



CUSTOMERS' ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS ECO-FRIENDLY TAKE-AWAY FOOD CONTAINERS

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ABSTRACT-----

Business organizations are prodded to wipe out the production, distribution and usage of single use plastic goods such as plastic flags, ice-cream sticks, plastic plates, cups, glasses, forks, spoon, knives, straws, trays and other disposable cutleries that have a high potential to become trash. Despite this fact, one of the industries where the single use plastic is rampant is the restaurant sector. The ban and related measures stimulate the restaurateurs to plummet the usage of single use plastic, which seem to be little difficult as the cost of substitutes are relatively high and their availability is also a worry. This complication can be lightened with the good co-operation from customers, when they become ready to use their own reusable and eco-friendly take away food containers wherever possible. This research paper attempts to determine how customers feel about using reusable and environmentally friendly food containers and how much they are attempting to make use of them, particularly in light of the ban on single-use plastic. Correlation technique is used to calibrate the relationship between customers' attitude and their actual practices. The findings of the study indicate that restaurant patrons have a favourable attitude of environmentally friendly take-out containers. In their real behaviours, this positivism is less apparent. Most of the time, they don't strive to pack food in reusable, environmentally friendly containers. To eradicate the usage of the single use plastic goods, government regulations must be made strong.

KEYWORDS: single use plastic ban, eco-friendly food containers, attitude, behaviour-----

I. INTRODUCTION

Single use plastic is the dreadful material which erodes the quality of natural resources. The government authorities are nudging the business organizations and the customers to reduce the usage of such materials by professing 'single use plastic ban' in the countries. The restaurant business, particularly takeaway shops, is one of the key industries affected by the single-use plastic prohibition. (Shende, Karmarkar and Pandey, 2020). EPS (expanded polystyrene) is the most typical material used to create takeout food containers, a product with a short lifespan that is promptly thrown away and which has a 500-year disintegration rate, has a significant negative impact on the environment and may be a human carcinogen (Barnes, Chan-Halbrendt, Zhang and Abejon, 2011). It is clear that, the new rules will be a blow on food deliveries and take away services, where the restaurateurs are using single use plastic materials as food containers. Notwithstanding, sudden change or shift from single use plastic items to more eco-friendly material is not possible since the cost of substitutes for the plastic food containers are comparatively higher (Shende et.al 2020) and their availability is also a question. This challenge can be tone down, if there is greater support and efforts from the part of restaurant customers. The reason is that, while the retailers are more concerned about the additional expenses, consumers are more concerned about the cleanliness of the containers, safety of the food (Jiang, Dong, He, Shen, Jing, Yang and Guo 2020)) and also they are growing increasingly worried about environmental problems (Yeng and Yazdanifard, 2015). If the customers are ready to carry their own eco-friendly food carriers, wherever possible it will be beneficial for both the restaurateurs and customers. This research paper attempts to study the extent to which customers are utilizing eco-friendly food containers while parcelling food from the restaurants.



II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The time to consider replacing plastic with another excellent substance that will not harm the environment or live animals has passed. Countries are now enforcing strict plastic-reduction policies and practices. Some industries would be impacted by the abrupt ban on plastic because of the high cost of substitution and the lack of substitutes. One of them is the food service industry, particularly restaurants that offer take-out and online meal delivery services. The majority of them rely entirely on single-use plastic goods like food containers.

The widespread use of disposable takeout containers generates a lot of garbage, which has a detrimental influence on the environment (Jiang et.al, 2020). As a result of greater awareness of the high environmental costs of EPS items and their pressure on disposal resources, EPS food container bans are becoming more widespread in governments across the world (Barnes et.al, 2011). Thus it is critical for managers and restaurateurs to find a lasting solution to this problem because takeaway and delivery services are already accounting for a significant amount of their revenue.

For facing this problem in an effective way, the restaurateurs need strong support and co-operation from their customers, as the substitutes of plastic may cost high and the availability of such materials is relatively less. However there are also study results which show that although the environmental effect of product packaging is an important component of product perception, buyers evaluate personal benefits such as convenience against environmental considerations when making purchasing decisions (van Dam and van Trijp, 1994). Consumers do not appear to be bothered by public campaigns against the use of plastic bags, nor by government rules aimed at limiting the use of plastic bags for packing hot foods (Jayaraman, K., Haron, H., Sung, G. B., & Lin, S. K., 2011). It is a fact that customers, restaurants, and OFD (Online Food Delivery) platforms will continue to use SFP (Single use Food Packaging), and the government will be unable to directly monitor restaurant activities (Li, K., Chen, Y., Liu, J., Zhang, L., & Mu, X, 2021). All these study results illustrate that it is the need of the hour to check the attitude of the customers towards reusable and eco-friendly food containers and the extent to which customers are trying to use eco-friendly and reusable food containers, especially in the context of single use plastic ban.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the attitude of customers towards reusable and eco-friendly food containers
2. To analyse the actual behaviour of customers towards reusable and eco-friendly food containers

IV. HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

1. H_1 : There is a positive relationship between customers' attitude and their actual behaviour towards eco-friendly food containers
 H_0 : There is no positive relationship between customers' attitude and their actual behaviour towards eco-friendly food containers

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained using a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire had 3 parts including socio-economic details, attitude towards eco-friendly food containers and actual usage of eco-friendly food containers. The survey was delivered in Kozhikode district of Kerala, specifically including those who live within borders of Kozhikode Corporation and having the habit of parcelling their meals from eateries. The district is chosen for study, because of its fame in respect of restaurants, intense dining out culture and increasing solid waste disposal. The respondents are chosen through purposive sampling method. A total of 120 questionnaires were issued, with 108 proving to be legitimate for the research. The information was gathered during January 2024. The collected data is analysed with the help of SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics and correlation technique has been applied for reaching the results.



VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

1. Reliability Analysis

Cronbach’s Alpha	Number of items
0.662	7

The questionnaire survey consists of 7 items and the value for Chronbach’s Alpha for the survey was 0.66. As it is close to 0.7, the internal consistency is acceptable.

2. Socio-demographic profile of the sample

Table-1. Profile of the Respondents

Particulars	Frequency (N=108)	Percentage
Gender:		
Male	72	66.7
Female	36	33.3
Age in Years:		
Up to 25	20	18.5
26-35	20	18.5
36-45	23	21.3
46-55	19	17.6
Above 55	26	24.1
Educational Qualification:		
SSLC	34	31.5
Plus Two	28	25.9
Graduation	36	33.3
Post-Graduation	10	9.3
Occupation:		
Public Sector	18	16.7
Private Sector	42	38.9
Self Employed	28	25.9
Others	20	18.5
Marital Status:		
Unmarried	30	27.8
Married	75	69.4
Widow	3	2.8
Monthly Income		
Up to 25000	75	69.4
25001-50000	19	17.6
50001-75000	4	3.7
75001-100000	4	3.7
Above 100000	6	5.6

Table 1 shows that nearly 70 % of the respondents are male and rest of them are female. In the age group as well more than 60% are above 36 years and very notably less than 10% of the respondents are post graduates, and around 60% have degrees or other credentials above the SSLC. 69.4 % of respondents are married, and more than 80% of respondents make up to ₹50,000 each month.

3. Descriptive Statistics

Table.2. Descriptive statistics

Particulars	Mean	Std. Deviation
Positive attitude towards eco-friendly food containers	4.03	0.64
Actual usage of eco-friendly food containers	3.11	1.02



The customers’ attitude towards eco-friendly take away food containers are measured using 3 statements in a 5 point Likert scale (1- Strongly Disagree and 5- Strongly Agree). On the other hand, their actual usage eco-friendly take away food containers was measured with the help of 4 statements in 5 point Likert scale (1- Rarely and 5- Always). The table 2 illustrates that the restaurant customers have a positive attitude towards eco-friendly take away food containers with a mean value of 4.03 (S.D ± 0.64). The customers’ actual usage of eco-friendly take away food containers accounts for a mean value of 3.11 (S.D ±1.02) which indicates that the customers take less effort to use their own eco-friendly take away food containers while parcelling food from the restaurants, despite the fact that they are having a positive attitude towards eco-friendly reusable take away food containers.

4. Hypothesis Testing

Table.3. Test Result of Hypothesis 1

Correlation			
		Positive attitude towards eco-friendly food containers	Behaviour towards eco-friendly food containers
Positive attitude towards eco-friendly food containers	Pearson Correlation	1	0.281**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	108	108
Behaviour towards eco-friendly food containers	Pearson Correlation	0.281**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	108	108

The hypothesis proposed that there is a positive relationship between customers’ attitude and behaviour towards eco-friendly food containers. The above table shows that the Pearson’s correlation coefficient is 0.281. Thus it is clear that there is a positive correlation between customers’ attitude and their behaviour towards eco-friendly take away food containers. However, since the correlation coefficient is less than 0.29, the degree of relationship between the variables is noted to be very low.

VII. SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

It is no longer beneficial to use plastic materials particularly the single use plastic products, since they cause drastic impacts on environment and living creatures. The authorities are making strict regulations on environmental conservation and the consumers are also becoming concerned about their health and the health of environment. The present study results also shows that restaurant customers are having a positive opinion about eco-friendly take away food containers. However this positivity is not so visible in their actual practices. Many innocent customers are not aware about negative consequences of the usage of plastic and they are not carrying reusable and eco-friendly food containers or vessels for parcelling the food items.

Simultaneously, single use plastic products including plastic plates, cups, glasses and banned carry bags are being used profusely in the restaurants. The restaurants which use plastic containers for food delivery need to switch their packaging materials from plastic to other eco-friendly materials. Cost is the main reason for the difficulty of switching from plastic to other bio-degradable packages. The new laws should provide plastic substitute manufacturing businesses to come up (Shende et.al, 2020) and compete in the market which will gradually reduce the cost of substitutes.

It is the need of the hour to educate the customers especially those who are parcelling food frequently. District level enforcement directorate should be established and war footing model must be initiated to implement the complete ban of single use plastic items.



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