

Retailer Focused Study on the Association Between the Preference Of The Skin Care Brands in Line with the Container Deposit Systems.

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ABSTRACT

Adapting and implementing practices which are conducive to the environment are known as sustainable practices. The inadequate and inconsiderate adoption of plastic causes harmful consequences to the environment. The promotion of sustainability by reusing the resources is gaining importance. This research by applying a retailer centric approach for collecting data makes an attempt to determine the relation between the preferences for a particular brand and the empty container deposit systems (ECDS) by the perspective of a customer, encompassing the skin care industry based on the theory of reasoned action attempts to understand the effect on the customers attitude and preferences with relation to retailers experiences and interaction with ECDS in the light of “ Bring Our Bottle Back “ campaign. By looking through the customer lens in the light of TRA framework, this research attempts to explore the applicable cognitive and behavioural aspects of the preferences of various brands of the customers in the context of applied ECDS. By recognising the associated retailers as prominent critical associations in implementing the various sustainability steps of different skin care brands and the perceptions of the associated customers. The data will be collected from the associated retailers providing the actual perspectives. Data for this research will be gathered directly from retailers engaged in the campaign, providing a unique perspective on the interaction between the customer and the retailer as this interaction will capture the different views of the customers associated with the different skin care brands implementing the ECDS. This research explores and brings into the forefront the details of perspectives of sustainability of the brands associated and its effect on the preference on the brand. The intricate association between ECDS and the preferences of the associated brands will be explored by this research which is based on the customer and the data gathered by the retailer. By covering the gap existing between retailer experiences and customer perceptions, this research attempts to bring about valuable insights to foster academic and corporate strategies for the associated skin care brands as well as the retailers involved to implement various sustainable practices.

Keywords: Brand preference, Bring Our Bottle Back, Empty Container Deposit Systems, Green marketing, Sustainable practices.

INTRODUCTION:

The contemporary world faces a myriad of challenges, with environmental degradation and climate change emerging as critical issues initiated by the pervasive use of products such as plastic, leading to pollution and global warming. In response to the escalating concerns about environmental preservation, individuals are increasingly adopting sustainable practices to foster an eco-friendly lifestyle. This global shift towards sustainability has not only influenced individual choices but has also compelled businesses, including prominent

players in the beauty industry, to align their objectives with sustainable goals.

The Body Shop, a renowned brand in the beauty sector, stands out for its commitment to natural products sourced from local farmers, thereby contributing to the financial stability of these communities. Moreover, The Body Shop has implemented an Empty Container Depositary System (ECDS), enabling customers to return empty bottles and containers—a sustainable initiative aimed at reusing and recycling. This endeavour

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also aligns with the conception of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as defined by Howard Bowen, considered the father of CSR, emphasizing businesses' obligations to pursue policies and actions that align with societal objectives and values.

As sustainability increasingly becomes ingrained in daily life, there is a burgeoning opportunity for beauty brands to transition to eco-friendly practices across their entire operational spectrum. A survey conducted by Bain & Company in 2022 underscores this shift, revealing that 52% of urban consumers in India anticipate an uptick in spending on sustainability. Furthermore, over 60% of Indian consumers convey a willingness to pay a premium price for sustainable products, indicating a substantial potential for beauty brands to gain preference by embracing sustainable practices.

