

## **Consumers Buying Trend on No Plastic Bags Campaign at Shopping Mall In Malacca City, Malaysia**

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**ABSTRACT:** A questionnaire of consumers buying trends on no plastic bags campaign at shopping mall in Malacca City (Aeon Mall, Tesco stores and Giant Food Stores) has been used to examine the consumers buying trends and evaluate customers behaviors on this campaign. The results of this study used to improve performance of the related industries and marketers. The study gathers a questionnaire survey from 215 customers and employs a semi-structured interview with the relevant stakeholders. A descriptive statistical analysis as well as correlations analysis has been performed using SPSS version 22. The analysis includes an investigation into how much the consumer's perception on this campaign. The study assumes its own criteria in deciding effectiveness of the campaign. If the person who take plastic bags and pay the levy is 75% or more, then the program can be considered as effective. If the percentage is 50% or only slightly more than 50%, we considered the tax was not very effective. If it is below 50%, the tax is not efficient. Limitations of study observe that can only during a purchase transaction. In this analysis, we did not get to capture motives of consumers in their participations in the program of, "No Plastic Bag". However, the selection of the method of observation reflects actual behavior of consumers in making purchases and thus actual decision involving the use of plastic bags can be directly observed. The study has its limitations. As the method of obtaining data is through observation and survey, some variables represent actual behavior of consumers while some others are information recorded based on observation.

**Keywords:** Buying Trends, Plastic Bag Campaigns, Green Practices, Eco-Friendly Inspiration, Sustainability

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### **I. GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE CAMPAIGN**

The useful life of single – use plastic bag is generally relatively short. The plastic bag has a short useful life, it has a substantial environmental impact. Green product such as product without hazardous materials, energy saving components or recyclable items is very common in the society. There are also individuals who give priority to green product which bears eco-labels during their purchase. One of the more well-known “green” consumer products is Body Shop who claims their products to be non-animal tested with recycling policies.

In conjunction with green marketing concept, it is noted that stakeholders such as government, consumer and business owner are very important for a successful plastic bag reduction implementation. Consumer plays a very important role as their opinion affects another stakeholder which is organization or even government to react on the issue in order to maintain the good reputation in public eyes. Therefore, in order to reduce the usage of plastic bags which are used to pack hot edible items, the perception and practice of the consumer should be studied in order to understand the influencing factors so that strategy can be planned to moderately reduce the usage of plastic bags in Malacca, Malaysia.

These are the plastic bag menace that many Malaysians can identify with. Although they are an undisputed modern day convenience, the clarion calls to do away with plastic bags have echoed around the world for environmental reasons. Several countries have banned the use of plastic bags or levied a tax on them. In Malaysia, the call to ban its use has been mooted now and then with little success. The latest is the Subang Jaya Municipal Council's plastic-free campaign launched last August with a declared aim of turning the Selangor municipality into the first place in the country to eliminate the use of plastic bags by 2010. The public is encouraged to switch to paper bags, biodegradable carriers or their own shopping bags.

### **II. FROM THE BEHAVIORAL PERSPECTIVE**

The prohibition of plastic bag can be classified as an anti-consumption behavior which is defined as a resistant against the culture of consumption and the marketing of mass produced [1]. Plus, the results from the excessive consumption of plastic bag in modern society forced by the wealthier nations or classes that emerge from the anti-consumption behavior [2]. In contrast, anti-consumption behavior has another meaning where it refers to the involvement of consumer emotions such as resentment toward the ban on consumption [3]. Anti-consumption behavior was classified as a consumer rebellion, resistance, boycott, counter-cultural movement, ethical consumption and non-consumption [4]. Both sides of the anti-consumption behavior definition in the

context of plastic bag levy will be explored in this study. It will contribute to the existing study that analyzes the consumer's behavior of plastic bag proscription on national basis [5]. Furthermore, purchasing behavior is influenced by four types of factors: (a) cultural; (b) social; (c) personal and (d) psychological [6]. He highlights that cultural factors strongly influence this type of behavior. Thus, culture is considered to be the main determinant of a person's behavior and desires. Another important factor is consumer subculture. That is, the subdivision into smaller groups with distinct identities and tendencies relating to items such as food, dress and perception. Thus, sub-cultures can even result in the emergence of market segments or niches. Social class also determines behavior. Behavioral differences related to the social class of consumers can be exemplified by dress, conversation and leisure activities, among other factors [6]. However, in order to have a better understanding of consumers, it is important to analyze not only what influences purchasing behavior, but how consumers actually make purchasing decisions.

The used of non-biodegradable plastic bags is one of the significant wastages which contribute to the environmental deterioration. In contrast, plastic bags wastage issues rose up the awareness of public and persuade people to behave green at any aspect, from the working environment to housing. The globe is experiencing environment deterioration caused by over consumption of natural resources as well as the solid waste from certain unrecyclable products such as plastic bags. The environment deterioration often linked with the rapid growth in economic, industrial development and urban lifestyle [7]. In the other words, the rapidity of development and economic growth has increased the solid-waste; consequently, more problems regarding environment deterioration become prominent. While governments and NGOs such as the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) were created to aim to provide future foresee towards the education on environmental protection and evaluation of governmental efforts in environmental for environmentalism [8]. Therefore, green marketing is becoming more important as the challenges and prospective are twofold.

### III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There are two major research objectives for this research based on the current literature on the plastic bags issue in Malaysia. The two major objectives are listed below:

1. To investigate the consumers buying trend when the government implement the campaign on no plastic bags.
2. To explore the perception practices of the consumers on no plastic bags campaign and the impact of this campaign.

