Why do people ignore the ‘plastic bag diet’ campaign? an Indonesian consumers perspective

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Abstract. As an effort to minimize the climate change impact, reducing plastic waste is urgently needed. Unfortunately, so far this effort has not yielded maximal results, even though the ‘plastic bag diet’ campaign has been intensified. This paper interrogates the reason why Indonesian consumers/shoppers disregarded and did not even care about the campaign. Using Focus Group Discussion, the authors discussed with two groups of different shoppers, namely the regular shoppers and non-regular shoppers. The discussion is divided into three topics. First, the habit of using plastic shopping bags. Second, awareness of avoiding the use of plastic shopping bags. Third, the possibility to adopt an eco-friendly lifestyle. The results show that both regular and non-regular shopper groups do not mind paying 200 IDR for plastic shopping bags because it is financially not detrimental, and they are reluctant to bring their shopping bags. Besides being troublesome, some of the participants also considered it old-fashioned. However, non-regular shoppers tend to have an awareness of environmental preservation better than regular shoppers. Therefore, we conclude several factors that cause consumers to ignore ‘plastic bag diet’ campaign, including functional, social, cultural, and structural reasons.

1. Introduction
The impact of climate change increases awareness for sustainable consumption [1] and ethical consumption [2]. Sustainable consumption is “the use of products and services in a way that minimizes the impact on the environment so that human needs can be met not only in the present but also for future generations” [3]. Different from ethical consumption which tends to consume differently and ethically, according to Evans [4] sustainable consumption effectively emphasizes as economically as possible consuming, with the primary objective of reducing the resource intensity of production-consumption systems. But both are the same in terms of treating nature and the environment properly and wisely.

One of the campaigns for sustainable and ethical consumption is the Indonesian Movement for Plastic Bags Diet (GIDKP), namely a national movement to encourage people to be wiser in using plastic bags. This movement responded to the explosion case at the Final Disposal Site (TPA) Leuwi Gajah in 2005 in Cirendeu City of Cimahi, West Java, which killed 157 people. The landslide caused by the explosion devastated the villages of Cilimus and Kampung Pojok within about one kilometer from the TPA Leuwi Gajah [5]. This movement was jointly initiated by Greneration Indonesia Ltd., Daun Plus (Leaf Plus) Ltd., Monica Hijau Lestari Ltd. (The Body Shop Indonesia), Change.org, Ciliwung Institute, Earth Hour Indonesia, Indorelawan, Recycling Creations, Si Dalang, Tiza Mafira and Joko Arif in 2013. This movement strategy was identified in three approaches [6], namely regulation (through the
The #payforplastic movement succeeded in encouraging the government to issue regulations on the use of plastic bags), education (by combining presentation methods, group discussions, environmental film screenings and making recycled works from used materials), and facilitation (by inviting retail businesses in Indonesia to take an active role in campaigning to reduce the use of plastic bags when people shop).

The environmental lover community in Indonesia is apparently not alone, because similar campaigns (albeit with different names) have also spread in many countries such as Malaysia [7], Afghanistan [8], Thailand [9] and many other countries. In fact, now every July 3 is celebrated internationally as a no plastic bags day. Some brands and organizations also campaign for awareness to reduce plastic waste through attractive advertisements, especially plastic waste in the sea which is becoming increasingly alarming because it threatens marine life, such as those conducted by Fairy ('Ocean Plastic Bottle'), Adidas ('Ocean Plastic Shoes'), Salt Water Brewery (' Edible six-pack ring'), Green Peace (' Dead Whale'), and Surfrider Foundation ('What goes in the Ocean goes in you') [10].

Today more and more countries are implementing bans on the use of plastic bags in an effort to control environmental pollution. Plastic bags are usually made of low-density polyethylene material which is a thermoplastic of ethylene monomer. It was created accidentally in a chemical factory in Northwick, England in 1933 and was secretly used by the British Military in World War II. The one-piece plastic bag was later designed by Sten Gustaf Thulin and patented by Celloplast, a Swedish company in 1965 [11]. In the 1970s, shopping plastic bags then become popular since stores and supermarkets were giving away free to attract more customers, and now it is estimated that one trillion plastic bags are produced a year.

In 1997, Charles Moore, a sailor and researcher, shocked the world with the discovery of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which collected large amounts of plastic rubbish in the sea that made the public aware and sparked global outrage. Since then, plastic bags have been blamed for causing the death of marine animals such as turtles which unknowingly consume plastic bags assuming they are jellyfish [11]. This led to a global campaign to encourage government policies in 60 countries to control the use of plastic bags including a total ban on plastic bags, an increase in taxes on plastic bags, and encourage citizens to avoid the use of plastic bags through environmental campaigns.

