

EVALUATING THE EFFICACY OF THE MEENDUM MANJAPPAI CAMPAIGN

July 2024



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Citizen consumer and civic Action Group



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CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	5
Methodology	6
Findings and Analysis	8
Conclusion and Recommendations	15

Executive Summary

Meendum Manjappai is a flagship campaign of the Government of Tamil Nadu which promotes the use of cloth bags thereby reducing the quantum of production and consumption of single-use plastic (SUP) carry bags in the state. The campaign, launched in December 2021, has made great strides in centre-staging the issue of plastic pollution, in particular, the impacts of SUP carry bags.

Since it has been two years following the launch of the Meendum Manjappai campaign, the need to study the extent of penetration of the campaign among citizens becomes essential to assess its success. Therefore, this study attempts to evaluate the efficacy of the Meendum Manjappai campaign by studying the extent of awareness and understanding of the objective of the campaign, plastic pollution, consumption patterns of SUP bags, attitudes towards alternatives to plastics among citizens including market vendors.



In a nutshell, the study finds that while there is a broad awareness of the impacts of plastics among citizens (98%) and market vendors (99%), the understanding of the extent and nuances of the plastic pollution crisis is superficial and limited. Citizens are aware of their role in the plastic crisis, such as littering, single-use culture, improper waste management. However, a majority of the respondents (75%) strongly believe that the ubiquity and inevitability of plastics is the major contributing factor for plastic pollution. While analysing their attitudes towards alternatives to plastics, we found that despite their intention and willingness to switch to alternative materials, the lack of availability, accessibility and affordability are the main impediments in citizens choosing sustainable consumption.

Market vendors also expressed concern that alternative materials are too expensive, not suitable for the nature of their product, and not easily available in the market as compared to SUP bags which are available in every nook and corner. When asked for their suggestions to improve the effectiveness of the campaign, a significant number of respondents (57%) concurred that only when production of SUP bags is controlled and capped, can the consumption of the same be regulated.

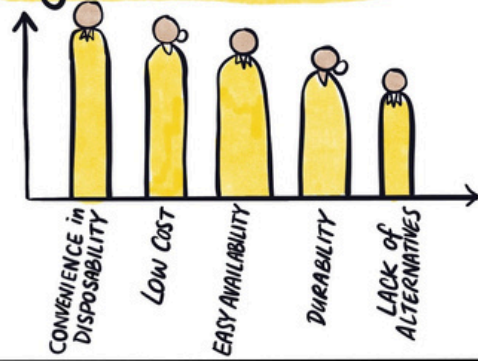
Therefore, the study, while quantitatively studying the reach of the Meendum Manjappai campaign, has also qualitatively analysed the underlying attitudes and obstacles among citizens and market vendors in transitioning away from SUPs. Based on the findings from the study, we have recommended some interventions which allow for course correction of the campaign. We suggest that regulating production of SUPs, designing an effective the communication strategy of the campaign, increasing the accessibility of the kiosks/vending machines and strengthening the alternatives ecosystem are areas which require the government's continued attention in achieving the objectives of the campaign.



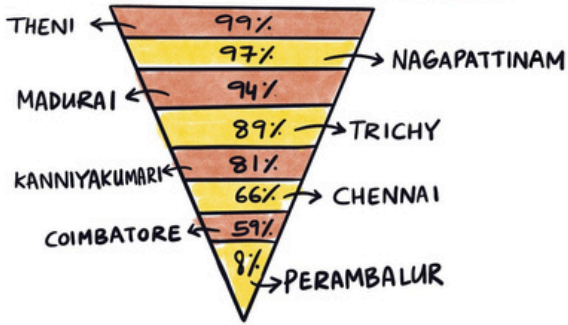
PUBLIC PERCEPTION



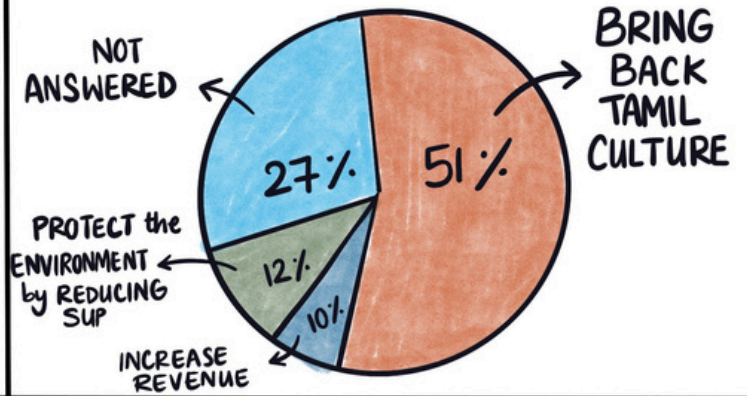
Why PEOPLE use SUP?



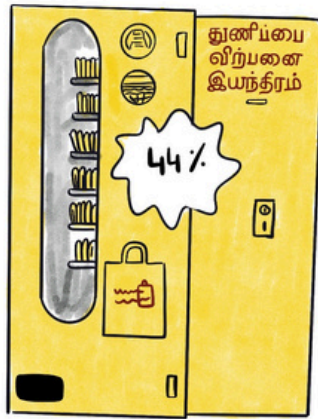
AWARENESS of MM CAMPAIGN - DISTRICT WISE



