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Can Sri Lanka fight for its beautiful beaches by paying more for a plastic-free coastline?

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Sri Lanka, a stunning island nation, has an abundance of breathtaking natural beauty with golden sandy beaches. However, as a result of poor waste management, consumer behavior, and dumping, Sri Lanka's economically significant beaches have grown more polluted by microplastic and plastic debris. Therefore, we conducted a study with specific objectives to determine the public's preferences to reduce marine plastic litter, to find out the public's

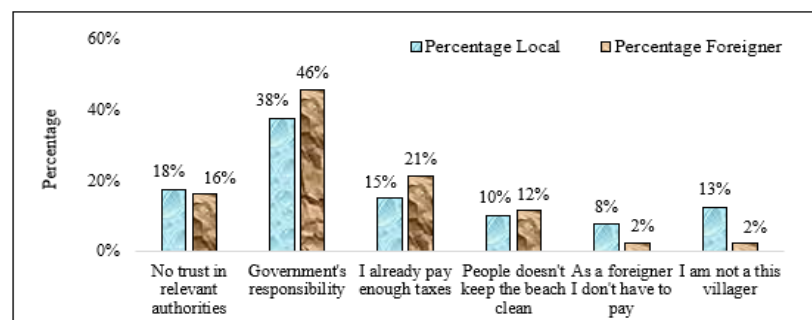


Figure: Reasons for not willing to pay

Willingness-to-Pay (WTP) for a beach cleanup program, and to estimate the social cost of plastic pollution. Using an econometric analysis, the study focused on 14 beaches in the Western and Southern Provinces in order to collect WTP from both foreign and local beach visitors. From November 2021 to February 2022, data were gathered through face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire from 227 (54%) locals and 193 (46%) foreign tourists. The study focused on factors of awareness, environmental knowledge, and environmental concern which were quantitatively measured using statements that reflect these factors. Results showed that 77% of foreigners and 82% of locals both expressed the willingness to pay for beach cleanups. Additionally, the variables of occupation and gender had a favorable effect on WTP for beach cleanup. Thus, in comparison to their male counterparts, local female government employees expressed a greater WTP for sustainable beach cleaning. The visitor's decision to spend an average of 3.4 hours per day cleaning the beach was highly influenced by their social and environmental knowledge. The average monthly WTP was LKR 2 819 per user, and the social cost of plastic pollution for beach users, including fishermen, was LKR 59 422.36. Findings highlighted the need for finding user preferences and economic assessment methods in order to put sustainable planning and development strategies into practice. Finally, the study recommends charging an entrance fee from beach users to safeguard Sri Lankan coastal ecosystems and marine resources by reducing the dumping of plastic waste.

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