While efforts to reduce plastic bag pollution have long been established, according to Xanthos & Walker [12], many countries are still lacking in implementation strategies. Not surprisingly, although regulations have been released, some research also recognizes monetary incentives may increase recycling activities of households [13], but Delistavrou's research [14] found that consumer participation in developing countries is still below the expected standard. This is evidenced by Afroz's research [15] that only 35% or less than half of the household respondents in Malaysia are willing to participate in the campaign.

Likewise in Indonesia, although the plastic bag diet campaign has been intensified, it has not yielded maximum results. The latest data from the Indonesian Plastic Industry Association (INAPLAS) and the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) show that Indonesia is still the second-largest contributor of plastic waste in the world with plastic waste reaching 64 million tons/year in which 3.2 million tons are discharged to the ocean [16]. The number of plastic bags thrown into the environment is 10 billion pieces per year or as much as 85,000 tons of plastic bags. Therefore, this paper investigates what factors cause consumers to ignore the incessant campaign of plastic bag diets and keep using plastic shopping bags in their daily shopping activities. Specifically, this paper answers the questions:

1) what are the habits of consumers in using plastic shopping bags?
2) to what extent are consumers aware of the importance of reducing the use of plastic shopping bags?
3) to what extent is the possibility of consumers willing to adopt eco-friendly lifestyles to prevent the worse effects of climate change on the survival of creatures on earth?

2. Methodology
We held a series of group discussions to investigate the background of consumers' reluctance to leave the habit of using plastic shopping bags. The first Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was held on 11 June
2019 in Jakarta involving 5 (five) regular shopper (RS) participants. We categorize participants as RS with the following criteria: 1) shop regularly at the supermarket or minimarket at least once a week, 2) like shopping, even if only window shopping, and enjoy the atmosphere of the shop or shopping center including the items on display in it, or 3) have a shopping program for household needs on a regular basis with a certain schedule so that they have an adequate budget every month.

The second FGD was held on 15 June 2019 in Jakarta, with 5 (five) non-regular shopper (NRS) participants. NRS here means having a shopping character or habits that are contrary to the RS, including 1) do not routinely shop at supermarkets or minimarkets, only shop as needed, and sometimes shop at street stalls, 2) do not like shopping, including windows shopping, or spending a long time in a shop or shopping center, 3) do not have a fixed budget for shopping and a definite shopping plan., so the amount of funds spent to shop fluctuate.

Recruitment of research participants is done by several methods, namely spreading call-for-research-participant through social media networks (WA, Facebook, and Line), convenience sampling by asking consumers who are shopping at supermarkets to be participant, and snowball sampling through information from existing participants or relatives who meet the criteria of the research informant. Referring to the research objective, the criteria of the informants (participants) of this research are: 1) have ever or often shopped at supermarkets or shopping centers, 2) have ever or often use plastic shopping bags, 3) know the campaign about reducing the use of plastic shopping bags.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Habits of using plastic shopping bags

Using plastic shopping bags is a habit of shop or shopping center consumers in Indonesia. Apart from being practical, the materials are also durable and strong. That is why RS-2 always relies on plastic shopping bags every time shopping.

> I even collected the plastic shopping bags. Usually after using, if it is still good, I fold it neatly and then I put it in a special box in the warehouse. When needed, it can be used to wrap or carry something, for example, food, for a neighbor or relative who comes to the house (RS-2, 11/06/2019, Jakarta).

Recognition of the RS-2 shows that used plastic shopping bags have 'other' benefits for daily needs at home. RS-5, a student who lives in a boarding house, even keeps a plastic shopping bag to be used as a base for garbage bins so that the trash is not scattered, "... as a coating inside the trash can, so if the garbage is full, it is easy to put it in the container for trash," RS-5 explained.

The practicality and durability of the material make consumers feel sorry to throw it away. A different matter was expressed by RS-1 who claimed to like plastic shopping bags not only because of the practicality and strength of the material but also how it looks.

> Especially if the design is 'cute', it is fun to bring it. We feel that other people know that we just shopped at the supermarket. There is such a sense of pride (RS-1, 11/06/2019, Jakarta).

This shows that the identity factor is one of the reasons for the use of plastic shopping bags, because shopping is an important channel in the construction of identity [2], which is capitalized by entrepreneurs in branding their business [17], and then become the consumers’ strategy of lifestyleing [18].

