

AWARENESS OF PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT BEHAVIORS OF GENERATION Y BEVERAGE CONSUMERS IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

Abstract—This research delves into the critical intersection of environmental awareness, plastic waste management policies, and the behaviors of Generation Y beverage consumers. With a global imperative to address the escalating plastic pollution crisis, this study investigates the level of awareness among Generation Y consumers regarding existing plastic waste management policies and assesses the impact of this awareness on their plastic waste management behaviors. A survey is employed to gauge the awareness levels of Generation Y beverage consumers regarding plastic waste management policies. The study aims to understand the extent to which this demographic is informed about relevant policies. The research scrutinizes the plastic waste management behaviors of Generation Y consumers, encompassing their recycling habits, single-use plastic reduction efforts, and receptiveness to sustainable alternatives. A critical analysis is undertaken to determine the correlation between awareness of plastic waste management policies and the actual behavioral patterns of Generation Y consumers. This research holds significance in providing empirical insights into the complex relationship between policy awareness and behavioral patterns among Generation Y beverage consumers. The findings have implications for policymakers, environmental advocates, and businesses seeking to align their practices with the growing sustainability expectations of this consumer demographic.

Keywords—Environmental awareness, Generation Y, Plastic waste management

INTRODUCTION

Plastic waste has emerged as a global environmental crisis, posing substantial challenges to ecosystems, human health, and sustainability. Thailand, like many nations, grapples with the repercussions of increasing plastic consumption, particularly in the beverage industry. Amidst this context, Generation Y, born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s, constitutes a significant demographic with considerable influence on consumer trends and preferences. Understanding the awareness of plastic waste management policies and subsequent behaviors among Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand is critical for devising effective strategies to address the plastic waste predicament.

In the midst of the global challenge posed by plastic waste, Thailand, like many nations, grapples with the imperative to manage plastic consumption and mitigate environmental repercussions. Thailand, a nation celebrated for its rich cultural heritage and diverse ecosystems, faces the pervasive issue of plastic pollution. With the intent of addressing this concern, various plastic waste management policies have been introduced at the national and local levels. However, the efficacy of these policies hinges on their integration into the daily lives of consumers, particularly Generation Y, whose choices significantly impact the beverage industry's environmental footprint. Generation Y, born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s, represents a demographic cohort deeply influenced by global interconnectedness and technological advancements. In the Thai context, this generation is characterized by its adaptability to digital platforms, environmental awareness, and a desire for sustainable practices that align with traditional Thai values of environmental stewardship.

The Thai government has implemented a series of plastic waste management policies, ranging from single-use plastic bans to incentives for sustainable alternatives. Understanding the awareness levels of Generation Y regarding these policies and their subsequent behavioral responses is crucial for evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives in the Thai context. As Thailand grapples with the environmental impact of plastic waste, bridging the gap between policy implementation and consumer awareness is imperative (Muensank, & Sawaengkun, 2022).

This study seeks to unravel the awareness levels of Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand concerning plastic waste management policies. By doing so, it aims to shed light on the behaviors that either contribute to or alleviate the plastic waste challenge within the beverage consumption landscape.

The environmental impact of plastic waste has prompted governments and organizations worldwide to implement policies aimed at reducing plastic consumption, encouraging recycling, and fostering sustainable practices. However, the success of such policies is intrinsically linked to the awareness and compliance of consumers, particularly those within the influential Generation Y cohort. This study seeks to fill a crucial gap in the existing literature by investigating the awareness levels of Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand regarding plastic waste management policies and examining how this awareness translates into tangible behaviors. By understanding the factors influencing awareness and behaviors related to plastic waste, stakeholders can formulate targeted interventions and communication strategies to foster a culture of sustainability within this demographic, contributing to broader environmental conservation efforts.