OBJECTIVE of MM



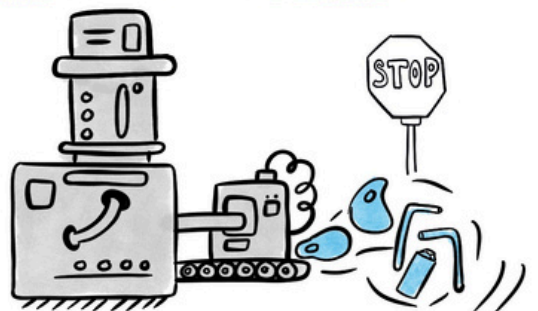
CHALLENGES in TAKING a BAG to the SHOP



No.1 CONTRIBUTOR to PLASTIC POLLUTION



57% SAY PLASTIC PRODUCTION SHOULD REDUCE



MARKET VENDORS

AWARENESS of BAN 86%



85% USE SUP BAGS

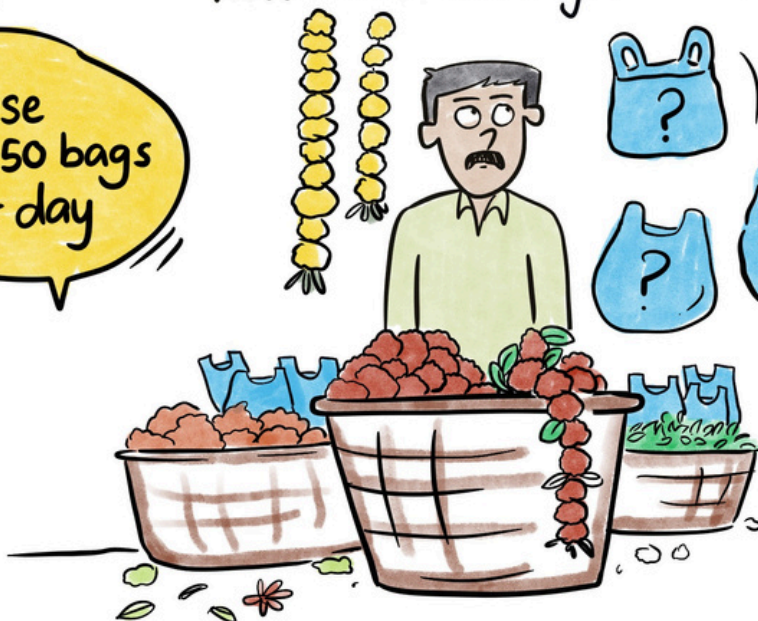


REASONS for VENDORS using SUP



HOW MANY SUP bags per DAY ?

I use 25-50 bags per day



One pack of SUP bag costs 150-170 Rs

I spend about 1800-2000 Rs per month on SUP bags!!!

Introduction

Single-use plastic (SUP) bags, a rare novelty in the 1970s, are now found in every discernible and indiscernible corner of the world. While there is a rudimentary awareness of the devastating impacts of plastic as a material around the world, the extent of health, environmental and social impacts of SUP is not widely known. The culture of single-use or use and throw propagated through SUP has drastically changed consumption and production patterns to unsustainable levels. Following the Tamil Nadu government's ban (2019) on certain SUP products, the Hon'ble Chief Minister launched the Meendum Manjappai campaign as 'People's Campaign against Single-Use Plastic' in December 2021.

The name of the campaign has been coined as 'Meendum Manjappai' (Back to cloth bags) in order to appeal to the citizens to take pride in the traditional sustainable culture of using a cloth bag, which used to be carried everywhere until before the advent of SUP bags in India. The cloth bags were dipped in turmeric, a natural disinfectant, which gave them the colour yellow and subsequently the name, 'Manjappai' (yellow bag).

Meendum Manjappai is a flagship campaign of the Government of Tamil Nadu which calls for traditional nature-based solutions and promotes the use of cloth bags to reduce SUP bags and to mitigate the menace of plastic pollution. The campaign seeks to change citizen awareness and behaviour around SUP bags and complement the already existing ban on certain SUPs. The campaign has taken centre stage in many government forums, highlighting the state's priority of eliminating SUPs which intersect with other missions such as TN Coastal Restoration Mission and TN climate change mission.

The government has taken numerous initiatives to publicise the campaign such as public service announcements, developing an app which locates and tracks the number of vending machines/kiosks, a complaint-raising feature in the app, manjappai brigade and also expanding the scope of the campaign by installing manjappai vending machines in some places across India.

Periodic review of a policy campaign is required to assess targets and indicators, measure performances and impacts and analyse the successes and failures of the campaign in order to ensure effective achievement of its objectives. Following the ban on SUPs by the Government of Tamil Nadu in 2019, Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) undertook a study to determine the efficacy of the SUP ban in Chennai.¹ The report released in August 2021, revealed that the ban has not been effective and that SUP was still widely in use.

Similarly, two years following the launch of the Meendum Manjappai campaign, CAG has undertaken this study to evaluate the efficacy of the Meendum Manjappai campaign to determine its extent of penetration of among citizens, behavioural and attitude change if any among citizens following the campaign and recommend actions to improve its efficacy. While we recognised the need to study the public perception of the campaign, we also identified the need to view the issue from an institutional (social) perspective. Therefore, the study primarily aims to understand the perception of citizens and market vendors towards SUP bags and alternatives in addition to testing their awareness of the Meendum Manjappai campaign.

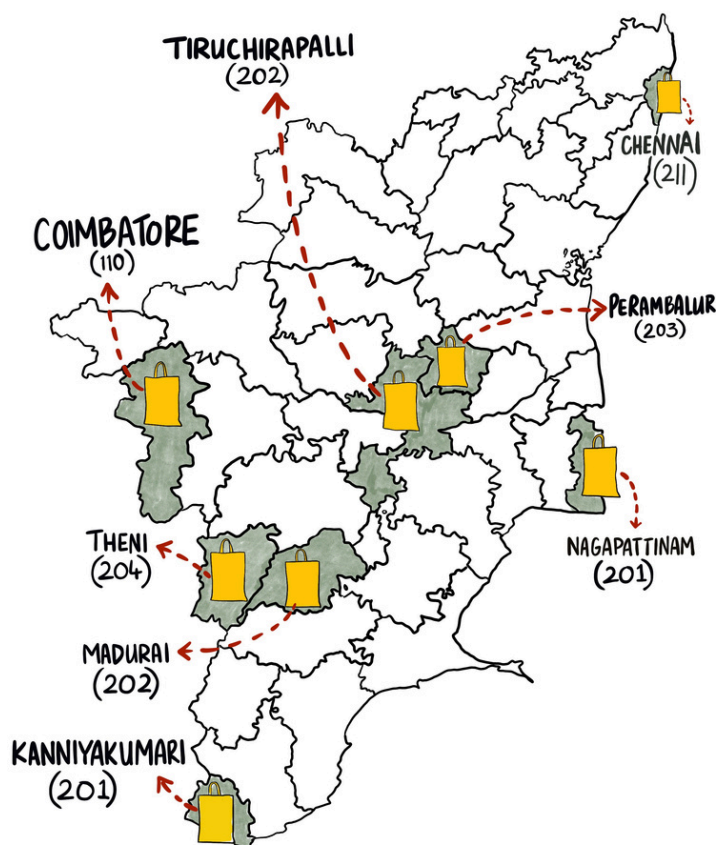
¹ [Efficacy of Single-Use Plastic Ban in Chennai | CAG, August 2021](#)

