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Project Dissertation Report on

Consumer Awareness, Perception, And Behaviour Towards Sustainable and Ethical Marketing

Submitted By

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24/DMBA/131

Under the Guidance of

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "Consumer Awareness, Perception, And Behaviour Towards Sustainable and Ethical Marketing" is a Bonafide and original work carried out by Mahima Maurya, a student of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program, under my guidance and supervision.

This research project is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration at Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University.

The student has satisfactorily completed the project work as prescribed by the university guidelines.

Project Guide
Dr. Arushi Jain

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the research project titled "Consumer Perception and Purchase Behavior Towards Sustainable and Ethical Marketing" is an original work carried out by me as part of my MBA program.

The study has been conducted for academic purposes, and all data collected has been used solely for research and educational purposes. The information presented in this report is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I further declare that this project has not been submitted previously for the award of any degree or diploma in any institution.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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I would like to extend my gratitude to all the respondents who participated in the survey and provided their valuable time and inputs. This research could not have been done without their cooperation.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study looked at how people think about companies that care about the environment and do the thing. It also checked how these thoughts affect what people buy. Lately taking care of the environment has become a deal for people and companies because of problems like climate change, pollution and running out of resources. So companies started doing things that're good for the environment and selling products that are eco-friendly to attract people who care. The main goal of the study was to see how much people know about eco- products what they think about them and what they actually buy. It also tried to understand influence on buying decisions and if theres a difference between whaat people say and their choices The study used information from a survey of 54 people, including students and working professionals and from research papers, articles and industry reports. The survey showed that most people know about eco- products but they don't always buy them. Most people only buy eco-products sometimes this shows there is a gap between what people think and what they do.

The study also shows that social media helps people know how to take care of the environment. However, when consumers purchase products, the factors of cost and quality are crucial. Consumers are often interested in the cost of the product and they do not wish to pay more for eco-friendly goods. The other important thing discovered was the unwillingness of consumers to trust organizations that claim to be environmentally aware. Many people think companies just use taking care of the environment as a way to sell more which makes people not trust them. This is called greenwashing. It affects how people think about companies. With these challenges people have good thoughts about taking care of the environment and doing the right thing. Many people said they care about the environment and don't buy products that are made in a way thats not fair.

The study concluded that even though people know about and care about taking care of the environment what they actually buy is affected by things like price, quality and trust. It suggested that companies should be transparent make eco-friendly products affordable and focus on quality to encourage people to buy products.

Overall the study showed that taking care of the environment and doing the thing is important, for companies today and that they need to make people trust them and actually buy eco-friendly products.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sustainability gradually became one of the most discussed global concerns because environmental and social problems started affecting everyday life more visibly than before. Issues such as climate change, pollution, excessive plastic usage, deforestation, industrial waste, depletion of natural resources, and rising carbon emissions increased awareness regarding responsible consumption and ethical business practices across different countries. Consumers gradually became more aware of how products were made, packaged, shipped and marketed. Traditionally most buying decisions were largely based on affordability, convenience and availability and product quality. In practice, environmental factors rarely affected regular consumer behaviour in the market. But the changing environmental conditions and the increasing public conversations about sustainability slowly began to influence consumer expectations. Businesses also realized that consumers were beginning to evaluate brands not only on the basis of products and pricing but also according to environmental responsibility and ethical practices followed by organizations. Sustainability therefore slowly evolved from being only a social concern into an important business and marketing strategy influencing customer relationships, brand reputation, and long-term organizational image.

Social media accelerated sustainability awareness very quickly among consumers.

In platforms like Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, blogging sites, podcasting, and social media groups, consumers were continuously subjected to information regarding environment campaigns, sustainability practices, living an eco-friendly lifestyle, ethical branding strategies, and marketing strategies by influencers. Consumers who are younger in age seemed well aware about sustainable consumption, recycling, responsible sourcing, cruelty-free manufacturing processes, and eco-friendly packaging due to constant exposure to digital content. Discussions about the environment increasingly became an integral part of digital content, and hence consumer awareness about environmental issues was highly raised. Consumers could openly talk about social responsibility, climate change, and environmental damage.

Many organizations started responding to these changing consumer expectations by introducing sustainable practices such as recyclable packaging, eco-friendly production methods, reduction of plastic usage, energy-efficient manufacturing, and responsible sourcing of raw materials. Several companies attempted to position themselves as socially responsible brands so as to increase customer loyalty as well as enhance long-term market reputation. Sustainability therefore became commercially important in addition to being socially relevant. It became more common for corporations to incorporate sustainability into their branding, communications, packaging, advertising, and operations strategy since environmentally aware customers have become an increasingly significant customer base. Sustainability had its effect in other industries as far as competitive advantage and differentiation strategy were concerned.

Ethical marketing was another emerging trend in the discussed time period.

Transparency, fairness, truthful advertising, responsible procurement, responsible labor practice, and corporate responsibility have become requirements that customers made regarding their interactions with companies. Such things as fair wages, safe work environment, cruelty-free manufacturing, environmental sustainability, and fair treatment of employees became factors that affected reputation more strongly than ever. Firms practicing unethical behaviour were criticized by the public via the Internet.

Moreover, with the growth in the marketing of sustainability, consumers faced confusion due to the growing tendency of making exaggerated environmental statements that was one of the reasons why greenwashing emerged. It was quite hard for consumers to distinguish between sustainable products and the use of green talk. Consumers were often exposed to ambiguous words like “green”, “eco-friendly”, “organic” or “natural” that lacked certification and transparent proofs about their sustainable nature. The repeated exposure to exaggerated environmental statements resulted in reduced trust from consumers, who grew sceptical about the sustainability related marketing strategies of companies. Consumers hence became more vigilant when it came to evaluating environmental statements.

Trust thus became a major issue in sustainable marketing practices.

Although people were conscious of environmental matters, at times there was a disconnection between environmental awareness and consumer behaviour in reality. People were concerned about environmental pollution, climate change, irresponsible manufacturing, social consciousness, etc. In practical situations, affordability, convenience, accessibility, product familiarity, and quality continued to influence buying behaviour more strongly than sustainability concerns in many cases.

Researchers from different countries therefore started identifying the actual gap between attitude and behaviour in pattern of sustainable consumption. Consumers frequently supported sustainability conceptually and expressed positive attitudes regarding eco-friendly products, but their actions during actual purchase situations often remained different. Products that were sustainable were believed to be relatively expensive and inconvenient for usage when compared to non-sustainable products. Such perceptions made it difficult for people who were environmentally conscious to prefer sustainable products whenever there was a need for them. The relationship between sustainable consumption and awareness of environmental issues became an area of concern among sustainable marketing scholars.

The Indian market environment offered a unique situation for the examination of sustainable products in relation to ethics of consumerism. Issues such as air pollution, plastic pollution, water shortage, waste mismanagement, and climatic issues were causing heightened awareness about sustainability among Indians living in cities. Government campaigns, education, environmental documentaries, social activism, and internet debates had made it easier to create awareness among consumers in India about sustainability. Younger people, students, and other professionals seemed much more aware of sustainability issues due to their greater exposure to digital media and lifestyle changes.