### Figures And Tables

**Table 1:** Summary of Respondents' Demographic Profile

Demographic	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	115	53.49
Female	100	46.51
Race		
Malay	54	25.11
Chinese	55	25.58
Indian	58	26.97
Others	48	22.34
Occupation		
Private sector	80	37.20
Government	65	30.23
Unemployed	50	23.25
Others	20	9.32

Respondents' demographics in this study involve participation of visitors or customers of Aeon Mall, Tesco stores and Giant Food Stores in Malacca town. Demographic criteria includes of gender, race, and occupation as stated in Table 1. From the 215 respondents on the participation on no plastic bags campaign, 53.49% are male and 46.51% are female. This means that the awareness among male customers of the stores is relatively high. This awareness may have derived from their character as a leader of the family. Therefore, as a man, they feel responsibility to teach and show a good role to their family especially to their children and wife.

From race criteria, all races recorded slightly difference in percentage by Malay (25.11%), Chinese (25.58%), Indian (26.97%) and others (22.34%). Based on these findings we can see all races realize about the campaign and they willing to join for better life and health of their generation in future. On the other hand, occupation variable showed private sector (37.20%) reflect more to this campaign among others. Some of them might work on handling waste management and energy companies. This reflects them to the green environment and sustainability management concept of life. This also means that the awareness the private sector is relatively high.

From this aspect, the stores participation on no plastic bags campaign in Malacca town can be regarded as high, given that it shows 50%. From the other side of opinion and recommendations, the stores can played a

role on assist in providing more reusable bags and or carriers for free or at minimum price and place them close to the transaction counters to make them more accessible to the customers, the purpose is to reduce their purchase of plastic bags.

Based from the below findings, it can be said that perception and participation of consumers in the campaign is slightly high, given that 69.76% of the customers willingly re-use plastic bags in Table 2. Most of the customers agree to recycle the plastic bags, and some of them throw them away or might a few of them just keep it to save the environment. From the consumers' side, 97.21% said been heard about the campaign of "Dangerous of Plastic Bags and the sources was from family members, friends, TV, radio and newspaper. Given that, 51.16% customers think that the society has enough information about the dangers of plastic bags and they said that the information was sufficient. Besides that, 46.05% that is nearly to half consumers or respondents requires more awareness. This means that, all the stakeholders (sellers, marketers, government and any enforcement body) need to spread more information and approaches to green environment and management.

Furthermore, the results indicate almost all of the respondents which represent 97.67% of total respondents agree to continue to reduce the usage of plastic bag even though the campaign is over. This statement showed that the awareness of the customers towards sustainability environment is very high and they are willing to participate to this campaign well in future for new generation.

**Table 2:** Respondents' Perception on No Plastic Bag Campaign

	Statement (Questions)	% of total respondents
1	<b>Do you re-use plastic bags?</b> Yes No	 69.76 30.24
2	<b>What do you do with your plastic bags?</b> Recycle them Throw them away Others	 43.25 31.16 25.59
3	<b>Have you heard or read about the campaign of "Dangerous of Plastic Bags"?</b> Yes No	 97.21 2.79
4	<b>Are you aware of the effect of using the plastic bags?</b> Yes No	 54.88 45.12
5	<b>What are the sources of your information about the dangerous of plastic bags?</b> Family and friends TV, Radio & Newspaper Others	 45.58 27.91 26.51
6	<b>Do you think that the society has enough information about the dangers of plastic bags?</b> Sufficient Requires more awareness Do not know	 51.16 46.05 2.79
7	<b>How many pieces of plastic bag did you used daily?</b> 1 – 4 5 – 9 More than 10	 52.09 39.07 8.84
8	<b>What can you use as alternative of plastic bag?</b> Reusable bag Paper bag	 53.95 46.05
9	<b>Will you continue to reduce the usage of plastic bag even though the campaign is over?</b> Yes No Not sure	 97.67 0 2.33

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#### IV. CONCLUSION

Plastic waste is a pressing issue, especially in this developing country like Malaysia. Policymakers hope that banning plastic bags will encourage customers to use cloth bags, but whether or not that occurs, the ban itself produces economic and environmental harm [9]. They also said the economic costs are substantial; Banning plastic bags reduces employment; provides an unfair advantage to retailers in one geographic area over another; leads to the theft of store shopping carts and shopping baskets; results in customers using more plastic produce bags (thus undercutting the effect of the ban); increases prices for consumers; decreases profit for producers; and decreases economic activity in the area. Plus, an impartial cost-benefit analysis would be unlikely to justify banning plastic bags.

There are also no environmental benefits to banning plastic bags, but there is potential harm [9]. When compared to cloth bags, plastic bags require less energy to produce and less energy to recycle and produce less municipal waste. Plastic bags generate fewer greenhouse gas emissions and require less water to produce than paper bags. Cloth bags need to be used 104 times before there is any environmental advantage over plastic bags. But most cloth bags are used half that amount. Reusing cloth bags can also lead to cross-contamination and disease. Plastic bags may be an easy target for politicians. However, they are better for the environment than either paper or cloth bags, or many consumers prefer them. Before banning any product policymakers need to conduct a detailed economic and environmental analysis. Unfortunately, in Malacca city and other jurisdictions that have imposed bans or punitive taxes on bags, such studies have not been done. Since banning plastic bags harms both the economy and the environment, the use of plastics bags should be permitted.

For future research directions, it would also be important to see to what extent the peer groups influence consumer behavior in switching from plastic bags to reusable bags. Historically, social interactions have played a significant role in correcting individual behavior for environmental externality problems. Hence, we expect norms and peer group effects to have an important effect on plastic bag usage as well. Our findings on changes in plastic bag usage due to alternative policy interventions would be strengthened by a proper cost-benefit analysis of the reduction in plastic bag consumption, which requires estimating the social cost of plastic bag consumption and the actual costs of alternative instruments. This is undoubtedly fertile ground for future research.

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