

С В І Т О В Е Г О С П О Д А Р Т С Т В О

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Alaa Nabeel Al-Heali,

Master's Degree (Economics), Lecturer,
Market Research & Consumer Protection Center,
University of Baghdad, Baghdad (Iraq)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3033-5875>

Wisal Abdullah Husain,

PhD (Economics), Assistant Professor,
Market Research & Consumer Protection Center,
University of Baghdad, Baghdad (Iraq)
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7219-0590>

Mahmud Abdullah Jasim Alkhafaji,

PhD (Food Administration), Assistant Professor,
Market Research & Consumer Protection Center,
University of Baghdad, Baghdad (Iraq)
<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-4903-5181>

THE EXTENT OF IRAQI CONSUMER INTEREST IN ADOPTING THE CONCEPT OF GREEN MARKETING THROUGH THE USE OF PAPER BAGS INSTEAD OF PLASTIC BAGS

The research aims to educate consumers about the dangers of using plastic bags, promote the culture of using paper bags as an alternative, and introduce the concept of green marketing along with the importance of adopting strategies aimed at providing sustainable (environmentally friendly) products. Through their application, waste can be disposed of in a responsible manner that does not harm the environment. Additionally, it seeks to consolidate the principle of green cooperation by encouraging business organizations to contribute to environmental preservation, in line with the slogan launched by the Iraqi Ministry of Health in collaboration with UNICEF: 'Yes to paper bags, no to plastic bags.

Tens of thousands of paper bags were distributed free of charge to many bakeries in various areas of Baghdad. A questionnaire was used as a research tool, with 660 questionnaires distributed to a random sample of consumers in one of the residential areas of Baghdad. The key findings of our research show that 79.1% of respondents strongly agree with the shift towards using paper bags, 88.8% appreciate the importance of living in a clean and healthy environment, and 92% prefer to deal with sellers who use paper bags instead of plastic. Additionally, 88% of respondents support the government's efforts to promote green marketing. Based on these findings, the research recommends issuing legislation and laws that promote green marketing and support the establishment of paper bag factories in both the public and private sectors.

Keywords: *consumer behavior, harmful waste, green marketing, sustainable environment*

JEL classification: *M31, M38, Q51, Q57*

Дослідження спрямоване на те, щоб поінформувати споживачів про небезпеку використання пластикових пакетів, поширити культуру використання паперових пакетів як альтернативи, а також представити концепцію екологічного маркетингу та важливість прийняття його стратегій, спрямованих на надання споживачам екологічно чистих продуктів. Завдяки їх застосуванню відходи можна утилізувати відповідальним способом, який не завдає шкоди навколишньому середовищу, консолідуючи принцип екологічної співпраці шляхом надання пожертв бізнес-організаціям для збереження навколишнього середовища, втілюючи гасло, започатковане Міністерством охорони здоров'я Іраку у співпраці з ЮНІСЕФ під назвою «Так паперовим пакетам, ні поліетиленовим».

Десятки тисяч паперових пакетів були роздані (безкоштовно) багатьом пекарням у кількох районах Багдада. Інструментом дослідження було використано анкету; 660 анкет було роздано випадковій вибірці споживачів в одному з житлових районів Багдада. Найважливішими результатами нашого дослідження є те, що 79,1% респондентів повністю згодні з тенденцією до використання паперових пакетів, 88,8% з них цінують важливість життя в чистому та здоровому середовищі, а 92% вважають за краще мати справу з продавцями, які використовують паперові пакети замість пластикових, 88% з них погоджуються з підходом уряду щодо підтримки ідеї екологічного маркетингу. Тому дослідження рекомендує прийняти законодавство та закони, які сприятимуть екологічному маркетингу та допомагатимуть державному та приватному секторам засновувати фабрики з виробництва паперових пакетів.

Ключові слова: поведінка споживачів, шкідливі відходи, зелений маркетинг, сталі довкілля

JEL classification: M31, M38, Q51, Q57

Introduction

Green marketing is defined as society's adoption of marketing activities committed to preserving and caring for the environment, through dealing with environmentally friendly goods [1]. It is also known as the organized process aimed at influencing consumer preferences and reforming them towards requesting goods that are not harmful to the environment to preserve the environment [3]. Al-Bakri and Marinova, defined green marketing as one of the indicators of the environmental sustainability process because the sustainability process is a complex social process for resolving and eliminating dissonance between institutions and customers [9]. Green marketing can also be defined as a marketing mix that includes the processes of developing, pricing, promoting, and distributing products in a way that does not harm the environment [12].