Nonetheless, the consumers in India were still highly price sensitive in practical buying scenarios. The eco-friendly products seemed relatively costly when compared with their traditional counterparts, and they discouraged the consistent uptake by many customers. Moreover, the availability of such products was also constrained in a number of local markets, mainly in rural settings. Consumers were unable to

completely trust the sustainability statements put forward by companies since the rate of environmental advertising had gone up significantly.

A number of organizations continued to focus heavily on branding efforts related to sustainability due to growing awareness of consumers. The companies realized the importance of sustainability in terms of brand improvement, as well as attracting young consumers who were conversant with the issue of environmentalism. In addition, the use of sustainability was seen as a way of improving business relationships and organizational images among competing firms. In spite of the increased awareness, consistent adoption of sustainable products was rather limited in a number of instances. The consumers were often in favor of sustainability from a conceptual point of view but kept on experiencing difficulties at the time of making a purchase decision. This clearly indicated that there was a need to gain a deeper understanding about consumer perception and behaviour in relation to sustainable and ethical marketing practices. In light of this situation, an attempt was made in the current study to analyze the consumers' perception of sustainable and ethical marketing and factors affecting their purchase behaviour.

1.2 Problem Statement

The concept of sustainability gained prominence in the past few years owing to environmental concerns like pollution, climate change, massive amounts of plastic, deforestation, and resource exhaustion which were impacting both companies and customers alike. Eco-friendly products, packaging materials, sustainable sourcing of raw material, and brand promotion activities were some of the measures taken by organizations in accordance with their changing marketing strategies. On the other hand, the concept of environmental protection was also gaining popularity among consumers who got to know about it through various means like educational campaigns, videos, government awareness programs, social networking sites, and other forms of digital media. Sustainability thus became a major component of contemporary marketing communication.

- Although sustainability awareness was evident, price remained a barrier for buying sustainable goods because of the high cost involved.

- Greenwashing practices by firms contributed to skepticism regarding green marketing claims amongst many consumers.
- Lack of availability of sustainable products made it difficult for them to be bought and used regularly.
- The use of social media promoted awareness on sustainability issues; however, it led to confusion on the part of the consumers.
- Positive attitudes towards sustainability were not reflected in their buying decisions in reality.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study has been conducted with following objectives:

- To analyze the level of awareness among consumers regarding sustainable and ethical marketing
- To identify the key factors that influenced consumer purchasing decisions
- To evaluate the if consumer willing to spend a premium price for sustainable products
- To understand consumer perception regarding ethical practices and greenwashing

These objectives helped in providing a clear picture about the behaviour of consumer and the effectiveness of sustainable marketing strategies.

1.4 Scope of the Study

This help in analysing consumer behaviour related to sustainable and ethical marketing within a specific group of respondents. The sample mainly included students and working professionals, as they represented active consumers with exposure to digital media and market trends.

This research explored a number of issues such as awareness, buying behaviour, attitudes, and ethical views of sustainability. Some of the issues that were considered to affect consumer behaviour in decision making were price, quality and trust. However, there are some limitations in this study despite the above advantages. The sample size was relatively small and data were collected from a specific demographic group . This could imply that the results of the research are not generalisable to the

whole population. Individual opinion was sought so there could have been individual bias.

Although the above points were made, this research has obtained some important insights into consumer behaviour. It highlighted the key trends in sustainable marketing and provided useful recommendations for improving marketing practices.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Environmental and social issues, sustainable and ethical marketing became highly relevant; consumer awareness was affected. Pollution, changes in climate, an excessive amount of plastic waste and poor working conditions pushed consumers to rethink their decisions regarding their purchases. Moreover, firms realized that consumers no longer evaluated products in terms of their quality and price; sustainability played a significant role, affecting brand perception and consumer loyalty. Researchers therefore questioned whether consumers preferred sustainable products or not – if market forces continued to shape consumers' preferences or if there was room for change. With social media becoming the new norm for communication, consumers were continuously exposed to environmentally friendly campaigns, ethical branding, and sustainability talks which affected sustainable marketing further. Sustainable marketing thus transitioned from being a niche area into an overall strategy used by industries.

In their book, Kotler & Keller (2016) state that contemporary customers demand companies' ethics and transparency; environmental responsibility is now seen as a necessity rather than an extra asset.Research on green marketing was mostly concerned with environmental communication.

Numerous organizations have adopted sustainability not as an organizational task, but rather as a means of promotion (Peattie and Crane, 2005). In this study, the researchers found that firms engaged actively in environmental advertising, but there were no notable organizational changes. Thus, the validity of environmental advertising was affected adversely, and there was a higher level of consumer skepticism. It was found that organizations paid more attention to creating a positive corporate image through advertising and public relations than implementing actual environmental practices.

Greenwashing later become one of the most contentious topics in sustainable marketing due to the difficulty for consumers to establish whether the information provided to them about being environmentally-friendly was true or misleading. According to research, the use of phrases such as "green," "natural," and "eco-friendly" lacked proper substantiation. Excessive exposure of consumers to such information made them less inclined to trust eco-friendly products and advertisements.

The willingness to trust has been the primary determinant of purchasing sustainable products. Studies have shown that consumers tend to prefer sustainable products if the organizations provide verifiable data regarding their environmental initiatives..

Joshi and Rahman (2015) examined green purchase behaviour and result was that consumers preferred sustainability and environmental protection. However, actual purchasing behaviour often remained inconsistent. In real buying cases, many customers preferred cheaper and more convenient goods despite their environmental concern. The researchers found that affordability, product availability, and concerns about authenticity were significant barriers to sustainable consumer behaviour. They pointed out that there was an attitude-behavioural gap since the customers had a supportive attitude towards sustainable consumption but their actions were different.

Similar findings can be observed in the research conducted by Gleim et al. (2013). The authors pointed out that the mere concern for the environment was not enough to ensure continued participation in sustainable shopping activities. Consumers would be reluctant to buy eco-friendly products at a high price or with uncertainty on the performance. Their finding suggested that the purchasing decisions were based on practical matters such as convenience and affordability.

White, Habib and Hardisty (2019) argue that behavioural approaches to sustainable consumption stress that awareness alone is seldom sufficient to trigger sustainable consumption behaviour among consumers. Sometimes sustainable behaviour meant more effort, lifestyle changes, and financial compromise, slowing the process. The authors contend that companies should make it easier for people to make sustainable choices instead of trying to raise awareness or appeal to people's emotions.

Social media would rapidly emerge as one of the most important drivers of sustainability awareness among young consumers.

Social media like Instagram, YouTube and Facebook opened up consumers to environmental dialogues, sustainability campaigns, influencer advertisements and eco-friendly products. "It was observed that sustainability-related posts had a strong effect on young people including students and professionals because of their heavy reliance on digital devices. The wide-ranging digital promotion caused some confusion in a

few cases. Consumers were not always able to differentiate between genuine sustainability efforts and marketing-oriented environmental claims.

