An Exploration of the Factors Concerned with Reducing the Use of Plastic Carrier Bags in Bangkok, Thailand

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Abstract

This research is an exploratory study to examine the attitude of people in Bangkok, Thailand, towards the reduction in use of plastic shopping bags. The research objective is to provide recommendations for policymakers as well as stakeholders in the public and private sector as to how plastic bag use may be effectively reduced. Key findings are that the four factors of the independent variable 'Use of plastic bags in Bangkok' and four of the demographic variables Gender, Nationality, Age, and Occupation are all significantly related to the dependent variable 'Intention to reduce the use of plastic bags'. Additionally, the study shows that regulatory measures like a plastic bag charge may initially reduce the use of plastic bags; however, the effect may only be short-term due to the minimal cost of the bag compared to the cost of items purchased. A number of alternatives are considered such as the substitution of engineered recycled paper containers and bags. However, the main long-term solution is seen as the promotion of a concern for the environment via waste control and recycling as a personal issue (particularly among children) leading to cultural adjustment rather than promotion of any particular project.

Keywords: plastic bags, recycling, pollution, levy, retail sector, regulatory measures

Introduction

An unprecedented change has taken place in Thailand: its population has risen by 20% since 1990 as a result of an economic boom that has swept across Southeast Asia since the 1980's. GNI per capita has risen by 190% between 2006 and 2014 with Bangkok at the centre of an increase in disposable income and a fast paced modernization. Waste production, increased CO_2 emissions and other forms of environmental pollution have followed as a dark shadow of consumerism (World Bank, 2015). Solid waste generation has continued to rise and currently stands at 15 million tons, furthermore, only a very small fraction of about 20% of this waste is recycled. It is