Methodology

The study comprises two components -

1) Baseline public perception of the Meendum Manjappai campaign among citizens and 2) A survey to understand attitudes of market vendors towards SUP bags and alternatives. The survey responses were collected from 1632 respondents using KoboToolbox, a research software used to collect and manage data. The survey responses were then analysed individually and with reference to other independent variables such as age, income, gender, geographic area, etc. In addition to the responses to the survey tool, some key qualitative observations were also recorded.

For the baseline public perception study among citizens, we developed a survey tool which tested the citizens' awareness and understanding of plastic pollution, role of consumers within the plastic pollution crisis, knowledge of solutions and alternatives to SUPs and awareness of the Meendum Manjappai campaign. The sample size for this component of the study was 823 respondents almost equally distributed across eight districts in Tamil Nadu, namely, Chennai, Coimbatore, Trichy, Madurai, Theni, Perambalur, Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari.



For the study among market vendors, we developed a survey tool to estimate the patterns and quantum of consumption of SUP bags in markets, reasons for using them, attitudes of vendors towards alternatives and awareness about the Meendum Manjappai campaign. The sample size for this component of the study was 809 and the samples were collected from different types of markets, broadly categorised into 4 types namely, fruits and vegetables, flowers, temple items and meat. The samples were collected from eight districts in Tamil Nadu, namely, Chennai, Coimbatore, Trichy, Madurai, Theni, Perambalur, Nagapattinam and Kanyakumari.

The sample for the study was carefully chosen to ensure that the study was representative of fundamental socioeconomic factors such as gender, age, region, etc. The districts were chosen primarily on the basis of population size (highest and lowest population) and two coastal districts were selected as part of the study since the consequences of plastic pollution are most acutely felt in coastal areas. The sample also contained an equal distribution of population from urban and rural areas in the selected districts. For the purposes of the study, ages of the respondents were categorised as: young adults (18-35 years), middle-aged adults (36-55 years), and elderly (above 55 years). Based on the income of respondents they were categorised as: economically weaker section (less than 3 lakhs per annum (pa), low-income group (3-6 lakhs pa), middle-income group (6- 12 lakhs pa), high-income group (more than 12 lakhs pa).

While we strived to ensure that the composition of the sample was representative of Tamil Nadu, we encountered some limitations while collecting the data. In the baseline public perception survey, the age group is not uniformly distributed with 55% of the respondents belonging to the middle-aged adults group, 41% belonging to the young adults group and only 4% falling in the elderly group. There is a slight difference in the distribution of urban and rural populations with the sample comprising 57% and 43% respectively. In the market vendors survey, the number of permanent shops (540) was almost three to four times as many as the temporary shops (148) and street vendors (121). This is because it was relatively easier to access and approach permanent shop vendors at the time of collection of data. Further, the number of vegetable and fruit vendors interviewed were also twice as many as vendors of flowers, meat and temple items. This is attributed to the fact that the number of vegetable and fruit vendors outnumber vendors of other products in all districts .



Findings and Analysis

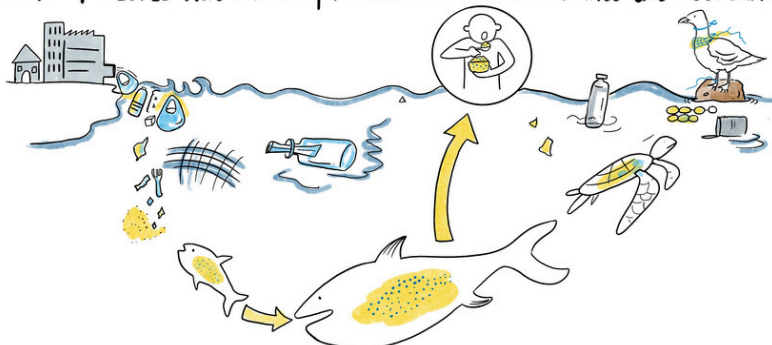
1. Baseline public perception study

For the baseline public perception study, we analysed the extent of awareness and understanding of the public about plastic pollution and its impacts, their role as consumers within the plastic pollution crisis, their knowledge and attitudes towards alternatives to plastics and their perception and awareness about the Meendum Manjappai campaign.

Awareness and understanding of plastic pollution

On awareness and understanding of plastic pollution, 98% of the respondents were aware that plastics are hazardous to the environment and human health. However, only 73% of the respondents were aware that microplastics are present in terrestrial, aquatic animals, birds and humans. Awareness on the penetration of microplastics into the food chain was highest among the middle aged group (55%) of respondents and among the urban population (59%). While 92% of the respondents were aware of what SUPs are, only 66% of the respondents were aware of the nationwide ban on certain SUP items. It is pertinent to note that among those who were aware of SUPs, more than half (57%) belonged to the urban population.

73% of PEOPLE were AWARE of MICROPLASTIC PENETRATION into the FOODCHAIN



Role of consumers in plastic pollution

When asked for the reasons why people prefer SUP, the respondents chose multiple answers. Their answers were ranked based on the order of their preference. Convenience of disposability was the number one reason for using SUP, followed by low cost, and easy availability in the market. Other reasons chosen by the respondents were lack of alternatives to SUP and the durability of plastics. One of the most important goals in this component of the study was to identify which factor contributes the most to plastic pollution as perceived by the consumers. A whopping 75% of the respondents believe that the ubiquity and the consequent inevitability of plastics is the number one contributor for plastic pollution.