While there is a growing awareness and inclination towards sustainability among consumers, there exists a research gap in understanding how merchants effectively communicate the sustainable attributes of participating companies and how this communication influences consumer choices. This study aims to fill this gap by delving into the nuances of how retailers convey the sustainable features of skin care brands involved in initiatives like the "Bring Our Bottle Back" campaign. Grounded in the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the research investigates the intricate interplay between customer perspectives, retailer experiences with ECDS, and customer attitudes and preferences towards sustainable skin care brands. Recognizing retailers as vital intermediaries, this study seeks to unravel the cognitive and behavioural dimensions shaping consumer brand preferences influenced by the implementation of ECDS. Through this exploration, the research aims to contribute valuable insights into the complex dynamics at the intersection of environmental sustainability, retail communication, and consumer brand choices.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The study is grounded on Theory of Reasoned Action, which focuses on predicting behavioural intentions of how the implementation of empty container deposit systems influences brand preference, especially from the perspective of retailers. The versatility of TRA accommodates the retailer-centric perspective, providing a comprehensive lens to understand how retailers' attitudes, subjective norms, and intentions intersect with the adoption of empty container deposit systems and subsequently influence brand preference. Furthermore, TRA's quantitative measurement capabilities make it conducive to the survey-based approach commonly employed in retailer-centric analyses, enabling the study to quantify and analyse retailers' perceptions systematically. Lastly, the well-established theoretical foundations of TRA, widely recognized in social psychology and consumer behaviour research, lend credibility to the study's exploration of the complex interplay between brand preference and empty container deposit systems.

The study conducted by Parwanda (2020) delves into the transformations observed in consumer buying behaviour in response to green marketing initiatives. The research specifically highlights the involvement of prominent global brands, such as Patagonia, IKEA, Johnson and Johnson, and Hershey land, that have actively embraced sustainable practices through green marketing strategies. The study underscores the significance of recognizing the economic implications of green marketing within the realm of marketing. The study concludes that green marketing should not be underestimated in its impact on the economic landscape and consumer choices. The highlighted international brands serve as noteworthy examples of entities successfully implementing sustainable practices, providing tangible evidence of the positive influence of green marketing on consumer behaviour. Both green marketing and a positive green brand image independently contribute significantly to users' attitudes. Whether considered individually or in combination, these factors exert a positive and noteworthy impact on the dependent variable of user attitude. The conclusion suggests that for The Body Shop in Indonesia, it is imperative to consistently enhance and uphold the execution of green marketing strategies and cultivate a positive green brand image. By doing so, the company can effectively compete in the market, instil trust among users, alleviate concerns about product quality, and solidify its position as a top-of-mind brand within society (Lestari, Fitriani 2021).

Halim and Berlianto's (2023) study explore the role of the customer dimension in loyalty, trust, and satisfaction. Despite the current trend favouring eco-friendly brands, the study surprisingly finds that social connection and conscious attention do not significantly impact consumer satisfaction. However, a key takeaway is that trust is notably influenced by customer satisfaction. Managerially, the study suggests that companies should prioritize increasing customer happiness, with one effective strategy being to encourage enthusiastic customer engagement on social media platforms. This engagement not only enhances satisfaction but also fosters the trust essential for sustained customer loyalty in the eco-conscious market.

Taufik et al.'s (2021) research explores the effect of perceived quality and brand trust on purchase intentions for the products of Body Shop. The findings emphasize that consumers' perceptions significantly drive their inclination to make a purchase. The study underscores the importance for companies to champion values through exclusive promotions and active community engagement. Importantly, it reveals that Brand Trust plays a pivotal role in fostering Green Purchase Intentions.

Einjella Patsy et al.'s (2023) study highlights the impactful role of the "Bring Back Our Bottle" campaign in reducing plastic waste, particularly from HDPE plastic. The findings present significant insights for future marketers seeking to optimize their CSR strategies.

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Affandi and Ramadini (2023) study underscores the importance of a company's commitment to ethical and sustainable business practices through corporate social responsibility (CSR). Specifically, their research evaluates the effectiveness of The Body Shop's "Bring Back Our Bottle" initiative in Jakarta, a corporate shared value (CSV) strategy encourages the customers to return empty product containers to the company. The study's findings not only address the research question but also affirm that the innovative Corporate Social Responsibility strategies, particularly through CSV activities, have led to strengthened relations with stakeholders and increase sales.

Marzia and Ekasari's (2022) study delves into the antecedents and consequences of a green brand image. The findings emphasize that a brand's trustworthiness as an environmentally conscious entity is directly linked to its commitment to environmental responsibility. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of personal connections with customers in reinforcing a brand's reputation as eco-friendly, with perceived innovation further enhancing the brand's image and contributing positively to environmental perceptions.

