}$ less than 0.05 (in this case, $p < .001$) suggests that the model is statistically significant and that the independent variables collectively have a significant effect on the dependent variable. The ANOVA that the regression model is statistically significant ($F(3, 96) = 63.794, p < .001$), indicating that the independent variables (Product Characteristics, Environmental Concern, Government Role) significantly predict the dependent variable (Consumer's Attitude Toward Eco-Friendly Packaging). This implies that the model explains a significant portion of the variance in consumer attitudes towards eco-friendly packaging.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Consumers in the Colombo District generally have positive attitudes about eco-friendly packaging. This good attitude stems from favorable evaluations of product attributes, increased environmental concern, and supportive government measures. Variations in opinions among demographic groups show that income level is more important than age, gender, or education level in influencing consumer behavior toward sustainable packaging. Emphasizing product characteristics such as quality, durability, and recyclability in eco-friendly packaging designs enhances consumer trust and satisfaction. Increasing consumer awareness about the environmental benefits of eco-friendly packaging and encouraging environmentally conscious purchasing decisions can further bolster positive attitudes. Additionally, continued support from the government through policies, incentives, and regulatory frameworks can sustain consumer interest and adoption of eco-friendly packaging practices.

Promotional Strategies: Create focused campaigns that emphasize the environmental benefits of eco-friendly packaging and its availability in local markets. Use a variety of media outlets, such as commercials, social media, and community events, to reach a large number of consumers and raise awareness. This strategy ensures that the word about the benefits of eco-friendly packaging reaches and understood by a wide range of people. **Product Strategy:** Encourage manufacturers to prioritize innovation in eco-friendly packaging, focusing on functionality, aesthetics, and environmental impact. **Incentives for Manufacturers:** Support for tax incentives and financial support mechanisms to encourage businesses to adopt sustainable packaging practices. Collaborate with industry stakeholders to develop guidelines and standards for eco-friendly packaging certification. These incentives and standards can motivate manufacturers to invest in sustainable packaging innovations and ensure consistency and reliability across products. **Consumer Education:** Launch educational programs targeting schools, communities, and online platforms to educate consumers about recycling practices, environmental benefits, and health implications of eco-friendly packaging. **Behavioral Change Programs:** Implement behavioral change campaigns that promote responsible consumption habits and encourage individuals to choose eco-friendly packaging options. **Environmental Policies:** Support for strong environmental policies that encourage recycling and limit the environmental impact of packaging materials. Collaborate with government agencies and policymakers to strengthen regulatory frameworks that encourage sustainability across industries.

By addressing these recommendations and exploring future research avenues, stakeholders can advance sustainable packaging initiatives, promote consumer engagement, and contribute to environmental conservation efforts in the Colombo District and beyond. This comprehensive approach will support the development of effective strategies that benefit both the environment and the economy.

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