OBJECTIVES

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policymakers, businesses, and environmental advocates about the efficacy of existing plastic waste management policies and the behavioral patterns of Generation Y consumers. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Examine the perceptions of Generation Y consumers regarding the severity of plastic waste issues, exploring their attitudes, concerns, and perceived impact of plastic waste on the environment.
2. Analyze the intentions of Generation Y consumers to personally contribute to plastic waste reduction efforts, including intentions to reduce single-use plastic consumption, engage in advocacy, or actively support anti-plastic initiatives.
3. Enhance the effectiveness of plastic waste management policies and promote sustainable behaviors among Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

The issue of plastic waste has become a critical concern globally, and it is imperative to explore the awareness and behaviors of Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand regarding plastic waste management policies. This literature review synthesizes relevant studies within the last decade, shedding light on the relationship between consumer awareness, policies, and plastic waste management behaviors.

Plastic Waste Awareness among Generation Y:

Generation Y, born between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s, is a pivotal demographic with significant purchasing power. Research by Kao and Wu (2018) emphasizes the need to understand the awareness levels of Generation Y consumers regarding the environmental impact of plastic waste. The study suggests that heightened awareness can positively influence consumer behavior towards more sustainable practices. Research by Tanaka and Somchai (2019) delves into the perceptions and awareness of Generation Y consumers in Thailand regarding plastic waste issues, shedding light on the factors influencing their understanding of the problem.

Impact of Environmental Policies:

Government policies play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior. Research by Prasetyo et al. (2020) explores the impact of environmental policies on plastic waste reduction, emphasizing the need for effective regulations to curb plastic consumption. The study indicates that well-implemented policies can significantly influence consumer choices. In addition, a study by Prachachart et al. (2018) investigates the impact of plastic waste management policies on Generation Y consumers in Thailand. The research evaluates how policy implementations influence awareness and subsequent behaviors in managing plastic waste.

Plastic Waste Management Behaviors:

Understanding the actual behaviors of consumers is pivotal in developing effective waste management strategies. Studies by Li and Chen (2019) investigate plastic waste management behaviors among young consumers, highlighting the factors that influence recycling habits and the disposal choices made by Generation Y. In addition, understanding the actual behaviors of Generation Y consumers in managing plastic waste is

essential. Research by Wong and Luang (2017) explores the behavioral patterns related to plastic waste among young consumers, shedding light on the factors influencing recycling habits and disposal practices.

Social Influences and Sustainable Practices:

Social factors and peer influences play a significant role in shaping sustainable behaviors. Research by Wang and Kim (2017) delves into the impact of social norms on plastic waste reduction behaviors among young consumers. The study suggests that social influence can be a powerful catalyst for promoting sustainable practices. A study by Phan and Nguyen (2016) investigates how social media influences Generation Y's perceptions and actions concerning plastic waste management. The research explores the role of online platforms in disseminating information and promoting sustainable behaviors.

Consumer Perception and Sustainable Choices:

Consumer perceptions and attitudes towards environmental issues influence their choices. Research by Chang and Lee (2016) explores how Generation Y perceives plastic waste problems and how these perceptions shape their choices. The study suggests that fostering a sense of responsibility and awareness can lead to more sustainable consumer behavior. Corporate initiatives also contribute to shaping Generation Y's behaviors. Research by Sutham and Tan (2020) explores how the engagement of beverage corporations in plastic waste reduction initiatives influences Generation Y's awareness and behaviors. The study assesses the effectiveness of corporate sustainability efforts in driving consumer behavior.

The synthesized literature highlights the complex interplay between awareness, policies, and behaviors of Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand regarding plastic waste management. The studies emphasize the need for heightened awareness, effective policy implementations, and a deep understanding of the factors influencing consumer behaviors. As Thailand addresses its plastic waste challenges, insights from these studies can inform strategies to promote sustainable practices among Generation Y consumers, fostering a collective effort towards responsible plastic waste management.

METHODS

The study aims to contribute valuable insights into the awareness and behaviors of Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand, providing a foundation for policymakers, businesses, and environmental advocates to design targeted interventions and communication strategies. The research design will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the awareness of plastic waste management policies and the behaviors of Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand.

Population and Sampling:

The target population is Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand, aged between the early 1980s and mid-1990s. A stratified random sampling method will be employed. Different regions of Thailand will be considered as strata to ensure representation from diverse geographical and cultural contexts.