Rachmasari, Sudaryanto, and Wulandari's (2021) paper addresses the decline in sales for The Body Shop Indonesia amid the COVID-19 pandemic, attributing the economic downturn and business closures as significant factors. The cosmetics industry, including The Body Shop, faced challenges in achieving annual sales due to the unprecedented and unpredictable nature of the pandemic. The study underscores the pivotal role of price in influencing consumer preferences and calls for further research to explore the interplay between green marketing, pricing, and purchasing decisions. In Raihanah's (2022) work, the integration of environmental concerns into business marketing strategies, known as "green marketing," is emphasized. The surge in environmental awareness is perceived as a reflection of expanding markets that prioritize environmental considerations, prompting many companies to adopt green marketing strategies with the anticipation of positively impacting sales. Azzahra and Fachira's (2022) study focus on assessing the impact of The Body Shop based in Indonesia "Bring Back Our Bottle" (BBOB) initiative on brand image, brand trust, brand love, and brand loyalty. This framework identifies Brand Experience and Brand Loyalty which considers the mediating variables that are Brand Trust, Brand Satisfaction, and Brand Love. The study highlights several key connections with significant positive impacts, including those between Brand Experience and Brand Trust, Brand Experience and Brand Satisfaction, Brand Experience and Brand Love, Brand Trust and Brand Loyalty, and Brand Love and Brand Loyalty. Additionally, a notable finding is a strong negative association between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty.

Hartika, Pawito, and Utari's (2021) research utilized content visualization on the Instagram account [@thebodyshopindo.impact](https://www.instagram.com/thebodyshopindo.impact) to identify messages

associated with The Body Shop Indonesia's #BringBackOurBottle campaign. The study's conclusions highlighted two key messages from the campaign, emphasizing the detrimental impact of plastic on human survival and advocating for sustainable living. Additionally, the research underscored the influential role of brands in shaping customer behaviour, illustrating how continuous campaigns, such as environmental conservation initiatives, can motivate consumers to actively participate in promoting sustainability. Adhimusandi, Sudirman, and Militina's (2020) study focuses on investigating the impact of corporate social responsibility and green marketing on brand perception, buying intent, and final purchase decisions among customers of The Body Shop, Samarinda. The findings reveal that the brand image experiences a significant and beneficial impact due to green marketing, whereas CSR has a limited influence on brand image. Interestingly, purchase intention is positively and significantly influenced by both corporate social responsibility and green marketing. Coelho, Corona, Klooster, and Worrell's (2020) article centres on the shift towards reusable packaging systems, driven by the rising environmental concerns. The paper provides a literature review highlighting the environmental and potential economic advantages associated with reusable packaging systems, aligning these insights with ongoing international developments in packaging trends.

Wati and Sari's (2020) research aim to examine the impact of The Body Shop in Indonesia's corporate social responsibility planning and Public Relations in promoting the BIO-BAGS campaign, a corporate social responsibility initiative targeting plastic waste reduction. The study concludes that The Body Shop Indonesia's initiatives have made a significant contribution to overcome plastic waste, with the hope that the research will inspire readers to actively engage in environmental protection and participate in future campaigns. While the above reviews cover various aspects related to sustainability, green marketing, and corporate social responsibility, they do not specifically address the relationship between brand preference and the empty container deposit systems from a retailer-centric perspective. The existing literature touches upon consumer attitudes, environmental initiatives, and sustainable practices but lacks a focused examination of how retailers, as key intermediaries, influence brand preference through the implementation of empty container deposit systems. Therefore, the research gap lies in absence of insights into the retailer-specific dynamics shaping brand preference within the context of empty container deposit systems. Also, Parwanda (2020) underscored the importance of continued investigation into green marketing practices, suggesting that a deeper understanding is essential to unlock the full spectrum of possibilities and implications associated with this evolving facet of marketing.

