

BANNING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS: RETAILERS' COMPLIANCE AND ADOPTION OF PLASTIC-FREE ALTERNATIVES IN ANURADHAPURA MUNICIPALITY, SRI LANKA

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Sri Lanka has banned single-use plastics (SUPs) to curb their adverse effects on human health and the environment. However, the response of SUP users to the ban remains unknown, posing a challenge to the effective implementation of the ban. Thus, this study attempts to investigate the SUP-using retailers' awareness, compliance and perception toward banning and intention to use plastic-free alternatives (PFA). A pre-structured questionnaire was utilized to gather primary data from 93 retailers in the Anuradhapura municipality, focusing on retailer's details, awareness, SUP usage and environmental concern (EC), attitude (AT), subjective norm (SN), and perceived behavioural control (PBC) regarding PFAs. Data was analysed using frequency, cross-tabulation, mean statistics and Spearman correlation of SPSS 22 software. Results indicate that retailers run food (46.2%), grocery (32.3%), and fruit/vegetables (21.5%) shops while earning an average monthly income of Rs. 10,000-50,000. Many retailers (>65%) were aware of eight banned SUPs (i.e., drinking straws, stirrers, food containers, plates, cups, spoons, garland, and string hopper trays), yet were unaware of two banned SUPs [i.e., forks (52.7%) and knives (54.8%)]. The banning of SUPs was known to most retailers through television (>50%) and the Central Environmental Authority (>30%). Most retailers (>95%) were compliant with banning stirrers, food containers, forks, and knives, but non-compliant with drinking straws, cups and spoons yet. Regarding PFAs, 44.1% of retailers have used at least one type of PFA, but 55.9% have not used any. Despite retailers having positive EC, AT, SN, and PBC towards the usage of PFAs, they were not significantly ($P>0.05$) varied among users and non-users of PFAs. Concluding retailers' response to the banning of SUPs as positive yet challenging for sustenance, this study provides policy suggestions to tackle SUP usage effectively and thereby minimize the health and environmental consequences of single-use plastics.

Keywords: Plastic alternatives, Retailers' perception, Single-use plastics, Theory of planned behaviour