

## The Role of Sustainability Perception in Consumer Behavior: A Study of Packaging, Ingredients, and Brand Awareness in the Soft Drinks Industry

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### ABSTRACT

This research seeks to understand how ingredients, packaging, brand awareness, and sustainability perception interact and influence consumer behavior in the soft drinks industry, specifically Coca-Cola. The online survey to 100 respondents was conducted via Google Form and the collective data was analyzed by the SPSS software. While the research examined the impact of ingredients and packaging on consumer decisions (H1 and H2), no direct effect was found. However, the research revealed a strong positive correlation between sustainability perception and consumer behavior (H3,  $R^2 = 0.391$ ,  $\beta = 0.423$ ). Interestingly, a positive relationship emerged between packaging and ingredient impact on one hand, and sustainability perception on the other (H4,  $\beta = 0.778$ ). Additionally, sustainability perception was found to positively influence brand awareness (H5,  $\beta = 0.548$ ). These findings suggest that consumers prioritize sustainability when making purchasing decisions in the soft drinks industry, and that a brand's commitment to sustainable practices can indirectly influence consumer behavior through positive sustainability perception.

**Keywords:** Brand Awareness; Consumer Behavior; Ingredients and Packaging Impact; Soft Drink Industry; Sustainability Perception

## **INTRODUCTION**

The soft drinks industry is a global powerhouse, with iconic brands like Coca-Cola holding a dominant position. Coca-Cola, a globally renowned brand, has maintained its dominance in the carbonated soft drink market for an extended period. The brand's enduring success can be attributed to its invigorating flavor and astute market positioning (Salsabila et al., 2021). Soft drinks, categorized as non-alcoholic beverages, typically comprise carbonated water, flavorings, and sweeteners. Coca-Cola, encompassing its classic variant, features a blend of carbonated water, high fructose corn syrup, caramel color, phosphoric acid, natural Flavors, and caffeine. The Coca-Cola Company places paramount importance on prioritizing consumer demand, and it invests substantially in top-tier ingredients and packaging to captivate the interest of customers while fostering trust. However, consumer preferences are constantly shifting, driven by health concerns, environmental consciousness, and ever-evolving marketing strategies. Understanding these changing dynamics is crucial for brands like Coca-Cola to maintain market share and adapt to a more discerning consumer base.

The choice of ingredients in carbonated drinks plays an indispensable role in shaping consumers' purchase decisions (Nagina et al., 2024). Various flavors are meticulously crafted to cater to specific target demographics, such as Diet Coke for adults and Coca-Cola Zero Sugar for younger, culturally diverse individuals. This tailored approach seeks to cater to a wide array of customer preferences and expand the brand's reach. Packaging, too, serves as a pivotal element in forging emotional connections between consumers and a product (Kabaja, 2021; Otto et al., 2021; Amadi, 2022). The Coca-Cola Company deeply acknowledges the significance of well-conceived packaging in the realm of marketing communications, especially at the point of sale, recognizing it as a critical factor influencing purchasing choices. As self-service options and consumer lifestyles continue to evolve, the role of packaging as a catalyst for sales promotion and a driver of purchasing behavior continues to expand.

In recent years, sustainability has become a major force shaping consumer behavior across various industries. Consumers are increasingly making purchasing decisions based on a brand's commitment to environmental and social responsibility practices. This trend is evident in the soft drinks industry, where concerns regarding ingredients, plastic waste, and production processes are gaining momentum. In line with sustainable marketing strategies, the Coca-Cola Company has made a resolute commitment to instigating transformative change through the adoption of circular economy principles. By transitioning to more sustainable packaging alternatives, such as the utilization of recycled plastic (rPET) in lieu of PET and single-use plastics, the company endeavors to curtail its carbon footprint. This strategic approach closely aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) introduced in 2015, which aim to foster social, economic, and environmental sustainability on a global scale (Filho et al., 2019). The advancement of sustainability within the food and beverage industry is greatly propelled by social responsibility and active consumer involvement. Research conducted by Sehgal et al. in 2020 underscores the critical role played by corporate social responsibility endeavors, ethical labor standards, community participation, and consumer enlightenment. Involving consumers through the utilization of sustainable product labelling, transparent dissemination of information, and responsible marketing strategies has the potential to stimulate a desire for sustainable dietary selections and cultivate beneficial societal transformation. Among the SDGs, three specific goals hold particular relevance in relation to the influence of Coca-Cola's product ingredients and packaging on consumer behavior.