Solutions and alternatives

84% of respondents were aware of alternative materials to SUP such as paper, metal, glass, and plant-based materials. One of the important findings was that 93% of respondents believed that alternative materials are safer than SUP and 94% of respondents affirmed they would be willing to avoid SUP and use alternative materials.

Those respondents who answered they would not be willing to switch to alternatives cited the following reasons (in this order of concern):

- Alternatives are expensive
- Alternatives are not easily available in the market; They have a shorter lifespan
- Easily breakable
- Limited design

All the respondents who cited the cost factor for their unwillingness to switch to alternatives are from the economically weaker section (EWS), whose annual income was less than 3 lakhs. It is also interesting to note that the respondents who cited the unavailability of alternatives in the market are proportionately split across both urban and rural.

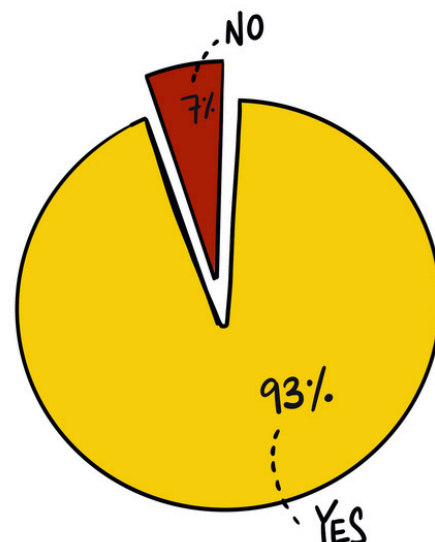


94% of PEOPLE were WILLING to AVOID SUPs and SWITCH to ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

Specifically, when asked about their willingness to take a cloth bag while shopping, 86% of respondents answered positively. Among those who answered negatively, 42% said that their unwillingness or inability was due to unplanned visits to the shops, whereas 22% said they forget to take a bag and 19% said that they find it inconvenient to take a bag to shop. Another interesting response from 18% of respondents who answered negatively was that they were unwilling to take a bag for shopping as they would get a free bag from the store.

A closer analysis of these responses reveals that 100% of those who responded that they would not be willing or maybe sometimes willing to take a cloth bag to shop are from the EWS. Out of which 55% of respondents who chose the option of 'unplanned visits to shops' belong to the young adults group (18-35 years). Whereas 71% of respondents who cited the reason as 'inconvenience' belong to the middle-aged group (36-55 years). More than half of the respondents who cited the reasons that they forget to take a bag (52%) and they get a free bag (55%) also belong to the middle-aged group (36-55 years).

Awareness of the Meendum Manjappai campaign



The study has found that 93% of the 823 respondents believe that cloth bags are better for the environment than SUP bags and 72% of the 823 respondents have heard of the Meendum Manjappai campaign. Of those not aware of the campaign, it is crucial to note that more than half (55%) of the respondents were from urban areas. In terms of awareness of the campaign across different age groups, 58% of the respondents who had not heard of the campaign belonged to the middle-aged group (36-55 years).

55% of those not aware of Meendum Manjappai are from Urban areas



While it was encouraging to find that significant majority had heard of the campaign and also believed that cloth bags are better for the environment, it was concerning to note that these numbers dropped drastically with respect to their understanding of the objective of the campaign. Only 12% of the respondents answered correctly that it was to prevent pollution and protect the environment by reducing SUPs. A shocking 51% (417) of those who answered, believe that the objective of the campaign is to 'bring back Tamil culture'. 10% of the respondents answered that the objective of the campaign was to increase revenue for the state.

Analysing the 51% of those who answered that bringing back Tamil culture is the objective of the campaign, it was worrying to note that 58% of them were from urban areas. It was also observed that out of the 51%, 58% belonged to the middle-aged group (36-55 years) and about 82% were from EWS. The awareness of the Meendum Manjappai campaign has reached people through various modes of communication. We asked the respondents to choose multiple answers and we found that people learned about the campaign through information in public places (52%), social media (39%), news channels (38%), newspapers (33%), and government portals (28%).

Another concerning observation was that 56% of the respondents were not aware of the existence of the kiosks/ vending machines for manjappai. Furthermore, out of those who were aware of the manjappai kiosks (44%), 57% of respondents answered they have not seen the kiosks anywhere and 6% answered that they might have seen one, but were unsure of where it was. Among those who responded that they had seen the kiosks, the majority (51%) of them had seen it in bus stands and 28% had seen it in the markets and only 9% had seen it in railway stations. The rest of the places where manjappai kiosks were spotted include beach (9%), park (15%), and other public places (5%). Of the 138 respondents who had seen the kiosks/vending machines, 82% of them had used the machine.



Finally, despite the limitations in understanding and awareness of the purpose of the campaign, 68% of the respondents believed that the Meendum Manjappai campaign was effective. When asked about what they believed could be improved about the campaign, 80% of the respondents wanted more information and education on impacts of plastics and plastic pollution, 54% asked for wider publicising for the campaign, 71% suggested the number of kiosks should be increased, 60% wanted instructions on how to operate the kiosks and 41% wanted the manjappai to be available in different colours and sizes. (Based on the data collected and informal conversations with the respondents we find that many people still think that carrying a manjappai is not fashionable). We received numerous suggestions from the respondents that manjappai should be available in different colours and sizes to destigmatize this notion. Another interesting observation is that the middle-aged group (36-55 years) tested highest for many questions relating to awareness, however, their responses to questions testing behavioural change revealed that the 'intention to action' gap is quite significant in this age group.

Respondents also flagged that when shops give a SUP bag for free, they would not be incentivised to carry their own bag or to even buy a cloth bag from the kiosk. Respondents also expressed concern that the cost of 10 rupees for a cloth bag from the kiosk is too expensive. They suggested that the government could implement a special scheme to make cloth bags available for shopkeepers at a subsidised price. These suggestions apart, there was an overwhelming agreement among the respondents that the 'only way to eliminate plastics from our lives is to stop manufacturing'.