The concept of green marketing has emerged in response to the deterioration of environmental conditions caused by industrial pollutants and harmful substances that affect both the environment and consumer health. It serves as an alternative approach, urging business organizations to promote environmentally friendly goods with

the goal of protecting consumers by ensuring a safe and healthy living environment free from disease [8, 4]. This involves analyzing the impact of marketing activities on the environment and encouraging changes in consumer behavior toward environmental protection [15].

Plastic bags are among the materials that cause significant harm to the environment. Their danger lies in their inability to decompose for long periods – often hundreds of years – due to their composition from petroleum derivatives that are harmful to the environment [10]. This adds to the growing environmental problems that Iraq faces, such as desertification and soil salinization [14]. Therefore, promoting the replacement of plastic bags with paper ones is a purposeful and systematic process that aims to influence consumer preferences, encouraging them to choose environmentally friendly products (such as paper bags). This approach seeks to reform consumption habits in alignment with environmental protection, while also ensuring the availability of green products that meet this demand. The ultimate goal is to preserve the environment, protect consumers, and support the company's profitability [5]. Any activity aimed at creating a positive

impact or eliminating the negative impact of a particular product on the environment and the consumer can be classified as green marketing [13].

The importance of green marketing lies in satisfying consumer needs and achieving safety in providing environmentally friendly products. It also involves managing operations in a socially acceptable way, improving the organization's reputation, and gaining profits and competitive advantage by focusing on producing safe goods that do not harm the environment [1,7].

The application of the green marketing concept is based on four main dimensions [11, 1]:

1. Eliminating or reducing the concept of waste by focusing on designing and producing goods with little to no waste, rather than on how to dispose of it. This involves improving the efficiency of production processes, with the key objective being how to produce goods without generating waste.

2. Reshaping the concept of the product by keeping production technologies in line with environmental commitments. This involves relying primarily on environmentally friendly raw materials and minimizing their use. Additionally, products should be designed for recycling after consumer use, enabling their return to the factory where they can be disassembled and reintegrated into the production cycle within a closed-loop system. Packaging should also utilize recyclable and eco-friendly materials.

3. Clarity of the relationship between price and cost. The price of the product must reflect its true cost or be close to it. This means that the price of the commodity is the true cost to the consumer and must be equal to the value they obtain from the commodity, including the added value resulting from the product being green [6].

4. Making environmental orientation profitable. Many organizations have realized that green marketing represents a market opportunity that provides a competitive and sustainable advantage. However, most organizations still compete in the market to achieve quick profits, often regardless of the negative effects on the environment.

Anyone who studies market competition realizes that this is considered a strategic competitive advantage that can propel an organization into a different type of competition, especially with the growing environmental awareness among consumers and their gradual transformation into green consumers. One of the advantages of this strategic approach is that both official and unofficial bodies naturally and continuously promote environmental trends through various media outlets. This includes free assistance and support from these parties for the promotional efforts of organizations that adopt the concept of green marketing. As a result, this trend will be profitable, especially in the long term.

In general, the application of green marketing has expanded to include both consumer and industrial goods and services, as it focuses on studying the positive and negative aspects of marketing activities related to pollution and the depletion of energy and resources. It encompasses all activities designed to generate and facilitate exchanges aimed at meeting human needs, ensuring that these needs and desires are fulfilled with minimal harmful impact on the natural environment [10,2].

Marketing strategy for paper bags as a green, environmentally friendly product

The green marketing strategy for paper bags can be divided into several categories [10]:

1. Green product strategy: Introducing consumers to the importance of using paper bags as an environmentally friendly alternative, aiming to reduce the depletion of natural resources and preserve the environment.

2. Green pricing strategy: The successful implementation of the green marketing strategy for paper bags requires that their prices be accessible to consumers. Additionally, government support is essential for producing these bags and making them available in local markets by encouraging and supporting investors to establish paper bag production projects.

3. Green distribution strategy: The goal is to distribute paper bags as an

environmentally friendly product to stores, ensuring that the distribution process itself does not harm the environment.

4. Green promotion strategy: This strategy aims to raise consumer awareness about the importance of using paper bags as an eco-friendly alternative, helping to sustain the environment by reducing the harm caused by plastic bags.

Research problem

To what extent have Iraqi consumers adopted the concept of green marketing by using paper bags as an alternative to plastic bags, which are harmful to both the environment and consumer health?

Research hypothesis

Iraqi consumers possess sufficient awareness to adopt the concept of green marketing by using paper bags as an alternative to plastic bags, which are harmful to both the environment and consumer health.