The first goal, SDG 3, is centered on the nexus between good health and overall well-being. It underscores the imperative of ensuring healthy lives and well-being across all age groups and seeks to address the challenges posed by epidemics and diseases, including AIDS. The second goal, SDG 6, underscores the paramount importance of clean water and sanitation. Water stress and shortages profoundly impact both physical and emotional well-being, thereby underscoring the need to invest in enhancing access to safe water and elevating water quality for consumption. Lastly, SDG 12 places a spotlight on responsible consumption and production. By minimizing waste and adopting more sustainable consumption and disposal practices, countries can usher in long-term economic development while preserving the environment.

In summary, Coca-Cola's global triumph as a brand is rooted in its sagacious market positioning, the utilization of premium ingredients, and the implementation of well-crafted packaging strategies. Coca-Cola's assorted range of beverages, packaged in an array of sizes and captivating colors, adorned with appealing, feminine bottle designs, not only entices consumers but also sets its products apart from competitors. The premium quality of its ingredients is a consistent favorite among consumers seeking to quench their thirst. Over the years, individuals have relied on Coca-Cola products as their go-to thirst quencher, cementing their loyalty to the Coca-Cola brand. The company's unwavering commitment to sustainable marketing practices aligns harmoniously with the SDGs, contributing significantly to the global promotion of health, well-being, access to clean water, and responsible consumption.

This research has several objectives. The first is to explore how product features like ingredients and packaging, along with brand awareness, directly influence consumer choices within the soft drink industry. Second, this study aims to understand the independent role that a brand's perceived commitment to sustainability practices plays in shaping consumer decisions for soft drinks. Third, this research investigates the possibility that product characteristics like ingredients and packaging, and even brand awareness, might indirectly influence consumer behavior by shaping their perception of a brand's sustainability efforts. By achieving these objectives, this study seeks to shed light on the complex interplay between product characteristics (ingredients and packaging), brand awareness, sustainability concerns, and consumer behavior within the soft drinks industry.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior is a multifaceted field of study that delves into the intricate web of factors influencing people's purchasing decisions (Ridwan, 2022). These factors encompass a wide array of environmental, psychological, and sociological influences that collectively shape how individuals choose products or services. In this context, marketers play a pivotal role in leveraging data to gain a deeper understanding of the complex processes that underlie consumer decision-making. By unraveling the intellectual and emotional mechanisms driving these decisions, marketers can decipher what motivates consumers to opt for one product or service over another.

Coca-Cola, the global beverage giant and the largest soft drink corporation, stands out as a prime example of a company that excels in influencing consumer behavior. The success of Coca-Cola can be attributed in part to its adeptness in comprehending and, in some cases, even shaping the choices consumers make. Before settling on a purchasing decision, consumers embark on a journey of information gathering and evaluation. They seek out and process data that provides insights into various facets of a product, such as its appearance, sound, taste, smell, and even its tactile qualities.

These sensory inputs, coupled with the information they accumulate, collectively give rise to sensations and perceptions in the minds of consumers (StudyCorgi, 2023).

### **Ingredients and Packaging Impact**

According to the prior studies, packaging greatly impacts consumer behavior (Hamdar et al., 2018; Desai et al., 2019). People often rely on a product's packaging for their buying decisions. It is a crucial point of contact between a brand and a customer, often being the first interaction in a store. So, packaging must be eye-catching and distinct from competitors. This involves choosing specific colors and imagery that resonate with the target audience. Effective packaging does more than look good; it conveys important information about the product's purpose, use, and benefits. Clear messaging is crucial to prevent misunderstandings and help consumers make informed choices. Additionally, in today's environmentally conscious world, packaging should reflect a company's commitment to sustainability. Brands that show their dedication to eco-friendly practices through their packaging are more likely to get a positive response from consumers (Ketelsen et al., 2020; Shimul & Cheah, 2023).