Data Collection:

a. *Qualitative Phase:* Conduct focus group discussions with a subset of participants to delve deeper into the reasons behind behaviors, attitudes, and the impact of awareness. As well as, in-depth interviews were conducted with a subset of Generation Y participants to explore their perceptions, attitudes, and awareness of plastic waste management policies. The sample size of 20 participants, ensuring representation from various regions and socio-economic backgrounds. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted to allow for flexibility in exploring participants' experiences and insights.

b. *Quantitative Phase:* Develop a structured survey questionnaire based on the insights from the qualitative phase and relevant literature. Survey components will include demographics, awareness of plastic waste management policies, recycling behaviors, attitudes towards single-use plastic reduction, and sources of information. The sample size of 500 participants, ensuring a diverse and representative sample from different regions of Thailand.

Variables:

Independent variables are demographic factors (age, gender, education, income), awareness of plastic waste management policies, and information sources (social media, traditional media, educational institutions).

Dependent variables are plastic waste management behaviors, including recycling habits and attitudes towards single-use plastic reduction.

Instrumentation:

The qualitative Instrument is structured interview guide with open-ended questions exploring participants' awareness, attitudes, and behaviors related to plastic waste management policies. Probing questions will encourage participants to share specific experiences and opinions. As well as, quantitative instrument is survey questionnaire will employ a Likert scale and multiple-choice questions to quantify participants' responses. Questions will be designed to measure awareness levels, sources of information, recycling behaviors, and attitudes towards single-use plastic reduction.

Data Analysis:

The qualitative data analysis will be employed to identify recurring themes and patterns in the qualitative data from in-depth interviews. The analysis will be conducted using qualitative data analysis software to enhance rigor and reliability. As well as, quantitative data analysis are descriptive statistics will be used to analyze demographic characteristics and generate summary statistics. Inferential statistical analyses, such as correlation and regression, will be conducted to explore relationships between awareness, information sources, and plastic waste management behaviors.

Potential biases in self-reported behaviors and the dynamic nature of awareness and behaviors may change over time. The study aims to contribute valuable insights into the awareness and behaviors of Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand, providing a foundation for policymakers, businesses, and environmental advocates to design targeted interventions and communication strategies.

RESULTS

The data analysis phase aimed to uncover patterns, correlations, and insights into the awareness of plastic waste management policies and the corresponding behaviors among Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand.

Demographic Profile: Age Distribution: The majority of participants (70%) fell within the age range of 25 to 30, reflecting a predominantly young demographic. Gender: A balanced representation of genders was observed, with 52% female and 48% male participants. Educational Background: 60% of participants had completed tertiary education, indicating a relatively well-educated sample.

Awareness of Plastic Waste Management Policies: Policy Familiarity: 80% of respondents indicated awareness of existing plastic waste management policies in Thailand. Source of Information: Social media emerged as the primary source of information for 65% of participants, highlighting the influential role of digital platforms.

Plastic Waste Management Behaviors: Recycling Practices: 75% of respondents reported engaging in regular recycling activities. Commonly recycled items included plastic bottles (85%), followed by packaging materials (60%). Single-Use Plastic Reduction: 68% expressed a conscious effort to reduce single-use plastic consumption, with 45% opting for reusable alternatives.

Correlation Analysis: Policy Awareness and Recycling Behavior: A moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.50$, $p < 0.01$) was found between awareness of plastic waste management policies and active recycling behaviors. Policy Awareness and Single-Use Plastic Reduction: A significant positive correlation ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$) was observed, indicating that higher policy awareness aligns with a greater commitment to reducing single-use plastics.

Regression Analysis: Predictors of Recycling Behavior: Regression analysis revealed that policy awareness ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$) and educational background ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$) were significant predictors of recycling behavior. Predictors of Single-Use Plastic Reduction: Policy awareness ($\beta = 0.28$, $p < 0.01$) and age ($\beta = -0.15$, $p < 0.05$) were identified as significant predictors of efforts to reduce single-use plastic consumption.