52% of PEOPLE were AWARE of the CAMPAIGN through INFORMATION in PUBLIC PLACES and 39% through SOCIAL MEDIA



2. A survey to understand attitudes of market vendors towards SUP bags and alternatives

For the study among market vendors we analysed the consumption patterns, attitudes towards alternatives and awareness and perception of the Meendum Manjappai campaign from 809 vendors across 8 districts.

Awareness of plastic pollution and SUP ban

While testing the awareness of impacts of plastics among vendors, we found that 99% of the respondents believe and are aware that plastics are hazardous to the environment and health. It was encouraging to find that 86% of the respondents were aware of the nationwide ban on certain SUPs. An analysis of the district-wise awareness of the ban revealed that the vendors in Perambalur were least aware (only 15 out of 102 vendors), with other districts faring better, with awareness levels at about 90% or above. Overall, while 93% of permanent shop vendors and 80% of street vendors were aware of the ban, 44% of vendors with temporary shops were unaware of the ban.

Consumption of SUP

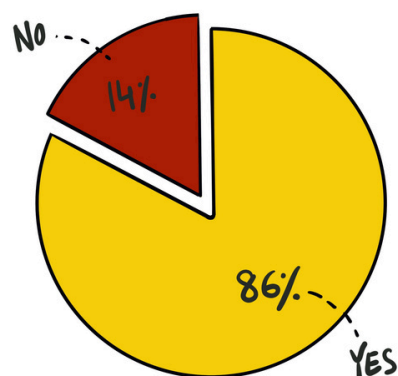


Despite reasonable awareness in various districts and among various types of vendors about the ban, it is alarming that 85% of the overall respondents sell their products packed in SUP bags. Further, when asked if they automatically pack all sold goods in SUP bags, 44% responded affirmatively, 41% admitted they do so only when customers ask for a bag and 15% responded that they do not automatically pack all sold goods in SUP bags.



Excluding the 124 respondents who declined to answer, the study found that on a daily basis, 31% of respondents use 25-50 SUP bags, 28% of the respondents use 50-75 SUP bags, 25% use less than 25 SUP bags, 12% use 75-100 SUP bags and 3% use more than 100 SUP bags every day.

AWARENESS of the NATION-WIDE BAN on CERTAIN SUP ITEMS



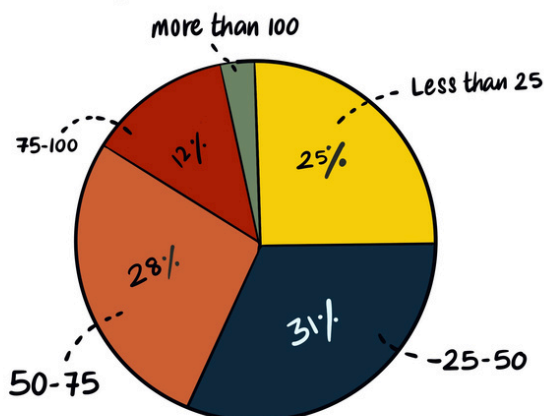
Although many respondents declined to answer how many SUP bags they bought every month and its cost, conversations with some respondents off the record revealed that one packet (100 bags) of SUP bags of a standard size would average up to 150 to 170 rupees. Considering the highest number of vendors use 25-50 SUP bags everyday, and an average cost of 160 rupees per packet of SUP bags, we can arrive at an estimate of 1140 bags per month with vendors spending about 1800 to 2000 rupees per month (subject to variations based on size and number of bags).

We asked respondents the reasons for using SUP bags to sell their products, ranked below in order of their preference:

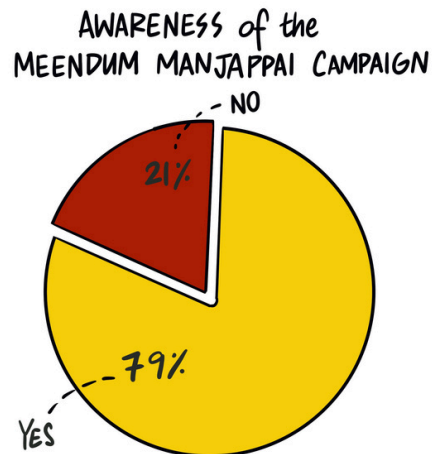
- Customers ask for bags
- Every other vendor in the market uses them
- SUP bags are easily available in the market
- Alternatives are expensive
- Nature of my product requires SUP bags
- SUP bags are cost-effective
- Hygiene
- Safety

When asked if their customers would buy from their shops if they refused to provide a SUP bag, 56% of the respondents answered that their customers would not buy from their shops.

DAILY CONSUMPTION of SUP bags by MARKET VENDORS



Meendum Manjappai campaign and alternatives



The study found that 79% of respondents were aware of the Meendum Manjappai campaign. Analysing this data further district wise, shows that while over 90% vendors in Madurai, Nagapattinam, Kanyakumari, Theni, Coimbatore were aware of the campaign, other major cities did not fare as well as these districts. 79% of vendors in Trichy and 74% of vendors in Chennai were found to be aware of the campaign. Perambalur showed worrying results with only 7% of the vendors aware of the campaign. On analysis of this data based on the type of shops, we found that 90% of the permanent shop vendors, 61% of street vendors and 52% of temporary shop vendors were aware of the campaign.

We asked for suggestions from respondents to reduce the use of SUP bags in marketplaces. The following are the responses in the order of their preference:

- Increase awareness of impacts of plastic pollution among public (79%)
- Alternatives must be promoted (66%)
- Alternatives should be cheap (75%)
- Consumers should be fined for using SUP bags (66%)
- Government should seal the factories producing SUP bags (57%)
- Strong penalties should be imposed (23%)

The data collected from market vendors reveal that irrespective of the geographic area and type of product, usage of SUP bags is the norm and taking a cloth bag to shops is the exception. Many vendors responded that even though they are aware of the dangers of plastics, the cost of alternatives, customer demand and peer pressure do not allow them to switch to alternative materials. Another observation from the responses from vendors is that the easy availability of SUP bags is also a major factor in their rampant consumption despite the ban on certain SUPs.