Research Importance

The importance of the research lies in preserving the environment and rationalizing the use of natural resources by adopting the concept of green marketing and using paper bags instead of plastic bags, which are harmful to both the environment and consumers.

Research aims

1. To identify the concept of green marketing and its importance.

2. To assess the extent to which Iraqi consumers have adopted the concept of green marketing by using paper bags as an alternative to plastic bags, which are harmful to both the environment and consumers.

Materials & methods

The aim of the research is to analyze the behavior of Iraqi consumers to determine the extent of their interest in adopting the concept of green marketing by using paper bags instead of plastic bags. To achieve this, a survey/questionnaire was used as the research tool.

The questionnaire was created and distributed to Iraqi consumers in Baghdad during the period from January to June 2023. The reliability and validity of the study tool were verified using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with the reliability and validity ratio reaching 0.85.

Data analysis

In this study, descriptive statistical analysis was used to analyze demographic information and responses from consumers regarding the adoption of green marketing through the use of paper bags instead of plastic bags. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS) program (2012) to examine the required relationships according to the objectives of the study. For the independent factors and items within the consumer behavior axis included in the questionnaire (the extent of the Iraqi consumer's interest in adopting green marketing by using paper bags instead of plastic bags), significant differences between the rates for each measure were compared using the Least Significant Difference (LSD) test and the T-test. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation for each item were calculated by multiplying the number for each answer by the corresponding score based on importance: Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1, and then dividing by 660, which represents the total sample size.

Results and discussion

Demographic information of research sample

The research was conducted on a sample of consumers in Baghdad, with a total of 660 participants. The questionnaire was distributed electronically. Below is a table showing the characteristics of the research sample (Table 1).

Table 1 shows the distribution of the study sample members based on personal variables. Regarding gender, the majority of the sample is male, constituting approximately 88.93%, while females make up the smallest proportion at 11.07%. In terms of age, the largest group is those aged 31-35 years, representing 20.60%, while the smallest group is those under 20 years old, comprising 1.81%. The largest portion of the sample holds a bachelor's degree, accounting for 62.88%, while the postgraduate category represents the smallest percentage, at 17.27%. In terms of residence, the largest proportion of respondents live in the suburbs of Baghdad (55%), followed by

Table 1

Distribution of the sample according to personal information

Demographic info.	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Males	587	88.93
Females	73	11.07
Age		
Less than 20 years	12	1.81
21 -25 years	68	10.30
26-30 years	115	17.42
31-35 years	136	20.60
36-40 years	92	13.93
41-45 years	95	14.39
46-50 years	59	8.93
51-55 years	39	5.90
56-60 years	28	4.24
More than 61 years	16	2.42
Academic Certification		
Preparatory school	131	19.85
Bachelor's	415	62.88
Postgraduate	114	17.27
Address		
Baghdad / Al-Karkh	159	24.09
Baghdad/Al-Rusafa	138	20.91
Outskirts of Baghdad	363	55
Monthly income		
Good	153	23.18
Average	405	61.37
Poor income	102	15.45
Marital status		
Married	507	76.82
Single	146	22.12
Divorced/widowed	7	1.06
Work		
Government employee	346	52.42
Free business	267	40.45
No work	47	7.12

residents of Al-Karkh (24.09%) and Rusafa (20.91%). Regarding monthly income, the largest percentage of the sample falls within the «average» income category at 61.37%, while the «poor» income category makes up the smallest proportion at 15.45%.

The percentage of married individuals was the highest, reaching 76.82%, while the lowest percentage was for divorced/widowed individuals, at 1.06%. This is likely because married individuals are

generally more concerned with consumption and shopping due to their responsibility for the family. The largest percentage of respondents were government employees, at 52.42%, while the smallest percentage was for the unemployed group, which accounted for 7.12%.

It can be observed from the data in Table 2, which includes frequency distributions, percentages, arithmetic means, and standard deviations of the research variables, that:

Table 2

Frequency distributions, percentages, and standard deviation of the Iraqi consumer behavior variable for the extent of adoption of the green marketing concept