3.2. Awareness of avoiding the use of plastic shopping bags

From discussions with all participants, almost all know about the campaign to reduce the use of plastic shopping bags. Apart from online media and social media, most of them know from posters in supermarkets or shopping centers, as well as from experience when paying at the cashier because there are additional costs for plastic shopping bags.
but the cashier did not explain why we had to buy a plastic shopping bag, whereas before it was free. When asked, they only answered that it was a new regulation from the government. Okay, because that's the government rule, we obey, there is no other choice (RS-3, 11/06/2019, Jakarta)

Understanding of saving the environment, the adverse effects of plastic waste, and the importance of participation from all parties including consumers to engage in campaigns should also be shared by supermarket staff and minimarkets, especially cashiers, whose work plays a direct role in distributing plastic shopping bags to consumers. Another interesting opinion was expressed by NRS-5:

*It is useless to campaign if the supermarkets still provide plastic shopping bags, even if it is only as an option. In my opinion, supermarkets should provide shopping bags from eco-friendly materials such as paper, rather than giving consumers the choice to pay an additional cost for plastic shopping bags or to bring their reuse shopping bags from home. 200 IDR is nothing compared to the inconvenience of carrying your shopping bag* (NRS-5, 15/06/2019, Jakarta).

The opinion of NRS-5 was agreed by almost all participants, including those from the regular shopper group (albeit with different disclosures), mainly related to their willingness to paying 200 IDR a plastic shopping bag rather than bothering to bring their shopping bags. Other than that,

*... do we have to go back to the days of our ancestors who went to the traditional market while carrying a shopping bag in hand with a waddling style ... Ugh, what an old-fashioned! After all, shopping bags that are often sold separately in supermarkets are usually large, folding them is difficult especially when in a hurry, very impractical, and damaging to the style!* (RS-1, 11/06/2019, Jakarta).

3.3. The possibility to adopt an eco-friendly lifestyle

The question then becomes: will consumers change their lifestyle to abandon the habit of using plastic shopping bags? For non-regular shoppers, this is not a crucial issue because shopping is not a compulsory ritual or part of their fun. Unlike the regular shoppers who have many considerations and 'requirements'.

*I still imagine how troublesome it is. Unless supermarkets want to replace plastic bags with other materials, I just agree, because they indeed should provide free shopping bag facilities as part of their services* (RS-2, 11/06/2019, Jakarta).

It is understandable that RS-2 seems to 'demand' a fair role with supermarkets as service providers. Previous research shows that the belief in fairness (including the supermarket's treatment of consumers) can be very strong in encouraging prosocial behavior [1], not least in terms of pro-environmental. Meanwhile NRS-3 realizes that changing behavior is not easy but can be done as long as there is a strong awareness and motivation. Awareness and motivation are the most dominant variables in changing behavior and consumer preferences [19]. Moreover, NRS-3 recognizes that strong awareness and motivation not only have an impact on oneself, but can also affect others and the environment. That is the basis for NRS-3 to implement pro-environment lifestyle and eco-friendly consumption.

*Now, I often use a bicycle or take public transportation rather than private vehicles. Besides saving, it can also reduce pollution. I also started to get used to not littering, and hey, I'm also a nature lover and animal lover. I have a healthy and lively dog at home* (NRS-3, 15/06/2019, Jakarta).
Interestingly, unlike research of Salehi et al. [20], this study found that male consumers tended to respond more quickly and immediately expressed readiness to adopt an eco-friendly lifestyle compared to female consumers who tended to have many considerations and express a number of ‘requirements’. Whereas research of Salehi et al. suggests that women tend to be easier to implement eco-friendly lifestyle related to climate change issues because they are more patient and caring. It seems that this took place at the level of affection, not to the level of action. Because emotionally, female participants in this research are indeed more expressive than men in interpreting the tragic consequences of environmental damage related to the use of plastic shopping bags, but in terms of the desire to change lifestyles, male participants are more practical, whereas female participants tend to be reluctant to leave ‘comfort zone’ with plastic shopping bags.

4. Conclusion
There are several reasons why consumers tend to ignore the plastic bag diet campaign and continue to use plastic shopping bags. First, functional reasons. Consumers benefit from collecting plastic shopping bags because they can be used for other purposes. Second, social reasons. By carrying shopping bags from famous supermarket brands, consumers feel proud because they get social recognition, improve ‘class’ in the social environment, and construct a modern identity that is inherent in their self-image.

Third, cultural reasons. Consumers consider that bringing their shopping bags from home as a setback of the times, old-fashioned, troublesome, impractical, and damaging their ‘style’. Fourth, structural reasons. Various parties who contribute or are involved, both directly and indirectly in shaping the behavior of using plastic shopping bags (such as supermarkets and shopping centers) do not wholeheartedly adopt the mindset and implement an integrated system that can condition consumers to naturally switch to an eco-friendly shopping lifestyle. In fact, eco-friendly lifestyles at least contribute to minimizing the impact of climate change.

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