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Research Article

Assessing the Effects of Plastic Bans on Businesses in Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the repercussions of the ban on Plastic Bags Business in Cabanatuan City, aiming to define respondent profiles, highlight encountered issues, evaluate business aspects, and propose strategies to address the ban's impact. It seeks to understand the ban's effect on sales/profits and weighs the advantages and disadvantages of plastic bag use. Utilizing a questionnaire, the researcher surveyed ten respondents across two public markets in Cabanatuan City. The focus encompassed problems faced, delving into marketing, financial, and socio-environmental aspects. Findings suggest that despite the ban, plastic bag owners perceive their business as profitable. They attribute this profitability to the perceived greater utility of plastic bags compared to alternative eco-friendly options. The study's significance lies in shedding light on the ban's impact on business operations and financial viability. It emphasizes the perceived profitability of plastic bag sales despite the ban, challenging assumptions about the ban's detrimental effects on business. In essence, the study examines how the ban affects the Plastic Bags Business in Cabanatuan City, underlining the resilience of plastic bag sales despite the prohibition. The insights gained could inform policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders about the complexities and nuances surrounding such bans and their actual impact on businesses and the environment.

Keywords: Ban, Litter, Plastic bags, Policy

Introduction

The plastic bag business stands as a testament to the adaptability and persistent demand within consumer markets. These ubiquitous carriers, fashioned from thin, flexible plastic film or nonwoven fabric, have entrenched themselves in our daily lives. Their profitability

hinges on their multifaceted utility: they serve as reliable containers for a myriad of goods—ranging from groceries and produce to powders and waste—offering convenience and practicality in various spheres of life.

The plastic pollution crisis is considered transboundary in nature as it involves various

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countries and territories. From the production side, a report from the Ellen MacArthur Foundation has projected that plastic production (which often transpires in Global North countries) will continue to increase 25-billion-metric-ton mark in 2050. This is projected to happen despite the fact that historical wastes are still a problem. Further, according to estimates, only 9% of the plastics that have ever been produced is recycled while 79% accumulates in landfills, or worse, gets leaked into the environment.

Their durability and reusability are key factors contributing to their enduring popularity. Unlike their paper counterparts, plastic bags withstand repeated use, making them a preferred choice for many consumers. This resilience has shielded the plastic bag business from complete prohibition impacts, with a significant portion of the populace displaying a consistent willingness to procure them, even amidst regulatory constraints.

Yet, beneath their convenience lies a contentious environmental issue. The dichotomy between biodegradable and non-biodegradable variants raises concerns about their ecological impact. While biodegradable plastic bags promise a more environmentally friendly alternative, the pervasive use of non-biodegradable ones poses threats to ecosystems, contributing to pollution and harming wildlife.

The recent surge in plastic bag bans, such as those implemented in Cabanatuan City, has brought forth a pivotal challenge for stakeholders in this industry. Business owners are confronted with the imperative to navigate a changing landscape, balancing consumer preferences, environmental concerns, and compliance with regulations.

The plastic bag business, characterized by its profitability and intricate interplay with consumer habits, environmental considerations, and regulatory frameworks, stands at a critical juncture. The evolving dynamics surrounding these carriers necessitate a nuanced understanding of their impact on industries, communities, and the environment they coexist within.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research, as outlined by McCombes (2023) aims to accurately and systematically describe a population, situation or phenomenon. It can answer *what, where, when* and *how* questions, but not *why* questions. It thrives on amassing measurable data that fuels statistical inferences pertaining to the target audience. Through this approach, closed-ended questions prevail, constraining the depth of unique insights. However, when wielded effectively, descriptive research unveils the power to assist organizations in precisely defining and quantifying significant aspects concerning a group of respondents and the broader population they represent.

Widely embraced across various industries, descriptive research emerges as the go-to methodology due to its efficacy in gauging the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of targeted groups on specific subjects. Its utility extends beyond surface-level scrutiny; the data gleaned serves as a foundation for longitudinal trend analysis and facilitates more sophisticated data interpretations, including segmentation, benchmarking, and employing diverse statistical techniques.

This method, while fundamental, plays a pivotal role in not only illuminating immediate insights but also in empowering organizations to harness the depth and breadth of gathered information for strategic decision-making, refined market understanding, and the crafting of tailored solutions aligned with the evolving needs of the target audience.

Results and Discussions

Profile of the Respondents

Table 1.1 displays a breakdown of respondent data categorized by age groups. Notably, the age bracket of 41-50 years emerged as the most represented, comprising 40% of the respondents, accounting for 4 out of 10 participants. Following closely, the age group of 51-60 years constituted the second-largest segment, encompassing 30% of the respondents, equivalent to 3 out of 10 individuals. The 31-40 years category secured the third-highest representation, encompassing 20% or 2 out of 10

respondents. Remarkably, the 61-70 years bracket exhibited the lowest percentage of respondents, accounting for 10% or 1 out of 10 participants. This distribution highlights a predominant presence of respondents within the middle-aged categories, suggesting a

substantial demographic with a notable capacity to engage actively in the subject matter, potentially signifying a significant portion with the capability and inclination to participate actively or contribute effectively within the study.