The findings also show that the manjappai kiosks, albeit a great initiative, have not reached people sufficiently. Respondents also mentioned that the machines are available in very limited places, mostly in district headquarters. And even if they are available, they are not maintained properly as they are rarely in working condition. This points to the need for increasing the reach and visibility of these kiosks, with quality checks to ensure their functioning.

The MM campaign is a step in the right direction, and with some course correction, can reach its full potential

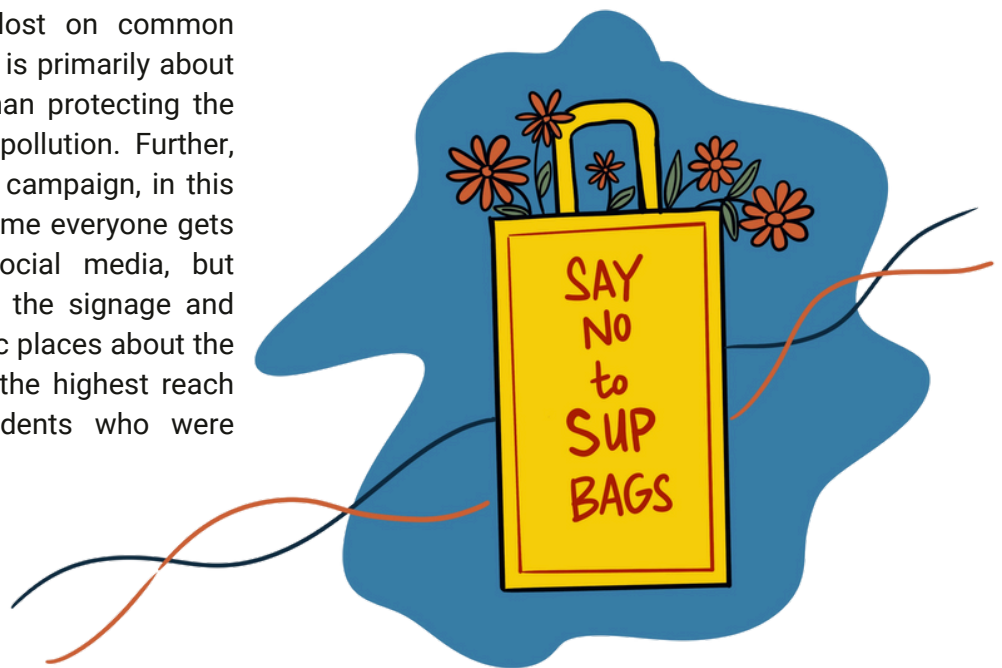


Conclusion and Recommendations

Regular monitoring and evaluation is one of the key pillars of any successful campaign. Since launch of the campaign 2021 when the Meendum Manjappai campaign was launched, the state government and its enforcement agencies have strived to publicise this flagship campaign and eliminate the use of SUPs, particularly carry bags.

The findings of the baseline public perception study show that overall, there is significant awareness among the citizens on the hazards of plastic as a material, causes and impacts of plastic pollution and the Meendum Manjappai campaign. However, the awareness and understanding of the objective of the campaign is quite limited and superficial. While it is understandable and admirable that the nomenclature for the campaign was designed in such a way that it is catchy and connects the current problem of plastics to the solutions from our tradition of sustainability, the purpose of the campaign seems to be lost on common citizens who believe that it is primarily about the Tamil culture rather than protecting the environment from plastic pollution. Further, regarding the reach of the campaign, in this digital era, one would assume everyone gets their information from social media, but contrary to popular belief, the signage and information placed in public places about the campaign seems to have the highest reach (311 out of 523 respondents who were aware of the campaign).

One of the major hurdles for citizens moving away from SUP and switching to alternatives is that alternatives are expensive and not easily available in the market compared to SUPs. This coincides with the responses to the question on what citizens think contributes most to plastic pollution, for which the top answer (75%) was 'plastics are ubiquitous and therefore inevitable'. The lack of durability and versatility in alternatives is also another major obstacle. We expected some variations between urban and rural populations and among various income groups with respect to awareness and attitudes towards plastics, however surprisingly there was not much difference. Irrespective of whether it was an urban or rural respondent, the easy availability of plastics and the lack of availability of alternatives was common to both populations.

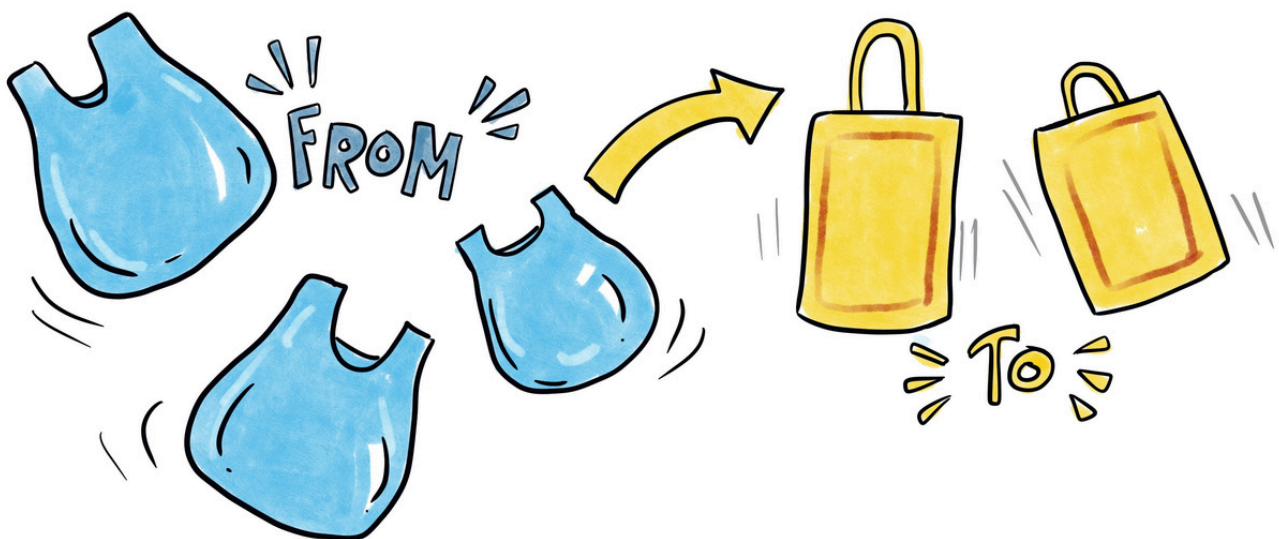


The findings of the study among market vendors show that their consumption patterns and attitude with respect to SUP bags remains unchanged, despite their awareness of the hazards of plastics and the SUP ban.