Ethical marketing was also an important area of discussion in the previous literature. Researchers were becoming more and more concerned about transparency, fairness, truthful advertising, responsible sourcing and ethical labour practices. Consumers began to evaluate brands not only on the quality of the products but also on the ethical standards of the organisations. Unethical practices have been found to damage consumer trust more than sustainability initiatives can help, in some studies.

Research in India has shown mixed consumer behaviour towards sustainability. Educational programs, environmental campaigns and a growing public concern for pollution and waste generation steadily increased awareness for the eco-friendly products. Urban consumers, especially young people, showed a greater awareness of sustainability concepts than in previous years.

This increased awareness did not however translate into a less price sensitive Indian consumer at the actual point of purchase. Several studies found that consumers supported sustainability ideologically but affordability and convenience had a greater influence on final buying decision than environmental concern. The regular adoption of eco-friendly products in the Indian market was also affected by the lack of sustainable alternatives and uncertainty about the authenticity of sustainability claims.

Research in this area has been extensive. However, some gaps in the research remain evident. Most of the previous works have concentrated on awareness and consumer attitude, rather than on actual purchasing behaviour. Ethical concerns and environmental sustainability were also often studied separately, rather than being examined together in a single framework.

2.1 Concept of Ethical Marketing

“Ethical marketing is the application of moral values to marketing activities”. It included the promotion of fairness and truthfulness in advertising, product claims and business operation.

Research indicated that consumers preferred companies that engaged in ethical business and did not engage in deceptive practices. Ethical marketing was a way for companies to gain credibility which was a must for maintaining customer loyalty.

Some scholars observed that a lot of companies are still practicing unethical behaviour such as misleading advertisement, product benefits exaggeration, lack of transparency. These activities negatively impacted consumers' perception of brands and damaged their reputation.

Furthermore, there were other ethical marketing issues such as price fairness, responsible resource management and safe working environment. Consumers began to give more importance to these factors and to consider them when making purchases.

2.2 Consumer Awareness of Sustainability

There was a notable increase in consumer awareness regarding sustainability in recent times owing to different reasons such as education, media influences and government initiatives. Research findings indicated that consumers were increasingly becoming aware about the importance of environmental conservation and their contribution through consumption patterns.

Media plays an important role in enhancing consumer awareness. Social media sites like Instagram, YouTube and Facebook are the source of awareness for environmental sustainability. Consumer are exposed to campaigns, advertisement messages and discussions related to environmental awareness.

Another important finding revealed by research is that younger consumers are much more environmentally aware than older age groups. These consumers include college students as well as working professionals.

But consumer awareness alone does not ensure consumer behaviour towards sustainability. It was found that consumers are environmentally aware but do not behave sustainably always.

2.3 Consumer Attitudes Towards Sustainable Products

Some research indicated that people's attitude towards sustainable products was positive, and they had concerns about environmental issues. In other words, consumers were appreciative of ecological products and brands that support sustainability.

Concerns for environmental issues and desire to make an impact on the environment were among the traits of consumers. They favored products that are recyclable or biodegradable.

Nevertheless, consumer's attitudes towards sustainability depended on various criteria including income, level of education, and personal values. Some consumers were very devoted to sustainability whereas some others were less concerned.

Additionally, it was seen that favourable attitudes may not have led to any behavioural changes. This indicated the presence of a gap between what consumers believed and what they did.

2.4 Consumer Buying Behaviour and Attitude-Behaviour Gap

Many researchers highlighted the consumer attitudes and buying behaviour gap. It is clear that consumers had positive attitudes about sustainability but did not act upon those attitudes during shopping.

Some studies showed that consumers liked sustainable products and believed that sustainability was important but actually purchased unsustainable products due to different reasons like high cost or unavailability.

For instance, consumers may have liked sustainable products but preferred less costly alternatives when they were unable to afford them. Moreover, unavailability of sustainable products acted as a discouragement for their purchase.

This implied that it was not enough that consumers were aware of sustainability and had a positive attitude towards it.

2.5 Factors Affecting Consumers' Choices of Sustainable Products

Several factors affected the choices of consumers with respect to sustainable products:

Price

Price was among the most important factors. Sustainable products had higher costs, and therefore, consumers refrained from buying them regularly.

Quality

Consumers tended to prefer high-quality products. Unsustainable products would be preferred to sustainable products if their quality was poor.

Availability

Unavailability of eco-friendly products discouraged their purchases. Consumers preferred to choose easily available products.

Brand Trust

Trust in companies played a significant role. Consumers were more likely to purchase from brands they trusted.

These factors collectively influenced consumer behaviour and decision-making.

2.6 Greenwashing and Consumer Trust

A further problem that has been considered in many studies is greenwashing. In this case, firms have been exaggerating or misleading information regarding their environmental practices. It meant a situation when firms have provided misleading information regarding their environmental practices.

It was believed that greenwashing lowered consumer trust and raised confusion among consumers. They faced challenges to distinguish between real and false sustainable products.

Trust thus became a vital factor affecting consumer decisions. Firms that practiced transparency managed to earn consumer trust easily.

2.7 Role of Social Media in Sustainable Marketing

Social media is important in shaping consumer awareness and behaviour. It provided a platform for companies to publicise their initiatives for sustainability and communicate with consumer.

Influencers and online content influenced consumer opinions. Consumers relied on reviews and recommendations before making purchase decisions.

Research suggested that social media is very effective in order to promote sustainable products and increasing consumer awareness.

2.8 Ethical Consumerism

Ethical consumerism referred to making purchasing decisions based on ethical considerations. Environmental impact, labour issues, and welfare of animals were among many aspects considered by consumers.

Research proved that consumers would rather choose brands with no unethical behaviour. Consumers' ethical views affected their brand loyalty and choices.

2.9 Problem of Sustainable Marketing

There were a number of problems that researchers had recognized, including:

- The high price of sustainable products
- Lack of consumer trust
- Awareness difficulties
- Difficulties in sustainability communication

Such problems hindered the promotion of sustainable products by firms.

2.10 Research Gaps

Despite a large body of research on sustainable and ethical marketing, there are still a number of important gaps in the present literature. Prior studies focused more on environmental awareness, green marketing communication and positive attitude of consumers towards sustainability. Conceptualising the support of consumers for eco-friendly products and responsible business practices was discussed by researchers. However, it has been less investigated, if these positive attitudes led to consumer consistent purchase behaviour in real market situations.

Previous studies also showed repeatedly the gap between consumer intention and actual buying behaviour.

Consumers are concerned about environmental protection, ethical sourcing and responsible consumption, but affordability, convenience, accessibility and product quality continue to influence their final purchase decision. This contradiction between awareness and actual behaviour was not sufficiently explored, especially in developing markets where consumers were more price sensitive.

Moreover, there existed another limitation of the prior research because ethical marketing and sustainable environment tended to be studied separately, rather than as one concept. For instance, some researchers examined environmental matters related to pollution, environmentally friendly packages, recycling products, and green marketing. At the same time, others paid attention to ethics in marketing as well as labor and sourcing issues. However, there is limited research that explored the combined effect of environmental and ethical issues on consumer perception and purchase behaviour.

Moreover, many of the studies are relatively limited on greenwashing and consumer trust.