Table 1.1 Age

No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	31-40	2	20%
2	41-50	4	40%
3	51-60	3	30%
4	61-70	1	10%
	Total	10	100%

Table 1.2 Gender

No.	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	1	10%
2	Female	9	90%
	Total	10	100%

Table 1.2 provides a gender-based breakdown of the respondents. Notably, the data indicates a striking gender disparity, with 90% of the respondents being female, constituting 9 out of 10 participants. In contrast, males represented a mere 10%, accounting for 1 out of 10 respondents. This gender skew suggests a noteworthy inclination of females towards

engagement or involvement in the plastic bag business, showcasing a considerable female demographic's active participation or interest within this sphere. Understanding such gender disparities can offer valuable insights into the market dynamics and consumer behavior, potentially informing targeted strategies or tailored approaches within this industry.

Table 1.3 Number of years in Business

No.	Number of years in Business	Frequency	Percentage
1	1-5 years	1	10%
2	6-10 years	7	70%
3	11-15 years	1	10%
4	16-years above	1	10%
	Total	10	100%

Table 1.3 delineates the distribution of respondents based on their tenure in the business. Evidently, the predominant segment, comprising 70% of the respondents, exhibited a tenure within the range of 6-10 years. This substantial majority underscores that a significant portion of the respondents possessed a notable level of experience and tenure within the business sphere. This data suggests that the

surveyed individuals were largely established within their respective ventures, indicating a seasoned and experienced cohort rather than newcomers to the business landscape. Such insight underscores the potential wealth of knowledge and expertise present among the respondents, potentially influencing their decision-making processes and industry-specific insights.

Business Aspect*Table 2.1 Marketing Aspect*

No.	Marketing Aspect	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	It is easy to sell plastic bag.	4.50	Strongly Agree
2	More consumers prefer to use plastic bag than other shopping bags.	4.20	Agree
3	Plastic bag is saleable	4.20	Agree
4	Customers wants plastic bag because plastic bag can carry a heavy products.	4.0	Agree
5	Plastic bag is inexpensive.	4.10	Agree
6	Plastic bag is convenient.	3.70	Agree
Total Weighted Mean		4.10	Agree

In Table 2.1, the marketing aspect of the business is depicted, revealing an average weighted mean of 4.10 and a verbal interpretation categorized as "agree." This assessment implies a positive sentiment regarding the marketing strategies employed by the business. The average weighted mean, falling within the "agree" category, signifies a favorable perception among respondents regarding the effectiveness or success of the business's marketing endeavors. Such a rating infers that the

business's marketing efforts are deemed satisfactory by the surveyed individuals, indicating a level of effectiveness in attracting customers, promoting products, or enhancing brand visibility. This positive evaluation strongly suggests that the marketing strategies in place contribute significantly to the business's overall profitability, reflecting a commendable alignment between marketing initiatives and consumer engagement or acquisition.

Table 2.2 Financial Aspect

No.	Financial Aspect	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	Plastic bag business is profitable	4.30	Strongly Agree
2	The business is a primary source of family income	4.00	Agree
3	The business income can pay rental, utilities, and wages of the workers.	4.30	Strongly Agree
4	The owners can support the needs of their family financially	3.80	Agree
Total Weighted Mean		4.10	Agree

In Table 2.2, the Financial Aspect of the business is presented, showcasing an average weighted mean of 4.10 and a verbal interpretation categorized as "agree." This depiction strongly suggests that the plastic bag business maintains a robust financial standing, capable of sustaining itself to cover essential expenditures such as rentals, utilities, and employee wages. Moreover, it implies that the business generates adequate revenue to support the financial needs of the workers' families. The recorded average weighted mean, falling within

the "agree" range, serves as a testament to the business's financial viability and stability. This positive evaluation highlights the profitability and financial health of the plastic bag enterprise, affirming its capacity to generate income sufficient for operational costs and to cater to the livelihood requirements of its workforce. Such financial stability is pivotal, ensuring the sustainability and resilience of the business amidst operational challenges and market fluctuations.

Table 2.3 Socio Environment Aspect

No.	Socio Environment Aspect	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	Plastic bag is bio-degradable.	3.40	Moderately Agree
2	Plastic bag is useful.	3.90	Agree
3	Plastic bag is recyclable.	3.80	Agree
4	The business provides employment.	3.90	Agree
Total Weighted mean		3.75	Agree

Table 2.3 outlines the Socio-Environmental Aspect condition, reflecting an average weighted mean of 3.75 with a verbal interpretation categorized as "agree." This portrayal suggests that the profitability of the plastic bag business is influenced by its positive socio-environmental attributes. Notably, the emphasis on the biodegradability and utility of plastic bags contributes significantly to this agreement. The recorded average weighted mean falling within the "agree" range signifies a favorable sentiment among respondents regarding the positive socio-environmental charac-

teristics associated with plastic bags. This implies that the acknowledgment of the biodegradability and usefulness of plastic bags serves as a pivotal factor contributing to the sustained profitability of the business. Understanding and acknowledging the socio-environmental advantages of plastic bags, particularly their biodegradable nature and practical utility, underpin the positive perception of the business's viability. Such recognition highlights the crucial role of eco-friendly attributes in bolstering the profitability and sustainability of the plastic bag industry.