With respect to their attitudes towards alternatives, vendors find it extremely challenging to switch to alternatives, primarily because of customer demand for a free bag and the high-cost factor of alternatives. These deter them from transitioning and complying with the ban. It was also shocking to see that most of the SUP bags did not bear any information on the microns, name and place of manufacturer, etc. This shows that there is an abundant supply of SUP bags in the market which go unregulated. Some vendors also mentioned that cloth bags are not suitable for their products such as flowers and meat and therefore they do not have a choice but to use SUP bags. While some traders' associations, particularly in Koyambedu, decide to stop using SUPs, the smaller vendors who are just outside the market premises, mostly street vendors, are unable to comply, and continue using SUPs.

Similar to the baseline public perception component, the market vendors component of the study also revealed an overwhelming number of suggestions from the respondents on one common point - production of SUP. Respondents expressed disappointment that the enforcement of SUP ban focuses primarily on small vendors, and that it is unfair. They added that the government needs to enforce the ban on big MNCs as they are the major contributors of plastic pollution, and continue using SUPs despite their capabilities and financial resources to transition away.

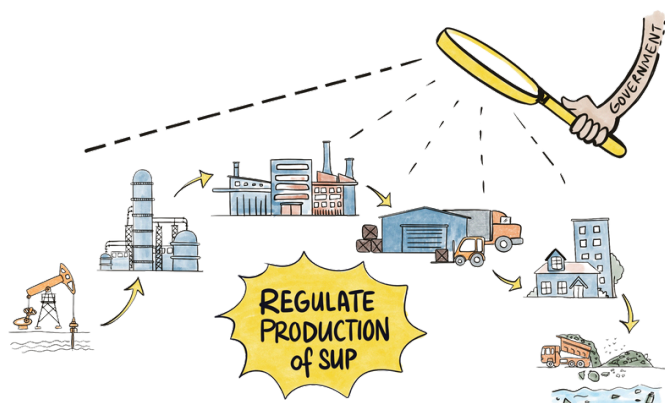
In conclusion, the study shows that the campaign has been effective in garnering attention to the campaign, particularly with the choice of name - 'Meendum Manjappai' - and in mainstreaming the issue of plastic pollution. But specifically, it has not been effective in achieving its objective - promoting cloth bags to eliminate SUPs. Therefore, we believe that the data collected from the study conducted among 1632 respondents across eight districts in Tamil Nadu is a valuable resource for the state government in developing targeted interventions.



1. Regulating the production of SUP bags

As long as production of SUP bags continues business as usual, consumption will also continue at the same rate, if not higher. The ban on SUP bags below 120 microns is required to be enforced starting at the production stage for effective implementation of the ban.

The study has revealed that the SUP bags used by some of the respondents (market vendors) did not disclose any information - name and place of manufacturing company, thickness (microns) of the SUP bag, certification, type of plastic, etc.



In some of the packets/ bundles which bore the name of the manufacturer, it was revealed that SUP bags below 120 micron also continue to be produced and consumed despite the ban. Further, **we found non-compliance with Rule 11 of the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 which requires the disclosure of details of manufacture on each SUP bag.** As the ban prohibits the manufacture, distribution and sale of SUP bags below 120 micron, in the absence of these mandated details on every single SUP bag, it is not possible to enforce the ban effectively as we cannot determine the thickness of the bag and track the manufacturer and subsequently extended producer responsibility cannot be effectively applied.

Therefore, imposing stringent sanctions for non-compliance with existing regulations on production, distribution and sale of SUP bags must be ramped up. Adequate sanctions must be imposed to ensure that there is a deterrent effect on non-compliant producers.

The regulating mechanism for capping production should embody transparency and accountability. To facilitate this, clear targets and timelines should be set where progressive reduction of production of SUP is monitored. This can be added to the existing interface in the Meendum Manjappai app, wherein list of name and place of manufacture of SUP, and the quantum of and location from where SUP has been seized, and the amount in fine collected from each manufacturer shall be displayed. The interface should also contain details such as current rate/ figures of production of SUP in Tamil Nadu.



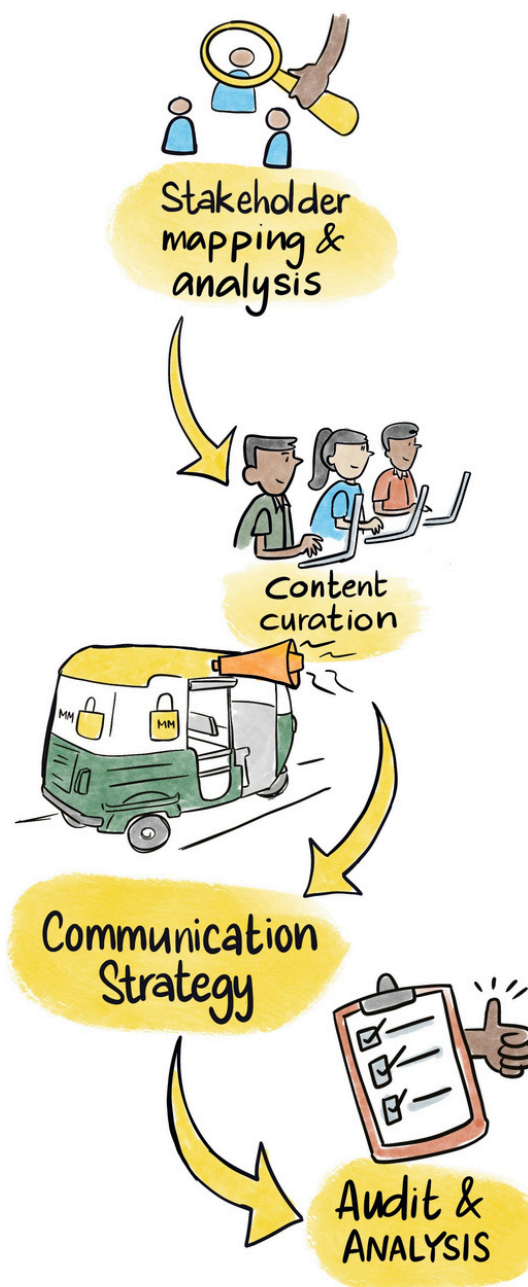
2. Expanding the scope of campaign communication strategy