Take Coca-Cola, for example. Their sustainable packaging strategy has been widely praised. The iconic Coca-Cola bottle alone is easily recognized by loyal consumers on the shelf. This shows how powerful and consistent packaging can build brand loyalty and trust (Mensah et al., 2021). Furthermore, Coca-Cola's product ingredients also play a big role in consumer behavior in the soft drink market. Coca-Cola isn't just a beverage; it is a global cultural symbol. The unique taste, secret ingredients, and eco-friendly packaging attract new consumers. Together, these factors shape consumer behavior and make Coca-Cola a strong choice in a competitive market.

In summary, packaging and product ingredients are crucial factors in influencing consumer behavior in the soft drink industry. Coca-Cola's innovative and sustainable approach has contributed significantly to its ongoing success. Hence, the researchers hypothesize:

H1: Ingredients and packaging impact is positively associated with consumer behavior.

H4: Ingredients and packaging impact is positively associated with sustainable perception.

### **Brand Awareness**

Brand awareness plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior, and it goes beyond just recognition (Krisnawan & Jatra, 2021). The level of recognition and association customers have with products and services heavily influences their purchasing decisions. Many consumers actively seek out and prefer to invest in brands they trust, which fosters loyalty and repeat purchases. Trust in a brand is often built on a track record of consistent quality and positive experiences. Another aspect of brand awareness is how good a product or service is in comparison to its competitors (Świtała, 2018). Consumers tend to choose brands they perceive as offering superior quality and value. This perception is strongly influenced by a brand's history, reputation, and the trust it has garnered over time.

Coca-Cola, with its impressive 137-year history since its launch in 1886, has successfully cultivated trust and reliability in the minds of consumers. This trust is not confined to a single market but extends globally, making Coca-Cola a brand that consumers rely on when it comes to selecting a beverage domestically. Coca-Cola's consistent quality and strong branding have contributed to its enduring popularity, making it a trusted choice for generations of consumers.

In conclusion, brand awareness significantly shapes consumer behavior, influencing their choices based on trust, quality perception, and brand reputation. The long-standing success of Coca-Cola is a testament to the power of brand awareness in building consumer loyalty and trust in a competitive market. Hence, the researchers hypothesize:

H2: Brand awareness is positively associated with consumer behavior.

### Sustainability Perception

In today's evolving consumer landscape, the perception of a product's environmental impact has gained significant importance. More businesses are realizing the necessity of integrating sustainability narratives into their marketing strategies (Javed, 2022). A recent IBM survey underscores the impact of sustainability on consumer behavior, with 49% of respondents stating that they've willingly paid a premium for products labeled as sustainable or socially responsible in the past year (Chugh, 2024). This statistic underscores the pivotal role of sustainability in shaping a brand's image and attracting conscious consumers. As an illustration, a study conducted by Čapienė et al. (2022) sheds light on the significant influence of personal values on how consumers perceive and engage with sustainable food options. Personal values act as a guiding force, directing both consumers and professionals within the industry toward sustainability by harmonizing their individual convictions with behaviors that advance ecological, social, and economic welfare (Laksmidewi, 2022).

The Coca-Cola Company has taken a proactive stance in this regard, emphasizing social, environmental, and economic stewardship in its sustainability approach. Through a comprehensive strategy, they aim to drive revolutionary and lasting change, extending their commitment beyond just product quality (The Coca-Cola Company, 2023). Their sustainability plan not only focuses on the products but also encompasses their support and engagement with the individuals behind the brand, including farmers, employees, and communities. This holistic approach demonstrates their dedication to safeguarding the environment's well-being.