With the commercialization of sustainability concepts, businesses were utilizing such language in terms of their branding and communications. However, the consumers had become more suspicious of the concept of sustainability. Prior research has done conceptual exploration of greenwashing. However, only few studies have explored the impact of misleading environmental communication on consumer trust and long-term purchasing behaviour, especially in the Indian market.

Another important area that was not well-explored is the social media influence. Digital platforms have dramatically increased people's exposure to sustainability campaigns, eco-friendly lifestyles, ethical branding and influencer promotions. In particular, younger consumers were constantly exposed to digital media and therefore became more familiar with sustainability-related discussions. However, there was little research about whether the awareness created from social media led to sustainable purchasing behaviour or was just limited to online engagement and positive attitudes.

These issues were studied in a particularly important setting, the Indian market, where awareness of sustainability among urban consumers has been increasing rapidly in the

recent years. Educational institutions, environmental campaigns, digital media discussions, documentaries and government initiatives created awareness about responsible consumption and ethical business practices. However in practice consumer behaviour was not consistent with affordability, accessibility, trust, convenience and uncertainty about product quality all influencing purchase decisions.

Most of the earlier studies carried out in developed countries were not always applicable to the Indian market as the behaviour of consumers, their purchasing power, cultural influences and price sensitivity were quite different in developed and developing economies.

Moreover, previous research has paid little attention to practical barriers that shape sustainable consumption behaviour in real market situations. However, these factors (e.g. product accessibility, willingness to pay premium prices, convenience, trust in environmental claims, perception of product effectiveness) were not always studied in one framework.In many studies, these factors were analyzed individually rather than collectively.

Another limitation observed within earlier literature was related to demographic coverage.

Several studies mainly focused on general consumer attitudes without specifically examining younger consumers, students, and working professionals who represented highly active digital consumers exposed regularly to sustainability-related content and ethical branding discussions.

Therefore, the aims was to address key differences by evaluation of consumer perception and purchasing behaviour towards sustainable and ethical marketing within the Indian context while considering awareness, trust, affordability, social media influence, ethical concerns, greenwashing, product quality, and accessibility together within one framework.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section presented the methodology adopted for conducting the research study on consumer behaviour towards sustainable and ethical marketing. It explained the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, research instruments, and tools used for data analysis.

The focus of this section was to provide a clear picture of how the study was conducted and to validate that the finding were reliable. The methodology helped in systematically collecting and analyzing data to fulfil the required objectives.

3.1 Research Design

The research design referred to the plan as well as structure used to conduct the research. Here, a descriptive research design was opted.

Descriptive research was considered appropriate because the study aimed to describe and analyze consumer awareness, attitudes, and behaviour towards sustainable and ethical marketing. It focused on answering questions such as “what,” “how,” and “to what extent.”

This design allowed the researcher to collect detailed information about consumer perceptions and identify patterns in their behaviour. It also was useful in organising data in a structured and meaningful way.

3.2 Design of the Study

The study was qualitative in nature.
The qualitative part involved the interpretation of consumer views, feelings and perceptions towards sustainability.

This combination provided a holistic understanding of consumer behaviour..

3.3 Data Collection

The collection of data was an important part of the research process. Both primary and secondary data was used in this study.

3.3.1 Primary Data

Primary data was gathered directly from respondents using a structured questionnaire. Which includes the following:

- Demographics
- Awareness of sustainable products
- Buying behaviour
- Attitudes towards sustainability
- Ethical perceptions

Distribution of questionnaire was through Google Forms, which allowed easy access and quick responses.

The use of primary data helped in obtaining first-hand information directly from consumers.

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3.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were retrieved from a number of sources such as:

- Research papers
- Articles
- Industry reports
- Databases Online

This data was useful in understanding the existing trends, supporting the primary findings and giving a broader view of sustainable marketing..

3.4 Sample Design

Method of sampling

The study was done using convenience sampling, in which participants who were easily accessible and available were selected for the survey. This method was selected because it was practical, less time consuming and made data collection easier.

Sample Size

The total sample size was 54 respondents.

The sample consisted of students and working professionals as they are active consumers and are exposed to the market trends and digital platforms..

Sampling Unit

The sampling unit included individuals who were consumers of various products and had basic awareness of sustainability.

3.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used in this study was a structured questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of 17 questions, divided into different sections:

- Demographics
- Awareness
- Buying behaviour
- Attitudes (Likert scale)
- Ethical perceptions

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3.6 Scaling Technique

A Likert scale was used to measure consumer attitudes.

Respondents were asked to rate statements on a scale of:

1 = Strongly Disagree

2 = Disagree

3 = Neutral

4 = Agree

5 = Strongly agree

This technique helped in measuring the intensity of consumer opinions and attitudes.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

All Information was gathered through online questionnaire. The questionnaire link was shared via:

- WhatsApp
- Social media platforms
- Personal contacts

Respondents were assured that their responses would remain confidential.

The data collection process was completed within a limited time period.

3.8 Data Processing and Visualization

After data collection, the responses were organized and process using simple tools.

The methods employed in the data analysis include:

- Percentage analysis
- Pie charts
- Bar graphs

These methods aided in the presentation of the data and helped in finding patterns in the consumer behaviour.

3.9 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity in the research study was maintained through the following measures:

- Use of clear and simple questionnaire format
- Use of relevant questions
- Employing consistent data collection procedure

The data obtained was deemed reliable because it was collected directly from the respondents.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The study made provision for ethical considerations throughout the research process. They included the following:

- Informing the respondents about the purpose of the study
- Voluntary participation by the respondents
- Anonymity and confidentiality of respondents' answers
- Academic use of the data collected

All these measures aided in making the research process transparent..

3.11 Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of the study include the following:

- Small sample size
- Narrow time frame

- Convenience sampling
- Personal opinion-based answers
- Geographical limitations

These limitations might have had an impact on the outcome of the study..

3.12 Importance of the Study

The study was important in understanding consumer behaviour towards sustainable and ethical marketing.

It provided insight into:

- Awareness of Consumers
- Purchase behaviour
- Sustainability attitudes

The findings can help firms to design better marketing strategies and to promote sustainable consumption.

4. ANALYSIS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter described the process of analysis of the data gathered from the respondents through the structured questionnaire method. This chapter focused on analyzing the consumer attitudes, behaviors, and awareness towards sustainable and ethical marketing.

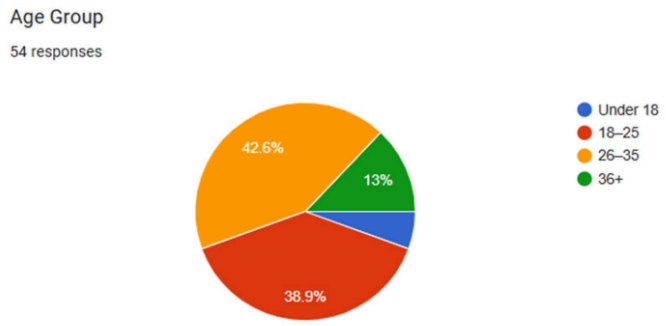
The gathered data from 54 respondents were analyzed using the percentage method and visual method through the use of pie chart and bar graph.