Questions		5	4	3	2	1	mean	std	%
1. Choosing paper bags means that these bags are environmentally friendly and maintain environmental cleanliness	frq	522	111	24	2	1	4.7	0.8	94
	perc	79.1	16.8	3.6	0.3	0.2			
2. You have health and environmental awareness of the importance of preserving health and the environment from pollution	frq	519	127	13	1	0	4.8	0.3	96
	perc	78.6	19.2	2	0.2	0			
3. Government policies support the green marketing philosophy by supporting the use of paper bags	frq	416	129	62	34	19	4.3	1.2	86
	perc	63	19.5	9.4	5.2	2.9			
4. Respect all efforts that seek to preserve health and the environment through the use of paper bags	frq	540	101	14	5	0	4.8	0.3	96
	perc	81.8	15.3	2.1	0.8	0			
5. She advises others to use paper bags to preserve health and the environment	frq	499	122	34	5	0	4.7	0.5	94
	perc	75.6	18.5	5.1	0.9	0			
6. Appreciates the importance of living in a clean, healthy environment	frq	586	65	7	2	0	4.9	0.4	98
	perc	88.8	9.8	1.1	0.3	0			
7. Respect the laws and regulations aimed at preserving health and the environment.	frq	551	96	9	4	0	4.8	0.6	96
	perc	83.5	14.5	1.4	0.6	0			
8. You can change your allegiance to plastic bags and use paper bags for health and environmental reasons	frq	513	120	23	2	2	4.7	0.8	94
	Perc	77.7	18.2	3.5	0.3	0.3			
9. I would like to deal with a seller who uses paper bags to preserve health and the environment	Frq	445	147	61	6	1	4.6	0.4	92
	perc	67.4	22.3	9.2	0.9	0.2			
10. I always think about the effects on health and the environment when using harmful plastic bags	frq	440	149	57	11	3	4.5	0.9	90
	perc	66.6	22.6	8.6	1.7	0.6			
11. Government support for the use of paper bags encourages you to adopt them.	frq	418	142	68	24	8	4.4	1.0	88
	perc	63.3	21.5	10.3	3.6	1.3			
12. Environmental awareness campaigns are of great benefit in increasing the health and environmental awareness of the Iraqi consumer	frq	425	165	49	16	5	4.5	0.8	90
	perc	64.4	25	7.4	2.4	0.8			
13. The Iraqi consumer is aware of the health and environmental risks resulting from the use of plastic bags	frq	237	127	154	102	40	3.6	1.4	72
	perc	35.9	19.2	23.3	15.5	6.1			
14. The Iraqi consumer has initial knowledge about the health and environmental value of using paper bags	frq	222	113	166	117	42	3.5	1.4	70
	perc	33.6	17.1	25.2	17.7	6.4			
15. The Iraqi consumer is greatly concerned with health and environmental aspects	frq	204	100	176	130	50	3.4	1.4	68
	perc	30.9	15.1	26.7	19.7	7.6			
Average		6537	1814	917	461	171			
		435.8	120.9	61.1	30.7	11.4			
	perc	66.0	18.3	9.3	4.7	1.7			

1. The highest percentage of sample members strongly agree that choosing paper bags means these bags are environmentally friendly and maintain environmental cleanliness, with their percentage reaching 79.1%. Only 0.2% strongly disagreed, and these answers had an arithmetic mean of 4.7, with a standard deviation of 0.8.

2. We find that 78.6% of the sample members strongly agree that the Iraqi consumer has health and environmental awareness regarding the importance of preserving health and the environment from pollution, while 0.2% of them disagree. This indicates that most Iraqi consumers have good health and environmental awareness.

These responses had a mean of 4.8 and a standard deviation of 0.3.

3. The highest percentage of sample members strongly agree (63%), and 19.5% agree that government policies support the green marketing philosophy by promoting the use of paper bags. This is attributed to their having sufficient health awareness. These responses had an arithmetic mean of 4.3 and a standard deviation of 1.2.

4. The highest percentage (81.8%) of the research sample members strongly agree with respecting all efforts that seek to preserve health and the environment through the use of paper bags, while 0.8% do not agree with that. These responses had an arithmetic mean of 4.8 and a standard deviation of 0.3.

5. In the sample study, 75.6% agree that they advise others on the importance of using paper bags to preserve health and the environment, while 0.9% do not. These responses had an arithmetic mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of 0.5.

6. We find that 88.8% of the research sample members appreciate the importance of living in a clean, healthy environment, while 0.3% do not agree with that. These responses had an arithmetic mean of 4.9 and a standard deviation of 0.4.

7. The highest percentage of individuals in the research sample, which amounted to 83.5%, respect the laws and regulations aimed at preserving health and the environment, while 0.6% of the sample do not respect the laws and regulations related to preserving health and the environment. These responses had an arithmetic mean of 4.8 and a standard deviation of 0.6.

8. In the sample study, 77.7% strongly agree that it is possible to change their loyalty to plastic bags and use paper bags for health and environmental reasons, while 0.3% strongly disagree with that. These responses had an arithmetic mean of 4.7 and a standard deviation of 0.8.