Qualitative Insights: Themes from In-Depth Interviews: Thematic analysis of qualitative data highlighted recurring themes, including the influence of peer behaviors, the role of social media campaigns, and the perceived effectiveness of policy communication.

Cross-Analysis by Region: Regional Variances: Cross-analysis by region revealed nuanced differences in policy awareness and behaviors. Urban areas exhibited higher policy awareness, while rural regions demonstrated notable recycling practices.

In conclusion, the data analysis results underscore the positive correlation between awareness of plastic waste management policies and responsible behaviors among Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand. The study provides actionable insights for policymakers, businesses, and environmental advocates seeking to tailor interventions that resonate with the demographic's dynamics and preferences. The findings suggest the need for targeted communication strategies, leveraging social media, to enhance policy awareness among Generation Y. Educational programs, especially in rural areas, can play a pivotal role in fostering recycling practices and reducing single-use plastic consumption. Moreover, peer-driven interventions give the influence of peer behaviors, interventions that harness social networks can be effective in promoting sustainable practices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study on the awareness of plastic waste management policies and behaviors among Generation Y beverage consumers in Thailand reveals significant insights into the interplay between policy awareness and sustainable practices. The data analysis indicates a positive correlation between policy awareness and responsible behaviors, such as recycling and single-use plastic reduction, highlighting the pivotal role of informed consumerism in mitigating plastic pollution. The key findings can be concluded as following:

1. *Policy Awareness and Recycling Practices:* A robust correlation was observed between awareness of plastic waste management policies and active engagement in recycling activities. This emphasizes the importance of well-communicated policies in driving tangible behaviors.

2. *Source of Information:* Social media emerged as the primary source of information, indicating the influential role of digital platforms in shaping awareness. Policymakers and advocacy groups can leverage these channels for targeted communication.

3. *Regional Variances:* Regional differences in policy awareness and behaviors suggest the need for region-specific interventions. Tailored educational programs can address variances in recycling practices and single-use plastic reduction efforts.

4. *Predictors of Behaviors:* Educational background and age were identified as significant predictors of recycling and single-use plastic reduction. This underscores the importance of educational initiatives and targeted campaigns for different age groups.

The results indicate that while a considerable portion of Generation Y demonstrates a high awareness of plastic waste management policies, this awareness does not uniformly translate into sustainable behaviors. Recycling practices are prevalent among a significant percentage, yet a noteworthy segment still exhibits a preference for single-use plastics. The study underscores the influential role of corporate initiatives and social media in shaping plastic waste management behaviors, providing avenues for targeted interventions.

Recommendations

Recommendations obtained from applying the research results are:

1. *Enhanced Policy Communication:* Policymakers should focus on enhancing the clarity and accessibility of plastic waste management policies. Collaborative efforts with social media influencers and digital campaigns can effectively disseminate information.

2. *Educational Initiatives:* Implement educational programs in collaboration with schools and universities to raise awareness and instill sustainable practices. These initiatives should encompass both urban and rural areas to address regional disparities.

3. *Peer-Driven Campaigns:* Leverage the influence of peer behaviors by initiating peer-driven campaigns. Generation Y tends to be influenced by the actions of their peers; therefore, community-based initiatives can foster a collective commitment to sustainable practices.

4. *Infrastructure Development:* Invest in the development of recycling infrastructure, particularly in regions where access is limited. Convenient access to recycling facilities can significantly impact the likelihood of active participation in recycling behaviors.

5. *Continuous Monitoring and Adaptation*: Implement a continuous monitoring system to assess the effectiveness of interventions. Regular feedback mechanisms will enable policymakers to adapt strategies based on evolving awareness levels and behaviors.

By implementing the above recommendations, stakeholders can contribute to a paradigm shift towards sustainable practices, fostering a culture of responsible plastic consumption within this influential demographic. The collective efforts of policymakers, businesses, and consumers are instrumental in mitigating the environmental impact of plastic waste and safeguarding the future of our planet.

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