This chapter also discussed the results and recommendations that came from the analysis.

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1.1 Age Group

The figure reveals that the largest number of respondents were in the age group of 26-35 years (42.6%), followed by those in the age range of 18-25 years (38.9%)



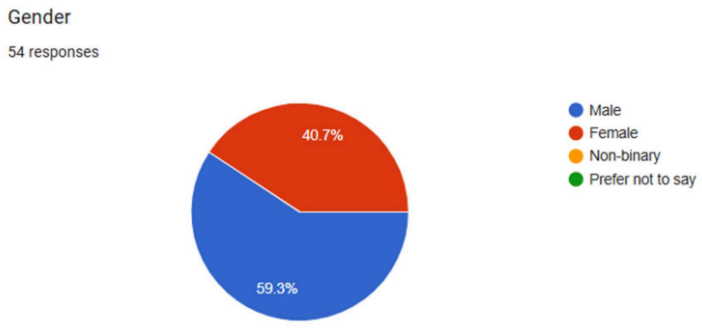
From the above answers, one can understand that the research had the maximum number of participants belonging to the youth category, which is economically active and more aware of sustainability initiatives on digital media.

In other words, people of this particular age category were more influenced by social media trends, global developments, and environmental movements.

The fact that this particular demographic group was highly sensitive to sustainability was an indicator of the target market for companies promoting sustainability.

4.1.2 Gender Distribution

The figure reveals that there were 59.3% males and 40.7% females among the respondents.

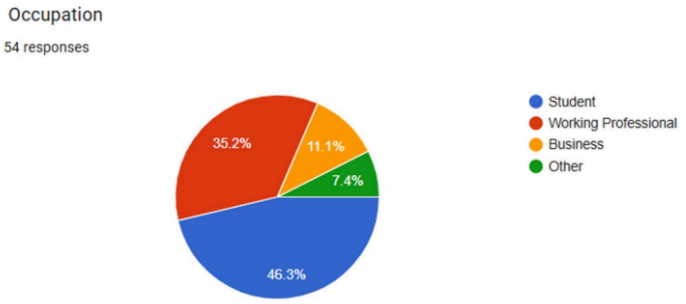


It can be concluded from the answer that the gender distribution among the respondents was quite even; however, the slight difference in gender distribution among respondents might have affected their attitudes toward some questions.

This suggested that future studies could further explore gender-based differences in sustainable consumption behaviour.

4.1.3 Occupation

The chart shows that students and working professionals together accounted for more than 80% of the respondents.



The analysis revealed that the research emphasized that the target sample included people who actively participated in the market and regularly made purchases. Furthermore, these people were more prone to know about sustainability because they had access to educational, business, and online environments.

Nonetheless, it was also implied that the results of the research may have been more reflective of urbanized and educated society.

4.1.4 Awareness of Sustainable Products

According to the graph above, 100 percent of those who took part in the survey were aware of sustainable products.



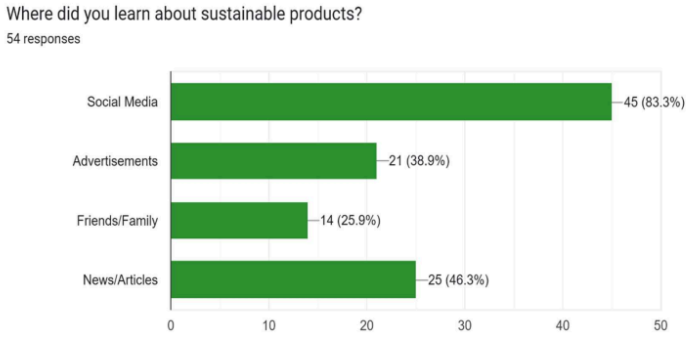
This showed that there was a very high degree of awareness, showing that sustainability was not just limited to being a niche term anymore; it had gone mainstream.

Nonetheless, this was important to note for the reason that:

Awareness alone could not make a behavioral difference, which would be made evident from future results..

4.1.5 Source of Awareness

As illustrated by the diagram above, social media (83.3%) was the leading medium, trailed by news and advertisement.



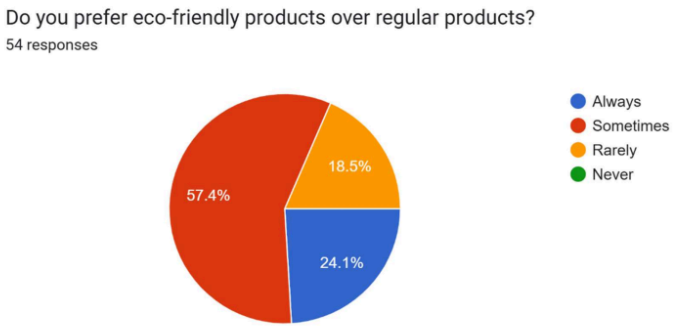
It is therefore evident that the major means of influencing consumer awareness were through digital media. Social media offered consumers consistent access to sustainability information, thus an effective means of altering perceptions about consumer

However, there was a greater likelihood of misleading information since the reliance on social media meant higher chances of greenwashing.

This means that firms need to be careful when leveraging social media in their operations.

4.1.6 Preferences for Eco-Friendly Products

As seen from the graph above, the majority of respondents have a preference for eco-friendly products occasionally (57.4%).



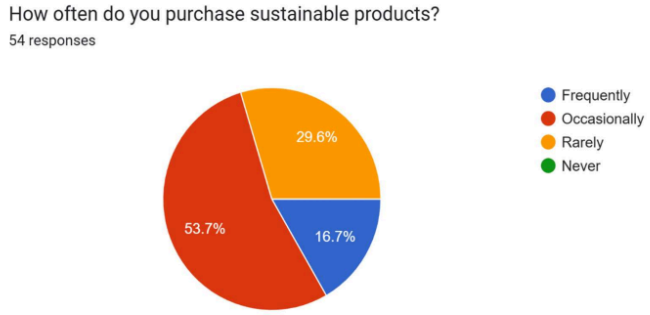
This revealed the existence of a disconnect between attitudes towards sustainable products and their actions towards those products.

In other words, sustainability did not take precedence in their decisions, which were dominated by price and quality considerations.

This revealed that the consumers were likely situational purchasers of these products, buying them when feasible and convenient.

4.1.7 Purchase Frequency

As seen from the graph above, the majority of respondents occasionally purchase eco-friendly products (53.7%) with a minority doing so regularly.



Based on the results, it could be assumed that sustainable products were not yet included into people's routine purchase activities.

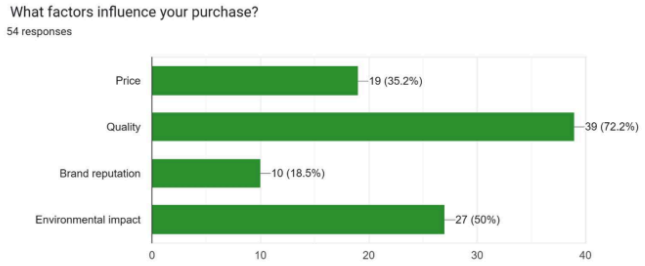
Thus, there could be several reasons for people's rare purchase, namely:

- Price
- Availability
- Habit

Therefore, it was crucial for manufacturers to make their products accessible and affordable for customers.