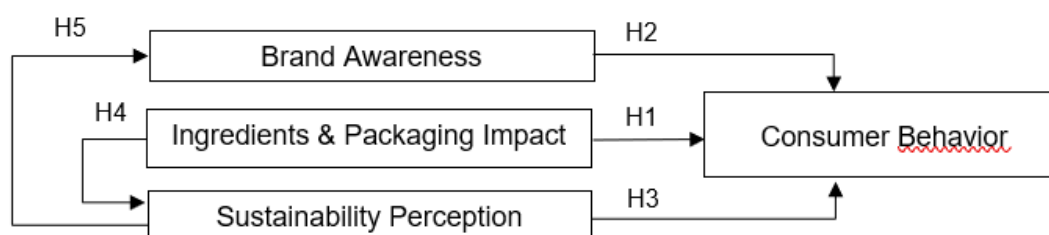
This emphasis on sustainability significantly influences brand awareness, subsequently impacting consumer behavior. To establish trust in a brand, consumers are now more likely to conduct research on Coca-Cola's specific sustainability initiatives before making a purchase decision. In this context, sustainability is not just a marketing strategy but a critical factor in building brand loyalty and driving consumer choices in an environmentally conscious world. Therefore, the researchers hypothesize:

H3: Sustainability perception is positively associated with consumer behavior.

H5: Sustainability perception is positively associated with brand awareness.

Figure 1 illustrates our research model. A total of 5 hypotheses were formulated.

**Figure 1.** The Research Model



## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a comprehensive approach, utilizing both primary and secondary data, to meticulously investigate the impact of Coca-Cola's product ingredients and packaging within the soft drink industry on consumer behavior. In order to gather primary data, a structured online survey using Google Forms was administered to consumers of Coca-Cola's beverages. This survey sought to assess consumer behavior in response to the continuous consumption of Coca-Cola and its potential effects on their physical well-being and disposition.

The utilization of an online survey distributed through platforms such as social media significantly enhanced the efficiency of data collection. This approach ensured easy accessibility for respondents, facilitating their participation and engagement in the research process. The survey instrument incorporated the Five-Point Likert Scale, enabling respondents to express their opinions by selecting a response on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To reach a wide and diverse pool of respondents, the survey was disseminated through various social media platforms. Ultimately, a total of 100 responses were gathered, providing valuable insights into consumer behavior patterns concerning the effects of Coca-Cola's product ingredients and packaging within the soft drink industry. This data collection process was instrumental in furnishing the study with empirical evidence to draw meaningful conclusions regarding consumer behavior dynamics.

The researchers have prepared eight items to determine how consumers perceive the ingredients and packaging of Coca-Cola's brand. An example of the item is "I am aware that the content and ingredients in Coca-Cola's soft drinks product are unhealthy". Five items are prepared to identify how consumers perceive the brand of Coca-Cola. An example of the item is "I am familiar with the Coca-Cola's Brand" Also, seven items were prepared to determine how consumers perceive the sustainability of the product and brand of Coca-Cola Company, for example, "I am aware of Coca-Cola's initiatives for a sustainable development." In addition, the researchers prepared eleven items to identify how consumers perceive and behave towards the brand. An example of the item contained "I am likely to continue to purchase Coca-Cola's soft drink products in the future."

The secondary data used for this study is from journals and articles. A journal is usually written in a more unique way so that it gives fully impactful and informative information that may also be used for academic purposes. It is also rational that journals may provide broader contexts and appropriate hypotheses for the problem to be studied.

## RESULTS

**Table 1.** Respondent Profile Summary (N=100)

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	39	39
Female	61	61
<b>Age</b>		
7 to 12 years old	0	0
13 to 17 years old	3	3
18 to 24 years old	79	79
25 to 34 years old	9	9
35 to 44 years old	3	3
44 to 54 years old	4	4
55 and above years old	2	2
<b>Education Level</b>		
Primary School	0	0
High School Diploma or Equivalent	46	46
Bachelor's Degree	35	35
Master's Degree	15	15
Doctorate Degree	0	0
Pre U	1	1
Sixth Form	1	1
STPM	1	1
Pre Uni	1	1
<b>Employment Status</b>		
Full-time	15	15
Part-time	1	1
Self-employed	1	1
Unemployed	3	3
Student	79	79
Student working part-time	1	1
<b>Annual Income</b>		
No Income	81	81
Less than RM 25,000	13	13
RM 25,001 to RM 50,000	3	3
RM 50,001 to RM 100,000	1	1
RM 100,001 to RM 200,000	2	2
RM 200,001 and above	0	0