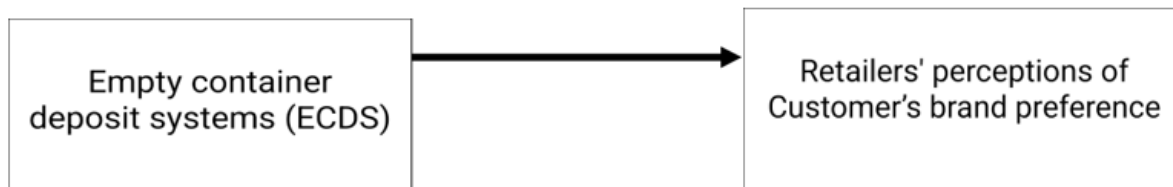
MODEL AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Objectives

- To investigate how the adoption of an empty container deposit system from a retailer's

- standpoint influences consumer brand preferences within the targeted market.
- To assess the key determinants shaping shifts in brand preference for consumers as observed by retailer's post-implementation of an empty container deposit system.
 - To provide practical and strategic recommendations for retailers based on the findings, aimed at enhancing brand positioning and marketing strategies.
 - To contribute valuable insights to the body of knowledge surrounding retailer perspectives on sustainable packaging initiatives and their influence on consumer brand preferences.

Conceptual Diagram



Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

Ha: There is a significant association between number of customers bringing back their empty containers and brand preference.

Hypothesis 2

Ha: There is a significant association between number of empty containers deposited monthly and brand preference.

H3: Number of Customers bringing back empty containers will have a positive impact on brand preference.

H4: Number of empty containers brought back by the customers will have a positive impact on brand preference.

Research design

Exploratory research design is used in this study to gain insights into the retailer-specific factors influencing brand preference in the context of empty container deposit systems. The data is collected from all types of Body shop retailers in Bengaluru city. In each retail shop, the data is collected from the salesperson or manager depends upon their availability during their busy schedule of attending customers, hence adopting convenience sampling. The sample size for this study is 32. Structured surveys are distributed to retailers to gather quantitative data on their perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards brand preference and empty container deposit systems. The questionnaire consists of three parts, the demographic profile of the respondents, questions related to empty container deposit system and brand preference, which is adopted from the instrument developed by Jamal, & Goode, (2001). Ms. Excel is used to analyse the collected data and statistical analysis like correlation analysis and Regression analysis are used to establish the relationship between the variables under study.

Analysis and interpretation

The respondent's demographic Profile are given in the below table:

Si. No	Demographic variable	Description of demographics	Frequency	Percent	Total
1	Age of the respondents	20.1-25 years	8	26	31
		25.1-35 years	19	61	
		35.1-45 years	4	13	
		45.1-60 years	0	0	
2	Gender	Female	22	70	31
		Male	9	30	
		Prefer not to say	0	0	
3	Total years of experience	0-2 years	5	16	31
		2.1-4 years	8	26	
		4.1-6 years	8	26	
		More than 6 years	10	32	
4	Experience in current brand	0-2 years	11	36	31
		2.1-4 years	9	29	
		4.1-6 years	6	19	
		More than 6 years	5	16	
5	Type of outlet	Standalone retail	20	64	

		Retail shop in mall	11	36	31
		Brand kept in departmental store chain	0	0	
6	Type of work	Store manager	13	42	31
		Salesperson	8	26	
		Supervisor	5	16	
		Senior beauty advisor	5	16	

Table 4.1: Demographic Distribution of the Respondents

Descriptive statistics of Important Attributes

Promoting awareness regarding new strategies or implementations in business is crucial. In the case of the empty container system, customer awareness was primarily disseminated through word of mouth and social media channels. Specifically, 58% of retailers conveyed that they utilized social media for raising awareness about the Empty Containers Depository System, while 42% relied on word of mouth as a means of communication.