4.1.8 Purchasing Influences

The figure demonstrates that quality (72.2%) was the highest rated factor, while environmental impact came second.

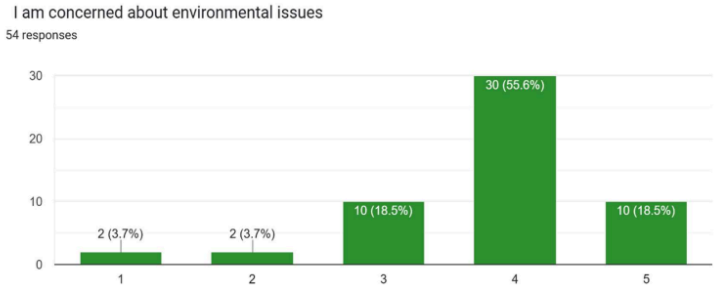


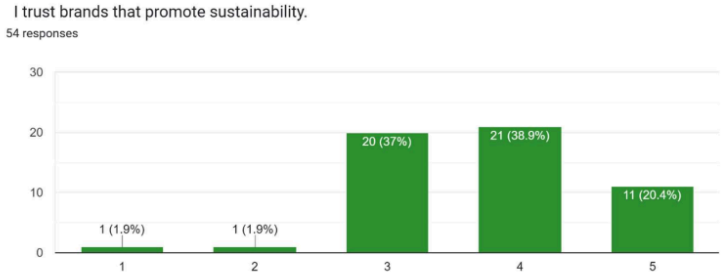
This clearly implied that functional aspects were more valued by the consumers than ethical ones.

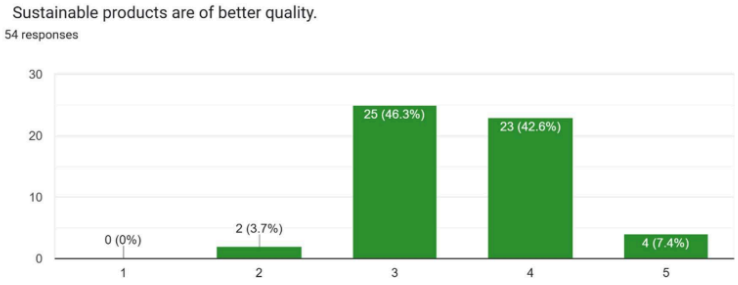
Even though sustainability was essential, it still could not substitute basic needs like product quality or performance. In other words, the businesses had to consider both aspects in their products.

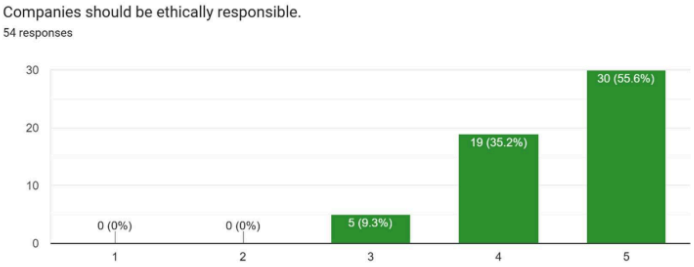
4.1.9 Consumers' Perspectives (Likert Scale)

As is seen from the figures above, there is a high level of agreement concerning environmental concern and business ethics..









These results show that consumers have sustainable attitudes, although they do not always act on them.

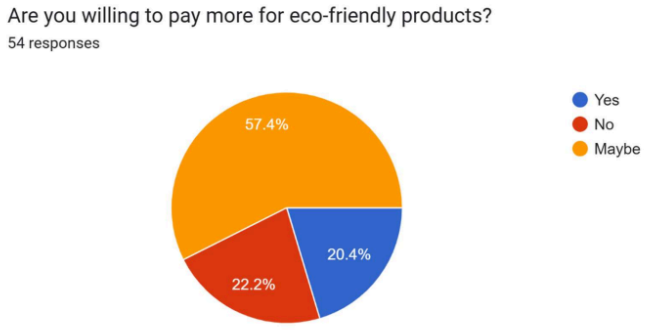
It can be interpreted as the existence of certain obstacles which are:

- lack of trust
- sensitivity to price
- habitual consumer behaviour

It means that although consumers expect something from businesses, they are not perfectly consistent themselves.

4.1.10 Willingness to Pay More

As shown in the figure above, the highest proportion of respondents chose “Maybe,” (57.4%) because of consumer caution.



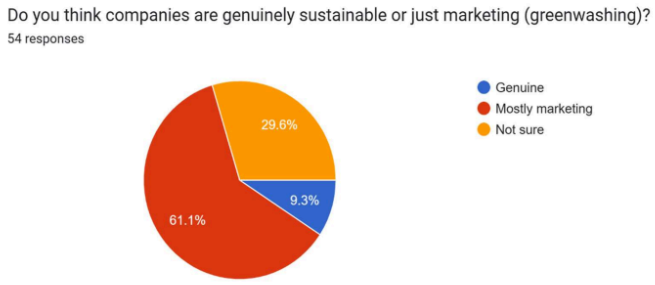
They weren't unwilling to pay more, but they required:

- Value for money
- Brand integrity
- Obvious benefit

It seems clear that the company needs to explain the added value of sustainable products to justify higher pricing.

4.1.11 Perception of Greenwashing

As indicated by the figure above, the majority (61.1%) thought that sustainability was just another way to market their product.



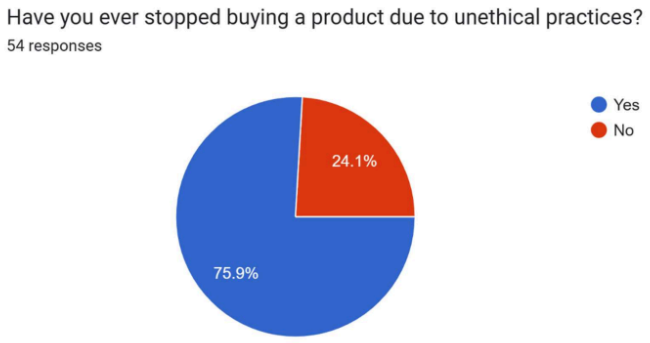
This was one of the crucial insights, showing consumer mistrust.

The perception of greenwashing meant that customers have become increasingly sceptical about sustainability.

Such distrust may act as a significant impediment to sustainable consumerism.

4.1.12 Ethical Behaviour

It can be observed from the graph that 75.9% of the total respondents had ceased purchasing products as a result of unethical behaviour.



The results indicate that although the consumers do not necessarily select sustainable products, they react very strongly to unethical behavior.

Negative actions by companies had a greater impact than positive sustainability efforts.

This suggested that maintaining ethical standards was critical for brand survival and reputation.