The summary of respondents' demography in this research is shown in Table 1. Out of 100 respondents (N=100), the sample consists of 61 females and 39 males. Many of the respondents, which consist of 79 respondents, are shown to be between 18 and 24 years old, which means that they are pre-university or university students. Whereas there was no respondent from the age of 7 to 12 years old. The education level of the majority of 46 respondents are high school diploma or equivalent. However, there were no respondents with a doctorate degree. Meanwhile, the employment status of 79 respondents is that of students. The least respondents with 1 response are from the category of part-time, self-employed, and student who is currently working part-time. Next, the majority of the 81 respondents have no source of income as they are students. The lowest yearly income of the respondents was between RM 100,001 to RM 200,000 with a total of 2 responses.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients, and Zero-Order Correlations of Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
Independent Variable				
1   Ingredients and Packaging Impact	0.841			
2   Brand Awareness	0.575**	0.883		
3   Sustainability Perception	0.778**	0.548**	0.933	
Dependent Variable				
4   Consumer Behavior	0.530**	0.473**	0.598**	0.865
Mean	26.6463	17.9640	22.5686	33.6509
Standard Deviation	5.63197	3.44872	5.97438	8.60764
No. of item	8	5	7	11

Note: N = 100; \* p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001; Diagonal entries in bold indicate Cronbach's coefficient alpha.

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics, information on dependability, and zero-order correlations between variables. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha shows that all the variables tested strong reliability ranging from 0.840 to 0.940.

**Table 3.** Regression Analysis Based on the Variables Hypothesized

Variables	Consumer Behavior	Sustainability Perception	Brand Awareness
1   Ingredients and Packaging Impact	0.092	0.778***	-
2   Brand Awareness	0.188	-	-
3   Sustainability Perception	0.423***	-	0.548***
R <sup>2</sup>	0.391	0.606	0.300
F Value	20.547	150.688	41.958
Durbin-Watson Statistic	2.052	1.986	1.799

Note: N = 100; \* p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001.

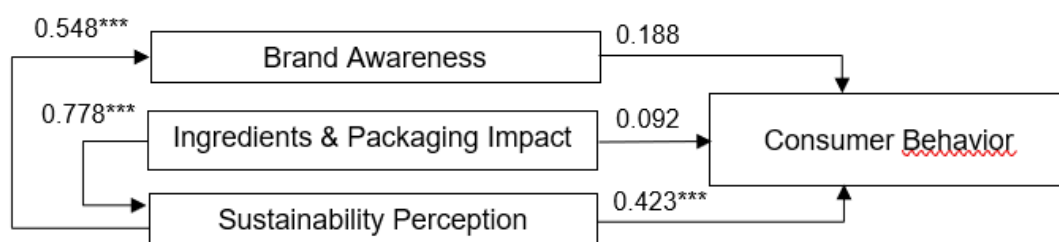
As presented in Table 3, consumer behavior serves as the dependent variable, while the independent variables encompass ingredients and packaging impact, brand awareness, and sustainability perception. The hypotheses formulated were rigorously examined through regression analysis. The outcome revealed that only sustainability perception exhibits a significant and positive correlation with consumer behavior. Consequently, H3 stands validated. The R<sup>2</sup> value obtained from the analysis stands at 0.391, underscoring that 39.1% of variations in consumer behavior can be attributed to sustainability perception. Notably, the sustainability perception variables exhibit a substantial beta value of 0.423, which is highly significant at p < 0.001. In contrast, the variables related to ingredients and packaging impact, as well as brand awareness, display an insignificant influence on consumer behavior. Therefore, H1 and H2 find no support.

Furthermore, the analysis sheds light on the potential impact of ingredients and packaging on sustainability perception. The findings indicate a positive and substantial relationship between the dependent variable of sustainability perception and the independent variable of ingredients and packaging impact, with a noteworthy beta value of 0.778 and a high level of significance at p < 0.001. Thus, H4 is deemed acceptable and substantiated. Additionally, the results highlight that sustainability perception, as an independent variable, can significantly influence brand awareness, a dependent variable, in a positive manner. The beta value connecting these two variables stands at 0.548, with a high level of significance at p < 0.001. Consequently, H5 garners strong support.