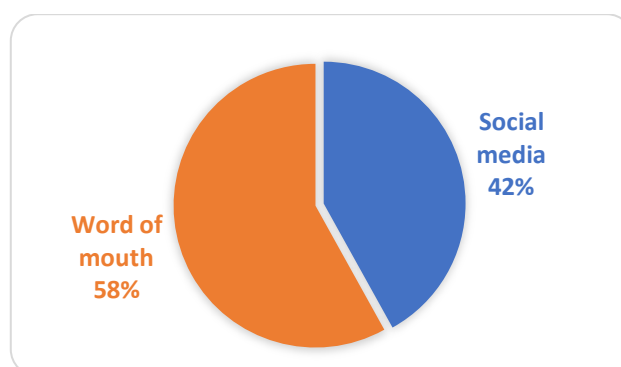


Chart 4.1: Awareness about empty Container Deposit System

The predominant category of deposited empty containers was comprehensive, with 55% of retailers indicating that containers of all types were returned. Additionally, 32% of retailers specified that Body care product containers were deposited more frequently, while 13% highlighted the deposition of Makeup product containers. This distribution suggests a higher inclination among customers to return containers across different product categories, with body care containers leading in frequency.

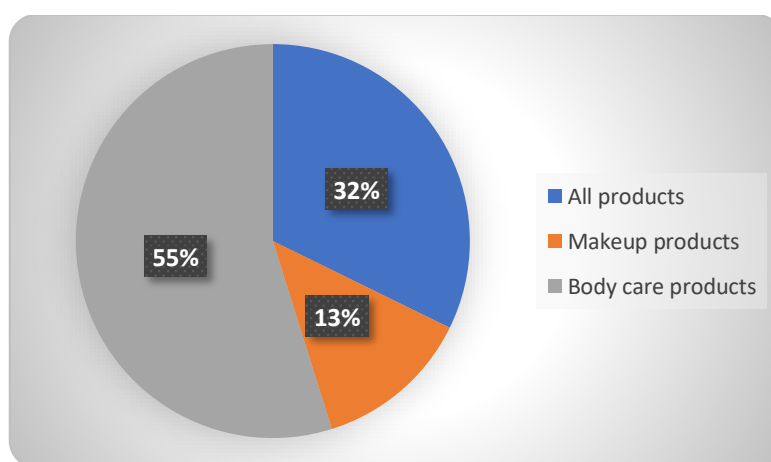


Chart 4.2: Category of Empty Container Deposited

The highest volume of deposited empty containers belonged to the 200-250ml category, surpassing other quantities. Following closely, the second-highest collection was observed for empty containers in the 60-100ml range. Conversely, the 400ml quantity of empty containers exhibited a comparatively lower deposition rate than other quantities. Additionally, some retailers noted a regular deposit of products across all quantity ranges.