The study finds that the name of the campaign has reached widely across Tamil Nadu, owing to the catchiness of the title and the government's efforts in publicising the campaign. However, ***the findings also reveal that the underlying objective of the campaign is lost on citizens as the awareness of the objective of the campaign was rightly understood only by 12% of 823 respondents.***

Therefore, a communication strategy which encompasses the following elements is suggested:

- **Target audience** - Identifying and grouping target audience based on their level of awareness.
- **Context** - Developing Information, Education, Communication (IEC) resources on the larger context of plastic pollution such as its impacts on human, animal and marine health, human rights, environmental pollution and climate change.
- **Medium of communication** - Signages in public places including public service announcements and information on social media seem to have the largest traction in creating awareness of the campaign compared to other channels of communication, as per the study. Further, including the campaign as part of the curriculum of school students could also widen the reach of the campaign, especially among children. Educational institutions need to be encouraged to become 'SUP free' campuses and it would incentivise them to accelerate this process if institutions switching to reusables are recognised and acknowledged by the government.

- **Monitoring & evaluation** - Regular monitoring and evaluation of the campaign in consultation with relevant stakeholders such as enforcing agencies, environmental and human rights NGOs, scientific community including social scientists, marginalised communities who are dependent on SUP bags, etc would ensure inclusive and effective progress in achieving the objectives of the campaign. Developing an action plan to ensure just transition of the communities whose livelihoods are dependent on SUP bags, would enable a smoother, easier and inclusive transition away from SUP.



3. Improving accessibility of Manjappai kiosks/vending machine

The study found that **the visibility of the kiosks/vending machines is limited as more than half of the 823 respondents were not aware of cloth bags dispensed through the kiosk/vending machines.** Therefore, increasing the number of kiosks/vending machines and choosing their location strategically so as to increase their visibility is recommended. Further, based on the suggestions by the respondents in the baseline public perception study, the kiosks/vending machines should also provide for cloth bags available in different sizes and colours so as to break the stigma associated with carrying a cloth bag/manjappai.



Another important suggestion received from the respondents in both the studies is the affordability of cloth bags from the kiosks/vending machines. While the objective of the campaign is to reintroduce and imbibe the practice of carrying a cloth bag over a SUP bag among people, it is imperative to be mindful that the cost of the manjappai should not act as a deterrent in people transitioning to the reuse culture. The respondents felt that the current price of ten rupees for a manjappai is quite high when compared to SUP bags being available for free in shops. Therefore, the cost factor is seen as a deterrent for people from all income groups.

4. Alternatives to SUP bags

While the study shows that **79% of the respondents were willing to take extra steps to switch to reusable materials instead of SUP, their mobility from intention to action is determined by various external factors such as availability, accessibility, affordability of alternatives and convenience.** Currently, SUP bags are easily available in the market for a very low cost in comparison to cloth bags. Only if this landscape is reversed and alternatives are made easily available in the market, priced competitively proportional to the cost of SUP bags, can consumers overcome the factor of convenience which plays a significant role in their decision-making.

The findings of the study among market vendors show that their consumption patterns and attitude with respect to SUP bags remains unchanged, despite their awareness of the hazards of plastics and the SUP ban.

With respect to their attitudes towards alternatives, vendors find it extremely challenging to switch to alternatives, primarily because of customer demand for a free bag and the high-cost factor of alternatives. These deter them from transitioning and complying with the ban. It was also shocking to see that most of the SUP bags did not bear any information on the microns, name and place of manufacturer, etc. This shows that there is an abundant supply of SUP bags in the market which go unregulated. Some vendors also mentioned that cloth bags are not suitable for their products such as flowers and meat and therefore they do not have a choice but to use SUP bags. While some traders' associations, particularly in Koyambedu, decide to stop using SUPs, the smaller vendors who are just outside the market premises, mostly street vendors, are unable to comply, and continue using SUPs.

Similar to the baseline public perception component, the market vendors component of the study also revealed an overwhelming number of suggestions from the respondents on one common point - production of SUP. Respondents expressed disappointment that the enforcement of SUP ban focuses primarily on small vendors, and that this is unfair. They added that the government needs to enforce the ban on big MNCs as they are the major contributors of plastic pollution, and continue using SUPs despite their capabilities and financial resources to transition away.

In conclusion, the study shows that the campaign has been effective in garnering attention to the campaign, particularly with the choice of name - 'Meendum Manjappai' - and in mainstreaming the issue of plastic pollution. But specifically, it has not been effective in achieving its objective - promoting cloth bags to eliminate SUPs. Therefore, we believe that the data collected from the study conducted among 1632 respondents across eight districts in Tamil Nadu is a valuable resource for the state government in developing targeted interventions





About CAG

Citizen consumer and civic Action Group (CAG) is a 38-year-old non-profit, non-political and professional organisation that works towards protecting citizens' rights in consumer and environmental issues and promoting good governance processes including transparency, accountability and participatory decision-making.



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