The summary of the analysis with the hypothesized model is shown in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2.** Hypothesized Model



## DISCUSSION

### The Factors That Affect Consumer Behavior When Purchasing Coca-Cola's Soft Drink Products

The study delved into an exploration of the various factors influencing consumer behavior when it comes to purchasing Coca-Cola's range of soft drinks. Among the multitude of factors examined, one stood out prominently: sustainability perception. It emerged as a pivotal element profoundly affecting consumers' choices when selecting Coca-Cola's soft drink products. What makes this discovery even more intriguing is that sustainability perception exerted its influence even in situations where consumers were fully aware of the health implications associated with these beverages.

This underscores the paramount significance of sustainability perception in the realm of consumer behavior. In today's dynamic market landscape, it has become increasingly evident that sustainability has ascended to a prominent position on the priority list of consumers. A compelling statistic from the Capgemini Research Institute reinforces this point - a staggering 79% of consumers have started to alter their purchasing habits based on factors related to inclusivity, social responsibility, and environmental impact.

Consumers, more than ever before, are aligning themselves with societal and environmental causes, seeking out companies and products that resonate with their values. This shift in consumer mindset holds profound implications for businesses. To effectively respond to this evolving consumer sentiment, companies must adopt a multi-faceted approach. First and foremost, they should integrate technology into the core of their sustainability initiatives, leveraging it as a powerful tool for driving positive change.

Additionally, empowering employees and equipping them with the knowledge and tools necessary to champion sustainability within the organization is crucial. This not only ensures alignment with external messaging but also fosters a culture of sustainability from within. Moreover, educating customers about the company's sustainability efforts is paramount. Transparency and clear communication regarding sustainability practices go a long way in building consumer trust and loyalty. Businesses should place technology at the heart of their sustainability initiatives, empower staff and educate customers to thoroughly embed sustainability, and engage with the larger ecosystem (Pandab, 2021).

In the context of Coca-Cola, these findings underscore the importance of transparently communicating their sustainability practices to consumers. A clear and authentic commitment to sustainability can undoubtedly have a positive influence on consumer behavior, potentially driving increased sales and brand loyalty. As the study suggests, sustainability is no longer a mere buzzword but a tangible and potent force shaping the choices of today's consumers.

### **The Influence of Ingredients and Packaging of Coca-Cola's Soft Drinks on the Consumer's Behavior in Purchasing it**

The outcomes of this research have unveiled unexpected insights that challenge the core premise of this study, which initially sought to explore the impact of Coca-Cola's soft drink ingredients and packaging on consumer purchasing behaviors. Contrary to the initial expectations, the analysis reveals that these factors may not exert a significant positive influence on consumer behaviors.

In delving deeper into the findings, it becomes evident that consumer awareness regarding the health implications of the ingredients is substantial. A substantial 60% of respondents were well aware of the potential health concerns associated with these ingredients. However, what is truly intriguing is that a majority of consumers, a noteworthy 35% of respondents, continue to show a strong inclination toward purchasing Coca-Cola's soft drinks despite this awareness. This discrepancy between awareness and behavior prompts us to explore the role of other influential variables.

Among these influential factors, the influence of social class emerges as a compelling force. A striking 35% of respondents strongly agreed that their purchasing decisions were significantly influenced by their social circles, particularly friends. This social influence factor appears to carry substantial weight in shaping consumer choices. Furthermore, the flavor profile of the ingredients used in Coca-Cola's soft drinks emerges as another significant determinant. Approximately 32% of respondents strongly agreed that the taste and flavor of these beverages were a driving force behind their continued patronage.

Moreover, enduring loyalty to the Coca-Cola brand emerges as a key factor, with 30% of respondents strongly affirming their allegiance to the brand. This loyalty factor appears to create a formidable bond between consumers and the Coca-Cola product line, transcending the potential concerns about ingredients and packaging.

