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# The Rise of Sustainable Shopping: Analysing Consumer Preferences for Eco-Friendly Products in India

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## Abstract

*Among Indian consumers, sustainable shopping is securing popularity due to growing environmental consciousness and shifting market trends. However, switching from traditional to environmentally friendly shopping, there are lots of hindrances that the consumer has to face. This study investigates consumer preference towards sustainable shopping in India, analysing key factors that influence the purchasing decision of consumers and barriers to adoption and new market trends. This research is based on secondary data from industrial reports, government policy, market studies, and academic journals. Although the findings show that consumer awareness towards sustainability is increasing, there is a lack of consistency in purchasing behaviour due to limited ability and high product prices and doubtfulness towards green marketing claims. Due to better access and affordability, urban consumers have a higher adoption rate of eco-friendly products as compared to rural consumers. Whereas rural consumers battle with price consciousness and knowledge gaps. Greenwashing and disinformation regarding eco-friendly products can wear trust in sustainable brands and can prevent their broad adoption. In order to promote consumer participation in sustainable shopping, businesses need to prioritize affordability, accessibility, and transparent marketing. Governments can play a crucial role in the adoption of sustainable shopping through their policies; they can assist eco-friendly businesses, encourage educational programs, and prevent false sustainability claims. Social media and digital platforms also play a pivotal role in influencing consumer perception and behaviour towards purchasing eco-friendly products. This study offers insight into information about consumer attitudes toward sustainability in India and offers practical suggestions for policymakers and businesses to encourage eco-friendly shopping practices.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable shopping, consumer buying behaviour, eco-friendly products, green marketing, affordability, accessibility, India, policy intervention, sustainable products, consumer preference.

## Introduction

There has been a recent and notable rise in sustainable shopping, driven by health consciousness, growing environmental concerns, and government regulation. As consumers become more conscious regarding the environmental impact of their purchasing, this leads to a shift towards eco-friendly products. The sustainable trends are gaining grip in India, especially in urban areas where knowledgeable consumers are switching towards biodegradable, organic, and ethical surrounding products. Regardless of this, there is still a lack of consistency in the adoption of sustainable shopping practices due to limited availability, high-priced products, and doubtfulness regarding the authenticity of eco-friendly claims.

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The conceptualization of sustainable shopping encloses the purchasing decisions of consumers that reduce environmental degradation and encourage social responsibility. Consumer priorities eco-certifications, decreases carbon footprint, green purchasing, and biodegradable packaging. While Indian consumers, whether urban or rural, manifest interest in eco-friendly products, numerous national and global reports, including Nielsen (2023) and McKinsey & Company (2022), analysed that in spite of the fact that consumers show interest in green products, the transition from intention to actual buying behaviour is influenced by accessibility, affordability, and brand trust. The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) provides a handy framework for comprehension of this phenomenon, which highlights how consumer behaviour is shaped by social influences, attitude, and perceived behaviour control.

The main objective of this study is to analyse Indian consumers preferences for sustainable products by using secondary data from market research studies, academic publications, and government reports. The center of attention of this study is to identify the key factors that increase consumers' adoption of sustainable shopping. It assesses the demographic pattern that impacts this decision and analyses the obstacle that fends off broader adoption of sustainable shopping. Further, it also determines the role of corporate sustainability initiatives, government policy, and sales approach. This study aims to mediate the gap between consumers awareness and actual According to Nielsen reports (2023), urban consumers in India are more likely to adopt sustainable shopping habits due to better exposure and accessibility as compared to rural area consumers adoption regarding eco- friendly products, by providing in-depth study on how to make sustainable shopping more tempting for Indian consumers. The research aims to foster sustainability and responsible consumption by addressing issues like trust, pricing, and availability.

## Review of Literature

**Kotler (2011)** modern consumers are getting more conscious regarding environmental impact, which affects their purchasing decisions. Brands need to adjust their strategy as environmental consciousness rises, in order to satisfy consumers demands in respect of eco-friendly products.

**Ajzen (1991)** the theory of planned behaviour analyses how consumers attitudes, cultural expectations, and self-efficacy affect the purchasing behaviour of consumers. This theory is commonly used to understand ethical consumerism.

**Testa et al. (2015)** found that eco-labels significantly impact consumer trust and willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products. Certifications like FSC, Fair Trade, and Organic India enhance consumer confidence.

**Parguel, Benoît-Moreau, & Larceneux (2011)** argued that misleading sustainability claims, known as "greenwashing," reduce consumer trust in eco-friendly products. Transparency in sustainability claims is crucial.

**Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (2022)** reported that India's government has introduced several sustainability regulations, including plastic bans and incentives for green businesses, significantly shaping consumer behaviour.

**Goh, Heng, & Lin (2013)** found that social media marketing campaigns increase consumer engagement with sustainability messages and enhance eco-friendly purchase intentions.

**Nielsen Report (2023)** urban consumers in India are more likely to adopt sustainable shopping habits due to better exposure and accessibility as compared to rural area consumers.

**McKinsey & Company (2022)** highlighted that in spite of growing awareness, the higher price of eco-friendly products remains the main obstacle to the adoption of sustainable products in India.

**Bitner (1992)** store ambience, such as green messaging and eco-friendly layout, has a notable impact on consumers buying behaviour.

**Peattie & Crane (2005)** find out that as compared to older demographic younger and educated consumers are more likely to acquire sustainable shopping habits.

**Kumar et al. (2021)** online shopping platforms such as Flipkart and Amazon are expanding their eco- friendly product categories to meet the growing demand of consumers regarding sustainable alternatives.