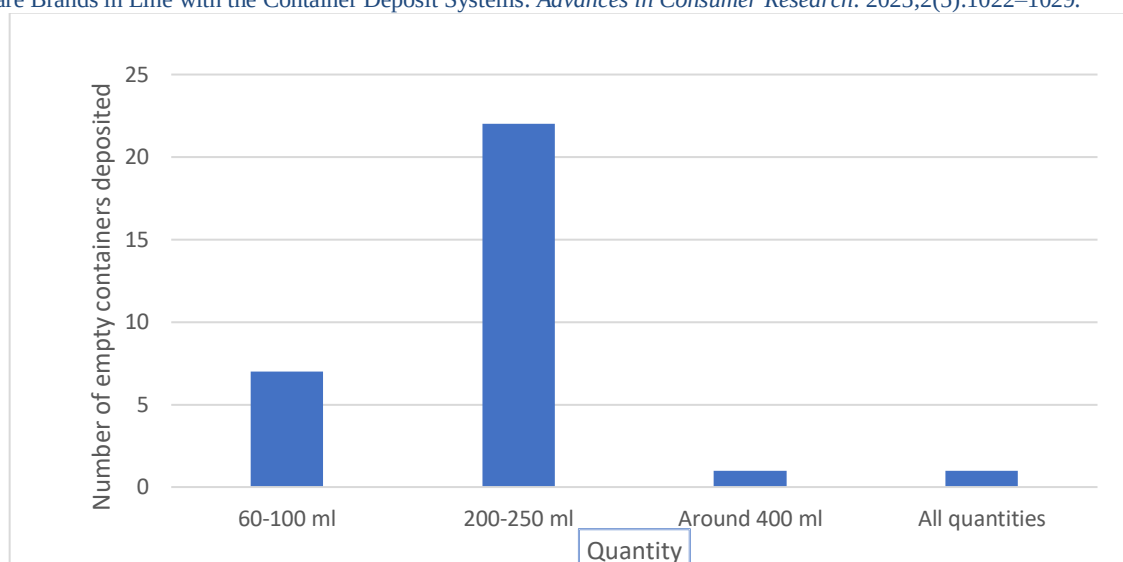


Chart 4.3: Highest Volume of Empty Container Deposited

CORRELATION RESULTS

Hypothesis 1

Ha: There is a significant association between number of customers bringing back their empty containers and brand preference.

The computed correlation coefficient (R-value) is 0.585 which indicates a positive association between the number of customers bringing back their empty containers and brand preference, hence accepting Ha. This positive correlation suggests that as the number of customers returning empty containers increases, there is a corresponding increase in brand preference. The positive direction of the relationship signifies that these two variables move in tandem, strengthening the association between customers engaging in the empty container return process and their preference for the brand. The statistically significant relationship further underscores the meaningful connection between these factors, emphasizing the potential impact of sustainable practices, like returning empty containers, on enhancing overall brand preference.

Hypothesis 2

Ha: There is a significant association between number of empty containers deposited monthly and brand preference.

The computed correlation coefficient (R-value) is 0.779 indicates a strong positive correlation among the monthly number of empty containers deposited and brand preference, supporting Ha. This positive correlation implies that as the monthly count of deposited empty containers increases, there is a corresponding rise in brand preference among customers. The substantial R-value of 0.779 underscores the robustness of this positive correlation. Moreover, the statistical significance of the relationship emphasizes the meaningful connection between the monthly deposit of empty containers and the resultant impact on brand preference, suggesting that sustainable practices such as

container deposits contribute significantly to shaping customer preferences for the brand.

REGRESSION RESULTS:

H3 states that the number of customers bringing back empty containers will have positive impact brand preference. The hypothesis is accepted with r-square value of 0.343, ANOVA's F value of 15.155 and p value <0.001. The value of unstandardised coefficient $b = 0.632$, with t value = 3.893, and $p < 0.001$. This indicates that the number of customers bringing back empty containers will strongly influence brand preference.

H4 states that the number of empty containers brought back by the customers will have positive impact on brand preference. The hypothesis is accepted with r-square value of 0.478, ANOVA's F value of 26.021 and p value <0.001. The value of unstandardised coefficient $b = 0.741$, with t value = 5.100, and $p < 0.001$. This indicates that the number of empty containers brought back by the customers will have a positive influence on brand preference.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this study we have established a relationship between Brand Preference and Empty container deposit system. This can be backed up by the study conducted by Parwanda (2020) where they address how green marketing and sustainable practices have a positive impact on consumer behaviour. The study by Lestari, Fitriani (2021) has a noteworthy impact on user attitude, Halim and Berlianto's (2023) study mentions that there is a positive association among brand trust and customer satisfaction. Taufik et al (2021) shows that the growth of Green Purchase Intentions is heavily dependent on Brand Trust that is directly linked to brand preference. Einjella Patsy et al.'s (2023) study shows a major impact on the decrease of HDPE plastic waste by the 'Bring back our bottle' campaign and an effective CSR activity which increases brand preference. Affandi and Ramadini (2023) results confirm that innovative strategies related to corporate social responsibility,

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especially through CSV campaigns, have strengthened stakeholder relations and improved sales. Marzia and Ekasari (2022) highlight the clear correlation between a brand's environmental responsibility commitment and its credibility as a sustainably associated entity. This study also emphasizes how crucial it is to have a personal relationship with consumers to support a brand's eco-friendly reputation. Perceived innovation also helps to improve a brand's image and favourably affects consumers' opinions of the environment.