In light of these findings, it is evident that the consumer decision-making process is influenced by a complex interplay of factors that extend beyond the purely rational assessment of ingredients and packaging. Social dynamics, taste preferences, and brand loyalty play a pivotal role in guiding consumer choices. This research, therefore, underscores the multifaceted nature of consumer behavior, highlighting the need for a comprehensive understanding of the intricate web of influences that shape purchasing decisions in today's dynamic market landscape.

### **The Effect of Ingredients and Packaging on the Consumer's Sustainability Perception**

The research findings shed light on a crucial aspect of consumer behavior: the profound influence of ingredients and packaging on sustainability perception. This study, which aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3, 6, and 12, addresses the critical themes of good health and well-being, clean water and sanitation, and responsible consumption and production, respectively. These SDGs underscore the global commitment to fostering a healthier, more sustainable, and ethically responsible world.

The investigation reveals a compelling connection between the ingredients and packaging utilized by Coca-Cola in the production of their soft drink products and the way consumers perceive sustainability. This linkage between the components of the products and sustainability perception highlights the intricate interplay between consumer choices and broader societal and environmental concerns. The findings demonstrate that consumers are becoming increasingly conscientious about adopting a sustainable lifestyle. This is reflected in their decision-making processes, where they

actively seek out brands that align with ethical and environmentally sustainable practices and values. In essence, consumers are voting with their wallets, signaling their preference for products and companies that demonstrate a commitment to responsible practices. Additionally, the research unveils a growing trend where consumers are willing to discontinue purchases of specific products due to apprehensions about the ethical or sustainability practices and values associated with a brand. This shift in consumer behavior underscores the profound impact that sustainability perception can have on brand loyalty and market dynamics. Research also discusses the importance of addressing environmental concerns by replacing traditional plastic with more eco-friendly alternatives to reduce pollution. The study advocates for the use of reusable plastics as the best substitute, as they significantly reduce plastic waste and mitigate the environmental damage caused by petroleum-based plastics. The focus of the research is on Pepsi Cola Company, which has been criticized for its plastic waste practices. The study highlights the growing problem of plastic pollution and increasing public awareness (Yee et al., 2020). Hence, this can also be implemented by Coca-Cola Company in improving their packaging's sustainability.

In conclusion, while Coca-Cola Company has achieved success, the research emphasizes the need for continuous development and change in various aspects, such as employment, processes, strategy, and products or services, to maintain that success in an evolving environmental landscape.

These findings align with broader industry trends, as evidenced by a study conducted by Pandab in 2021, which underscores the pivotal role of sustainability in shaping consumer choices. This corroborative evidence highlights the relevance and timeliness of the research, emphasizing the imperative for companies like Coca-Cola to transparently communicate their sustainability efforts and align their practices with evolving consumer expectations.

Research conducted by Deloitte UK, also shows that the majority of the consumers (65%) believe that a product is 'sustainable' when it is made from natural materials or a renewable resource (Deloitte, 2023). Hence, when Coca-Cola discloses its ingredient content and packaging material, the consumer's sustainability perception towards the brand will increase.

### **The Influence of Coca-Cola's Sustainability Perception on the Brand Awareness**

The comprehensive analysis reveals a compelling connection between consumers' sustainability perceptions of Coca-Cola and the brand's awareness, which is both significant and positive. In an era characterized by a heightened focus on sustainability issues and practices, the way consumers perceive a company's commitment to these matters has become a paramount factor in their decision-making process. This paradigm shift underscores the critical importance of a brand's image in relation to sustainability.

The journey toward sustainability awareness typically commences with consumers becoming cognizant of a company's or brand's sustainability practices. This initial awareness then evolves into a nuanced perception, which can either be positive or negative, regarding the brand's sustainability efforts. Importantly, this perception is a driving force that compels consumers into action. Their reactions to a company's sustainability initiatives can manifest in various ways. It may take the form of favorable actions, such as a willingness to pay a premium for a sustainable product or enthusiastic recommendations to friends and acquaintances. Conversely, it can also lead to negative responses, such as the avoidance of a product or brand or vocal criticism of the brand on social media platforms (Mackay & Culley, 2021).