4.2 Findings

The findings of the study showed that awareness regarding sustainable and ethical marketing had increased considerably among consumers during recent years. Most respondents appeared familiar with concepts such as eco-friendly products, recyclable packaging, ethical sourcing, environmental responsibility, and sustainable consumption practices. Consumers, particularly students and office workers, were also seen to be more informed about the issues of sustainability due to their repeated

exposure through social media conversations, campaigns, documentaries, digital content, and changes in lifestyle trends. The environmental issues related to pollution, global warming, plastic waste, and unethical business practices had also played a crucial role in making consumers aware of issues.

Yet, knowledge alone did not influence the decision-making process of consumers in a real-life marketing situation.

Even though all participants had positive attitudes towards sustainable practices, they chose normal products due to reasons of low price and accessibility. It could be seen in the presence of an attitude-behaviour discrepancy, wherein consumers had attitudes favouring sustainability but behaved otherwise when buying. Several respondents appreciated eco-friendly products and ethical brands but hesitated while paying premium prices during regular purchasing situations.

Price therefore emerged as one of the strongest factors affecting sustainable consumption behaviour within the study. Sustainability products seemed to be more expensive than other products. It is noteworthy that sustainable products were often viewed as costly relative to regular ones. Consumers always chose inexpensive products even if they had some worries about environmental protection and responsibility. Such a problem seemed more relevant for customers who tended to give priority to practical and cost considerations in their daily shopping behaviour.

The quality and convenience of products could also serve as a key factor influencing consumer choice.

Sustainable products were expected to be as efficient, reliable, durable, and accessible as ordinary products. When eco-products were less effective, less convenient, or harder to obtain, consumers were more likely to prefer traditional products even if they supported sustainability. Such findings prove that only the awareness about environment problems did not make a customer purchase sustainable products in the long run.

In addition, the study showed that trust had a vital role in influencing consumer perception towards sustainable and ethical marketing. Many participants showed signs of hesitancy in relation to sustainability communication since environmental

marketing had grown considerably in recent years. It was difficult for many consumers to distinguish between environmentally friendly marketing communications and actual sustainable products. Overstated sustainability claims and greenwashing appeared to create a certain skepticism towards eco branding.

As a result, consumers tended to believe in brands that were transparent in their certifications, sources, environmental policies, packaging, and ethics.

One of the aspects that seemed to influence consumer awareness about sustainability was social media. Social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, among others, constantly expose consumers to environmental conversations, influencer campaigns, ethical branding campaigns, and other related content. Young Consumers often reacted negatively towards companies associated with misleading communication or unethical practices even when those organizations promoted sustainability aggressively. Ethical conduct therefore appeared closely connected with consumer trust and long-term brand perception.

The Indian market presented a particularly interesting situation regarding sustainable consumption behaviour because awareness regarding environmental responsibility increased rapidly among urban consumers during recent years. Educational initiatives, digital campaigns, documentaries, social media discussions, and environmental awareness programs contributed significantly towards increasing familiarity with sustainability-related concepts. However, practical barriers such as affordability, accessibility, trust, convenience, and uncertainty regarding product authenticity still affected purchasing decisions strongly during actual market situations.

The study therefore indicated that sustainability awareness among consumers was increasing gradually, but regular adoption of sustainable products still remained inconsistent because practical market factors continued influencing consumer behaviour more strongly in many situations.

Overall, the findings suggested that successful sustainable and ethical marketing required businesses to focus not only on environmental branding and promotional communication but also on affordability, transparency, accessibility, product quality, authenticity, and long-term consumer trust.

4.4 Recommendations

The findings of the study suggested that businesses could no longer depend only on environmental advertising or sustainability-related branding if they wanted consumers to adopt sustainable products consistently. It was evident that people were more aware about sustainability, particularly the younger generation since they frequently encountered information regarding sustainability through online debates, social media activism, documentaries, and even environmentally oriented content. However, decision-making was highly influenced by concerns related to affordability, accessibility, and quality. The consumers believed in the ideas of sustainability but behaved differently when factors like price and convenience were introduced into the equation.

The cost factor continued to be one of the most significant obstacles that affected sustainable consumerism within the research process. Participants were for eco-products and ethical conduct, but they did not want to pay extra money at the point of purchase. Sustainable goods were typically considered premium goods and not ordinary consumer products. Hence, organizations would have to come up with pricing policies that can make such items affordable to average buyers rather than just the premium ones.

Another important concept which was brought up consistently throughout the research was that of trust.

It turned out that many consumers became suspicious of communications related to sustainability because of the rapid proliferation of environmental communications in recent years. The participants of the survey often seemed unsure whether these environmental messages were based on real concerns or just on marketing purposes. Consistent over-promising on eco-friendly issues resulted in consumers' loss of trust in brands promoting themselves as environmentally conscious. In such cases, companies should concentrate more on being transparent and authentic in their communications.

It seems that many consumers would prefer brands which clearly communicate information about their sourcing, certification, material, sustainability activities and ethical considerations rather than make vague promises about being environmentally

friendly. Transparency and clear communication may thus be helpful in building trust in sustainable products.

Quality of product and convenience remained important factors in consumer behaviour as well. It turned out that customers tend to expect the same effectiveness, reliability, availability and convenience from sustainable products as from conventional ones. In case eco-friendly goods were inconvenient or hard to obtain, many consumers tended to choose the latter. Sustainability alone therefore was not sufficient to influence long-term purchasing behaviour unless businesses also fulfilled practical expectations related to quality and usability.

Social media played both a positive and negative role within sustainable consumption behaviour. The awareness of the consumers about environmental responsibility, environmentally friendly lifestyles, ethical branding, and sustainable consumption was raised considerably due to the digital platforms. In particular, young people seemed particularly concerned about such an issue because of their constant use of digital technologies and changes in the trends of the modern lifestyle. On the other hand, sometimes too much information made customers confused since both real actions concerning environmental protection and misleading environmental advertisement were provided at the same time.

In such a situation, companies must conduct themselves more responsibly on social media, trying to avoid promotional communication and educate customers about sustainability-related issues.

Such partnerships could assist organizations in promoting sustainability awareness. Specifically, informative campaigns about the negative impact of certain actions, ethical branding practices, recycling, product authentication, and similar issues could raise the awareness of the consumers regarding such an important topic.

Apart from that, it might be possible to involve educational establishments and governmental organizations in order to influence the consumers and make them behave responsibly in terms of environmental protection.

Furthermore, there was an indication from the findings that businesses should desist from seeing sustainability as a passing fad in advertising since consumers started

becoming more aware of their ability to tell whether communication was indicative of responsibility for sustainability or merely a way of promoting products. Those organizations whose activities revolved solely around branding would end up losing credibility among consumers.

This meant that organizations should incorporate sustainability into their operations and practices, procurement processes, manufacturing techniques, packaging processes, and cultures instead of limiting them to advertising communication alone.

On the whole, this study showed that the success of sustainable and ethical marketing lay in finding a balance between such aspects as environmental responsibility, affordability, transparency, trustworthiness, product quality, accessibility, and consumer demands in reality.