Raihanah's (2022) highlight that numerous companies are implementing green marketing strategies in with the aim of positively boosting revenue, as a surge in environmental consciousness is viewed as a reflection of expanding markets that prioritize environmental considerations. Azzahra, Fachira (2022) highlights the framework finds that the variables that mediate the relationship among brand loyalty and brand experience are brand trust, brand satisfaction, and brand love. The study identifies several important relationships with noteworthy advantages. Hartika, Pawito, and Utari (2021) emphasis on two concepts: the harm that plastic does to human survival and promote sustainable living. Furthermore, the study emphasized the impact that brands have on consumer behaviour, demonstrating how ongoing campaigns, like environmental conservation efforts, can inspire customers to take an active role in advancing sustainability. Adhimusandi, Sudirman, and Militina (2020) shows that while CSR has a minimal impact on brand image, green marketing has huge positive impact on brand image.

In keeping with current global advancements in packaging trends, the article offers a review of the literature that highlights the potential economic and environmental benefits of reusable packaging solutions by Coelho, Corona, Klooster, and Worrell (2020). Wati and Sari's (2020) study say that there is an impact made by The Body shop to reduce plastic waste & also increase awareness among the customers about environmentally sustainable practices. Adhimusandi, Sudirman, and Militina's (2020) research concludes that green marketing significantly enhances the corporate image. It relates this positive outcome to increased environmental knowledge across the general population, which encourages consumers to adopt environmentally sound practices. Contradictorily, Azzahra, Fachira (2022) mentions that there is a strong negative affinity between brand satisfaction and brand loyalty. Halim and Berlianto's (2023) study say that social connection and conscious attention do not significantly impact consumer satisfaction, despite the current trend supporting eco-friendly enterprises.

Managerial Implications:

The result of this study hold important managerial implications for businesses, particularly those in the retail sector. Understanding the positive correlation between the implementation of empty container deposit systems and brand preference from a retailer-centric perspective suggests that businesses can enhance their brand image and customer loyalty by strategically

adopting sustainable practices. Retailers play a crucial role as intermediaries in shaping consumer perceptions, and fostering a positive attitude among retailers towards initiatives like empty container deposit systems becomes imperative. Managers can leverage this insight to develop targeted training programs or informational campaigns to ensure that retailers not only understand the environmental benefits but also recognize the positive impact on brand preference. Additionally, incorporating these sustainable practices into overall marketing and communication strategies can further strengthen the brand's position in the market, aligning it with evolving consumer preferences for eco-friendly and socially responsible brands. Overall, this study provides actionable insights for managers to align their business strategies with sustainability goals, enhancing both environmental impact and brand equity.

Directions for future research:

The study on the relationship between brand preference and empty container deposit systems from a retailer-centric perspective opens avenues for future research to delve deeper into this dynamic intersection. Firstly, exploring the moderating factors that influence the strength of the identified correlation, such as variations in retail settings or differences in product categories, could provide a more nuanced understanding. Secondly, investigating the long-term effects and sustainability of the observed relationship would contribute valuable insights, determining whether the positive impact on brand preference endures over time. Additionally, exploring the role of technology, such as digital platforms or smart packaging, in facilitating and enhancing the implementation of empty container deposit systems could be a relevant and timely extension. Moreover, comparative studies across various industries or regions could shed light on contextual variations and industry-specific nuances. Lastly, a consumer-centric analysis to complement the retailer-centric perspective would offer a comprehensive understanding of how both stakeholders contribute to the success of sustainability initiatives. Overall, directions for the future can impart a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between sustainable practices, retailer engagement, and brand preference.

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the relationship between brand preference and empty container deposit systems from a retailer-centric perspective. The positive correlation identified emphasizes the pivotal role that retailers play in influencing brand preference through the implementation of sustainable practices. The Theory of Reasoned Action has served as a robust framework, shedding light on the attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioural intentions of retailers in the context of empty container deposit systems. The findings carry significant managerial implications, highlighting the potential for businesses to strengthen brand image and customer loyalty by fostering positive retailer attitudes towards sustainability initiatives. Overall, this study adds to the growing body of knowledge on sustainable

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practices and brand preference, providing a foundation for strategic decision-making in the evolving landscape of environmentally conscious consumer behaviour.

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