In light of these insights, it becomes evident that Coca-Cola's proactive stance and commitment to sustainable development, as exemplified by initiatives such as water wastage reduction, the utilization of recyclable and biodegradable materials, and participation in human rights conferences (The Coca-Cola Company, 2023), contribute significantly to enhancing the brand's image and reputation. This dedication to sustainability not only resonates with environmentally conscious consumers but also aligns with the broader societal trend toward ethical and responsible consumption.

It is worth noting that Coca-Cola's resilience and continued prominence within the soft drink industry, despite facing a major incident in Belgium in 1999 (Vasiliu, 2012), can be attributed, in part, to its ongoing commitment to sustainability. This commitment has allowed the brand to navigate challenges and reinforce its reputation over time, illustrating the enduring power of sustainability as a key driver of brand success.

In conclusion, the analysis of this study underscores the symbiotic relationship between sustainability perception and brand awareness. As consumers increasingly prioritize sustainability in their decision-making processes, companies like Coca-Cola that proactively engage in sustainable practices not only contribute positively to society and the environment but also solidify their position as leaders within their respective industries. This symbiosis between sustainability and brand image reinforces the enduring appeal and resilience of brands like Coca-Cola.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the factors influencing consumer behavior, with a particular focus on ingredients, packaging, brand awareness, and sustainability. The findings reveal that sustainability perception plays a significant and positive role in shaping consumer choices (supported by H3, R-squared = 0.391, beta = 0.423). This suggests that consumers are increasingly making purchasing decisions based on a brand's commitment to environmental and social responsibility.

Interestingly, the research found no direct relationship between ingredients and packaging impact or brand awareness on consumer behavior (H1 and H2 not supported). However, the analysis did uncover some interesting secondary effects. Firstly, ingredients and packaging with a positive sustainability perception were found to have a significant influence on overall sustainability perception (supported by H4, beta = 0.778). This implies that consumers who perceive a brand's ingredients and packaging as sustainable are more likely to view the brand itself as sustainable.

Secondly, the study revealed a positive and significant relationship between sustainability perception and brand awareness (supported by H5, beta = 0.548). Consumers who perceive a brand as sustainable are more likely to be aware of that brand in general. This suggests that a strong sustainability image can not only influence purchase decisions but also contribute to overall brand recognition.

In conclusion, this research underscores the growing importance of sustainability in consumer behavior. Companies that prioritize sustainable practices throughout their operations, from ingredient sourcing to packaging, are likely to resonate with today's environmentally conscious consumers. Furthermore, by effectively communicating their sustainability efforts, brands can not only influence purchase decisions but also build a stronger and more positive brand image.

Given these insights, it is imperative for the Coca-Cola Company to prioritize and intensify its commitment to sustainable development. By actively working towards the achievement of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, as outlined by the United Nations (United Nations, n.d.), Coca-Cola can not only contribute to global efforts to transform the world but also enhance its brand image and increase public awareness. This commitment to a greener, more sustainable business model aligns with the evolving expectations of consumers and positions Coca-Cola as a responsible industry leader.

### LIMITATION

This research, while informative, presents several noteworthy limitations. One of the primary constraints lies in the methodology employed, as the study exclusively utilized an online platform via Google Form. This approach predominantly attracted respondents from Malaysia and India, thereby restricting the geographical scope of the research. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that a significant proportion of the respondents were part of Generation Z and students, which imposes limitations on the generalizability of the findings to a broader demographic spectrum.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the research primarily focused on ingredients and packaging as factors influencing consumer behavior toward the purchase of Coca-Cola's soft drink products. However, it did not delve into the examination of other potentially influential variables, such as brand loyalty, individual psychological factors, and the impact of social influences. These unexplored facets represent a significant gap in the research's scope.

Therefore, to advance the understanding of the multifaceted dynamics that shape consumer behavior in this context, future research endeavors should consider incorporating a more diverse range of variables. This could encompass factors like brand loyalty, individual psychology, and social influences, which would contribute to a more comprehensive comprehension of why ingredients and packaging might not hold the primary sway over consumer behavior.

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### DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest.

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