4.5 Limitations of the Study

While the experiment gave some valuable insights, there were certain limitations that should be taken into consideration during interpretation of the results. First of all, the sample size used in the research could be considered rather low. Thus, it was hard to generalize the results obtained for a larger population. Since the research included only a limited number of respondents, the results may not completely reflect the views of the entire population.

Another limitation was that selection of respondents were based on accessibility that is convenience sampling. It is possible that this technique created a bias in the sample, since it did not consider equality among consumer types.

There was also a limitation in the demographic range in conducting the study, as it mainly consisted of students and working adults. Therefore, the conclusions may only present opinions from a particular group, rather than the general population.

Furthermore, it must be noted that the information obtained was self-reporting information, and the answers might have been influenced by subjective opinions or social desirability factors.

Another limitation was due to the time restriction placed when doing the research.

Finally, it should be noted that this research was limited to a particular environment, and thus, the conclusions cannot be applied in various environments with different consumer behaviour trends.

5. CONCLUSION

Over the last few years, sustainability and ethical business practices started becoming more visible in consumer discussions, business strategies, and marketing communication. However, issues like pollution, global warming, overuse of plastic, depletion of resources and many other environmental problems have made people realize that it is necessary to consume goods in a responsible way. In addition, companies have begun to react to these changes in consumer behaviour by launching eco-friendly products, packaging and ethical brands. As a result of all these factors, sustainable and ethical marketing has started gaining importance as a part of modern day business practices.

Awareness about sustainability issues was seen to be very high amongst consumers, especially those consumers who used various sources of internet communication such as social media sites where information about sustainable behaviour is shared. Respondents seemed to know terms like eco-friendly products, reusable containers, ethically branded products, and the importance of environmental responsibility. Social media sites have made substantial contributions to raising awareness about sustainability issues and responsible consumerism.

However, just having knowledge about sustainability did not make everyone behave sustainably.

Consumers tended to believe in sustainability issues and were in favor of buying eco-friendly products because of convenience and availability of these products.

This research aims at studying how consumers perceive sustainable and ethical marketing practices and whether their perceptions affect their buying behaviour in the real world. Awareness level, affordability, reliability, ethical considerations, product quality, convenience and buying behaviour concerning sustainable products are the main areas of interest in the study. Consumers often appreciated sustainable products and ethical business practices but hesitated while paying higher prices during practical purchase situations. This clearly reflected a gap between consumer attitudes and buying behaviour.

Price therefore remained one of the biggest barriers affecting sustainable consumption behaviour within the study.

Consumers also expected sustainable products to provide the same level of quality, effectiveness, convenience, and reliability as conventional alternatives. If the eco-friendly items were perceived as expensive, impractical, and inaccessible, environmentally conscious consumers would resort to regular shopping habits. It implied that sustainability could not be sufficient to encourage consumerism unless practical expectations were met successfully.

Another vital factor affecting consumer perceptions of sustainable and ethical marketing practices was trust. A number of consumers were reluctant to be influenced by the sustainability messaging since its presence has become pervasive during recent years. Many consumers did not find it easy to distinguish between sustainable products and marketing-driven environmental messaging. The use of greenwash and exaggeration of sustainability communications created scepticism about eco-friendly brands.

Therefore, consumers seemed more likely to place their trust in companies that would provide information on environmental policies, certifications, sources, and ethical business principles.

The role of social media in promoting sustainability could also not be overlooked within the scope of the study. Environmental discussions, influencer marketing, and green initiatives became common occurrences on the likes of Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. The younger generation seemed significantly influenced by sustainability messages from the digital environment.

At the same time, excessive promotional communication occasionally created confusion among consumers regarding authenticity of sustainability claims.

The Indian market presented a particularly interesting situation regarding sustainable consumption behaviour because awareness regarding environmental responsibility increased rapidly among urban consumers during recent years. Educational initiatives, online discussions, documentaries, environmental campaigns, and social media trends contributed significantly towards increasing awareness. However, practical barriers

such as affordability, convenience, accessibility, trust, and uncertainty regarding product authenticity continued affecting purchasing decisions strongly during actual market situations.

Therefore, the results indicated that firms should not solely rely on their sustainability marketing strategies or any type of communication related to environmental protection efforts to change the long-term consumption patterns of consumers.

The organizations should pay attention to transparency, affordability, accessibility, product quality, and proper communication. The consumers were seen to respond positively towards sustainable companies when they were environmentally responsible as well as cost-effective and behaved in an ethical way instead of using sustainability as an advertising tool.

Another point made by the findings was the increasing role of ethical practices in marketing, such as responsible communication, ethical business behaviour, transparency, and responsible marketing practices. Consumers usually had negative attitudes toward firms which engaged in unethical practices and misleading communication irrespective of the fact that they positioned themselves as environmentally responsible companies.

In general, the research proved that the importance of sustainable marketing practices would grow in the future since the level of consumers' and companies' discussions about the issues of environmental awareness and corporate responsibility would increase greatly. At the same time, for successful sustainable marketing practices, companies would have to consider both their environmental responsibility and other aspects, such as affordability and quality.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1 Questionnaire

Link: https://forms.gle/VspR4WhqyYdjCLAf6

Sustainable Consumer Behavior Survey

This study is conducted as part of an MBA research project to analyze consumer awareness, perception, and behaviour towards sustainable and ethical marketing. Data is collected through a structured questionnaire and will be used strictly for academic purposes. All responses will remain confidential and anonymous.
The study aims to understand consumer attitudes and provide insights for improving sustainable marketing strategies.

1. Age Group
   - ☐ Under 18
   - ☐ 18–25
   - ☐ 26–35
   - ☐ 36–45
   - ☐ 45+
2. Gender
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female
   - ☐ Prefer not to say
3. Occupation
   - ☐ Student
   - ☐ Working Professional
   - ☐ Business
   - ☐ Other
4. Are you aware of eco-friendly/sustainable products?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No
5. Have you heard about “green marketing”?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☐ No

6. Where did you learn about sustainable products? *(Multiple choice)*

- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Advertisements
- ☐ Friends/Family
- ☐ News/Articles

7. Do you prefer eco-friendly products over regular products?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

8. How often do you purchase sustainable products?

- ☐ Frequently
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

9. What factors influence your purchase of eco-friendly products? *(Multiple choice)*

- ☐ Price
- ☐ Quality
- ☐ Brand reputation
- ☐ Environmental impact

(Use scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

10. I am concerned about environmental issues.
11. I prefer brands that use eco-friendly packaging.
12. I trust brands that promote sustainability.
13. Sustainable products are of better quality.

14. Companies should be ethically responsible.

15. Are you willing to pay more for eco-friendly products?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

16. How much extra are you willing to pay?

- ☐ 5–10%
- ☐ 10–20%
- ☐ 20%+
- ☐ Not willing

17. Do you think companies are genuinely sustainable or just marketing (greenwashing)?

- ☐ Genuine
- ☐ Mostly marketing
- ☐ Not sure

18. Have you ever stopped buying a product due to unethical practices?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

19. Which ethical issues concern you the most? *(Multiple choice)*

- ☐ Environmental damage
- ☐ Animal testing
- ☐ Labor exploitation
- ☐ False advertising

mahima

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