Problems Encountered

Table 3.1 Marketing Aspect

No.	Marketing Aspect	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	The demand is decreasing because of the plastic bag ban.	3.50	Agree
2	Stiff competition.	3.60	Agree
3	Lack of resources (people/time).	3.00	Moderately Agree
Total Weighted mean		3.60	Agree

Table 3.1 delves into the encountered challenges within the marketing aspect, reflecting an average weighted mean of 3.60 and being verbally interpreted as 'agree.' This data suggests that the most prevalent issue faced by the

plastic bag business in Cabanatuan City is a constrained demand due to prohibition or restriction, indicating a significant obstacle in the market for these products.

Table 3.2. Financial Aspect

No.	Financial Aspect	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	Profit decrease because of the prohibition.	3.70	Agree
2	Decrease in sales.	3.70	Agree
3	Proper handling of money/income.	3.40	Moderately Agree
Total Weighted mean		3.60	Agree

In Table 3.2, the financial aspect's challenges are outlined, reflecting an average weighted mean of 3.60, categorized as 'agree.'

This data interpretation indicates that the financial hurdles faced by the plastic bag business in Cabanatuan City significantly impact

sales. Specifically, the status of plastic bag usage in the city seems to have contributed to a decline in sales, elucidating a noteworthy

factor affecting the financial performance of the business.

Table 3.3 Socio Environment Aspect

No.	Socio Environment Aspect	Weighted mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	Use of plastic bag can cause pollution that affects animals and humans.	4.40	Strongly Agree
2	Plastic bag is one of the causes of calamity, liked flood because of the blocking in the drainages.	4.90	Strongly Agree
3	Plastic releases toxins when burned.	4.20	Strongly Agree
Total Weighted mean		4.50	Strongly Agree

Table 3.3 highlights the socio-environmental challenges confronting the business, registering an average weighted mean of 4.50 and falling within the 'strongly agree' category. This data unveils a critical perception: the widespread consensus indicates that the utilization of plastic bags poses substantial harm to both the environment and the health of consumers, especially when used regularly. This heightened concern over the detrimental effects underscores a pivotal issue impacting the socio-environmental aspects associated with the plastic bag business operations in Cabanatuan City.

Conclusions

Based on the summary of findings the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Female individuals tend to show a greater preference or inclination towards the use of plastic bags within the realm of business.
2. Regular use of plastic bags poses dual risks, impacting both the environment and the health of customers adversely.
3. Despite environmental concerns, the profitability of plastic bags persists due to their perceived biodegradability and practicality in everyday use.
4. Plastic bags continue to be marketable, generating adequate revenue to cover expenses such as rent, utilities, employee wages, and provide financial support for workers' families
5. The decline in plastic bag sales is attributed to the changing status of plastic bag usage within Cabanatuan City.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Considering the observed inclination of female individuals towards the use of plastic bags in business settings, it might be beneficial to conduct targeted marketing campaigns or offer eco-friendly alternatives. Providing reusable or biodegradable bag options could attract a wider customer base and align with sustainability efforts, potentially enhancing business appeal and environmental responsibility.
2. Given the dual risks associated with regular plastic bag use—environmental impact and potential health concerns—it's advisable to gradually transition towards eco-friendly alternatives. Implementing policies encouraging reusable or biodegradable bag usage not only promotes environmental conservation but also demonstrates a commitment to customer well-being, fostering a positive brand image and contributing to a healthier, more sustainable future.
3. While acknowledging the perceived biodegradability and convenience of plastic bags, it's crucial to address their actual environmental impact. To balance profitability and sustainability, consider conducting educational campaigns to debunk misconceptions about plastic bags' biodegradability. Simultaneously, explore cost-effective alternatives like reusable or compostable bags, aiming for a gradual transition. This proactive approach aligns profitability with environmental responsibility, potentially

enhancing customer loyalty and mitigating long-term ecological risks.

4. While plastic bags might offer revenue, consider the long-term impacts on the environment and public perception. Exploring eco-friendly alternatives could help maintain revenue while demonstrating corporate responsibility, potentially appealing to a wider customer base concerned about sustainability.
5. Consider conducting market research to understand the factors contributing to this shift. Explore alternative materials or promotional strategies to adapt to the changing preferences within Cabanatuan City and align with the evolving attitudes towards plastic bag usage. Collaboration with local authorities or environmental groups may also aid in transitioning towards more sustainable options.

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