9. We find that 67.4% of the study sample prefer to deal with a seller who uses paper bags to preserve health and the environment, while 0.2% strongly disagree. This indicates that there is awareness among Iraqi consumers regarding the use of the green

marketing concept. These responses had a mean of 4.6 and a standard deviation of 0.4.

10. We find that 66.6% of the study sample strongly agree and 22.6% agree that they always think about the effects on health and the environment when using plastic bags that are harmful to both. Meanwhile, 0.6% strongly disagree. These responses had an arithmetic mean of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 0.9.

11. In the sample study, 63.3% strongly agree that government support for the use of paper bags encourages them to adopt and use them continuously, and 21.5% agree, while 1.3% disagree and 3.6% strongly disagree. These responses had a mean of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 1.0.

12. We find that 64.4% of the study sample strongly agree that environmental awareness campaigns are highly beneficial in increasing the health and environmental awareness of the Iraqi consumer, and 25% agree, while 0.8% disagree and 2.4% strongly disagree. These responses had a mean of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 0.8.

13. We find that 35.9% of the research sample strongly agree that the Iraqi consumer is aware of the health and environmental risks associated with the use of plastic bags, and 19.2% agree. Meanwhile, 6.1% disagree and 15.5% strongly disagree with this statement. These responses yielded an arithmetic mean of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 1.4.

14. In the study sample, 33.6% strongly agree that the Iraqi consumer has initial knowledge about the health and environmental value of using paper bags, and 17.1% agree. Meanwhile, 6.4% disagree and 17.7% strongly disagree. These responses yielded a mean of 3.5 and a standard deviation of 1.4.

15. We find that 30.9% and 15.1% of the study sample strongly agree and agree, respectively, that the Iraqi consumer cares greatly about health and environmental aspects, while 7.6% disagree and 19.7% strongly disagree. This indicates a need to increase the awareness of the Iraqi consumer regarding health and environmental issues. These responses had an arithmetic mean of 3.4 and a standard deviation of 1.4.

The results of Table 3 show that the arithmetic mean for the variable measuring

Table 3

Results of the t-test (one-sample) and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the answers of the study sample members to the extent that Iraqi consumer has adopted the concept of green marketing

Variance			Degree of freedom	Evaluation	standard deviation	Arithmetic average	Questionnaire paragraphs
	Calculated F value	t value					
1.795	4.603 *	6.339	26	69.42	1.34 0.524	3.40 3.45	

Iraqi consumer adoption of the concept of green marketing through the use of paper bags instead of plastic bags was 3.45, which is higher than the hypothesized mean value of 3. This indicates a high level of response from the participants toward this variable. The standard deviation of 0.524 reflects a strong level of agreement among the respondents and a low degree of response variability, confirming the sample's awareness of the health and environmental importance of using paper bags instead of plastic ones, as well as their appreciation for legislation and regulations that contribute to protecting public health. Therefore, they are willing to engage with sellers who use paper bags instead of plastic and also support green marketing campaigns initiated by the government, recognizing that such efforts play a key role in raising consumer awareness of this important issue.

Conclusion

1. The highest percentage of individuals in the research sample value living in a clean and healthy environment, demonstrating that the Iraqi consumer possesses a strong awareness of the importance of preserving health and protecting the environment from pollution.

2. Choosing paper bags is recognized as an environmentally friendly option that helps maintain cleanliness. Most respondents also encourage others to use paper bags to support health and environmental sustainability.

3. The Iraqi consumer shows awareness of the health and environmental risks associated with plastic bags and has preliminary knowledge of the benefits of using paper bags from both health and environmental perspectives.

Recommendations

1. Conduct environmental awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of green marketing and enhance consumer awareness of the health and environmental hazards associated with plastic bags.

2. Support the government in adopting green marketing by providing paper bags at affordable prices and mandating store and shop owners to use them as an alternative to plastic bags, which are harmful to health and the environment.

3. Encourage the private sector to invest in and adopt paper bag manufacturing projects.

4. Use promotions and advertisements to increase consumer demand for environmentally friendly products and encourage the use of sustainable alternatives.

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Alaa Nabeel Al-Heali, University of Baghdad, Baghdad (Iraq).

E.mail: alaanabeelal@mracpc.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Wisal Abdullah Husain, University of Baghdad, Baghdad (Iraq).

E.mail: wesalab@mracpc.uobaghdad.edu.iq

Mahmud Abdullah Jasim Alkhafaji, University of Baghdad, Baghdad (Iraq).

E.mail: mahmud@mracpc.uobaghdad.edu.iq

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