**Laroche et al. (2001)** discovered that women are more likely to shop for sustainable products as compared to men because they care more about the environment.

## Research Methodology

The research methodology reports a substructure for systematically analysing consumer preference for sustainable shopping in India. Secondary data is used to engage the factor that influences the purchasing decision of eco-friendly products, market trades, and the optical to the adoption of sustainability. The research approach uses a descriptive and analytical method to ensure a structured estimation of the market report, existing literature, and consumer behaviour analysis.

## Findings and Discussion

The secondary data used in this study was gathered from a range of academic sources, government publications, and business reports. This section surveys consumers preferences for sustainable shopping in India, the obstacles affecting the adoption of eco-friendly products, and the role of policymakers and companies in uplifting the consumption of eco-friendly products.

### Key Findings:

#### A. Growing Consumer Awareness but Low Adoption Rate

- According to McKinsey (2022) and Nielsen (2023) studies, Indian consumers are becoming more conscious of sustainability.
- 75% of urban consumers express interest in purchasing eco-friendly products.
- However, actual adoption remains low, with only 25-30% regularly purchasing sustainable goods due to price anxieties and short supply.

#### B. Price Sensitivity and Affordability Barriers

- McKinsey & Company (2022) pointed out that sustainable products are habitually priced 30 to 10% higher than those of traditional alternatives.
- Consumers prioritize affordability over sustainability, especially in price-sensitive markets like India.
- Premium pricing on eco-friendly products deters middle and lower-income groups from making sustainable choices.

#### C. Urban vs. Rural Split in eco-friendly shopping

- According to the Nielsen report (2023), urban consumers are more likely to adopt sustainable shopping practices due to better convenience, high disposable income, and brand loyalty.

- In rural areas, eco-friendly products have a lower adoption rate due to a lack of knowledge and affordability.

#### D. Deceptive advertising and consumer faith

- Parguel et al. (2011) found that misleading sustainability claims (greenwashing) erode consumer trust.
- Many consumers hesitate to purchase eco-friendly products because of uncertainty about their authenticity and ambiguity regarding their environmental certificate.

#### E. The Role of Digital and Social Media in Sustainable Shopping

- According to Goh et al. (2013), analyse that social media and digital marketing play a crucial role in influencing the customer perception regarding sustainability.
- Consumer engagement can be increased by promoting eco-friendly products on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and e-commerce websites.

#### F. Corporate Sustainability Initiatives Driving Change

- Companies that have adopted a holistic approach for sustainability into their branding, such as ITC, Tata, and FabIndia, have an impact on consumers buying behaviour.
- Porter & Kramer (2011) suggest that brands that align their corporate social responsibility (CSR) with sustainability experience higher consumer loyalty.

### Discussion:

#### A. Bridging the Gap between Awareness and Action

While consumer awareness of sustainable shopping is increasing, there is a significant gap between knowledge and behaviour. This study finds that while eco-consciousness is high in urban areas, the actual purchasing behaviour remains inconsistent due to financial constraints, skepticism, and lack of product availability. Brands must educate and engage consumers through transparent labelling and marketing campaigns to drive adoption.

#### B. Need for Affordable and Accessible Sustainable Products

One of the primary barriers to sustainable shopping in India is the high cost of eco-friendly products. Many consumers are willing to shift

toward sustainability but are held back by price sensitivity. To enhance affordability:

- Businesses should invest in cost-effective sustainable production.
- Government subsidies can help lower the price gap between traditional and eco-friendly products.
- Retailers must ensure that sustainable products are available in both urban and rural markets.

### **C. The Importance of Transparent and Credible Green Marketing**

The issue of greenwashing is a major challenge, as many brands make false sustainability claims to attract eco-conscious consumers. To address this:

- Government regulations should enforce stricter sustainability certification and labelling.
- Consumers need education on how to identify authentic eco-friendly products.
- Third-party certifications, such as FSC, Organic India, and Fair Trade, should be promoted to build consumer trust.

### **D. Digital and Social Media as Catalysts for Sustainable Shopping**

The rise of social media and online shopping platforms has created new opportunities for sustainability-driven consumer behaviour. Influencers and brands promoting eco-friendly lifestyles on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube play a crucial role in shaping young consumers' preferences. E-commerce platforms like Amazon and Flipkart have expanded their "sustainable product" categories, making it easier for consumers to access green alternatives.

### **E. Role of Government and Corporate Sustainability Initiatives**

The Government of India has introduced several environmental regulations, such as:

- The Plastic Waste Management Rules (2021) banning single-use plastics.
- Incentives for eco-friendly businesses and startups to encourage green product innovation.
- Sustainability initiatives by corporations like ITC, which focuses on sustainable packaging and ethical sourcing.

These policies help in reducing environmental impact and encourage consumers to adopt sustainable shopping habits. Although more

rigorous awareness campaigns are essential to certify wider adoption.

### **Conclusion**

However, sustainable shopping is becoming trendier among Indian consumers, but adoption rates remain low due to accessibility, higher prices, and trust issues. To link between awareness and actual adoption of eco-friendly products, policymakers, retailers, and businesses must cooperate together to make eco-friendly products more accessible, transparent, and affordable.

Findings suggest that:

- Urban consumers are more likely to adopt sustainable shopping due to better accessibility and brand recognition.
- The expensiveness of eco-friendly products prevents their general acceptance, mainly in the price-conscious market like India.
- Greenwashing is done by companies that create trust issues among consumers and make them hesitate to shift to sustainable brands.
- Consumer buying behaviour is influenced by digital marketing and social media platforms.
- Government policies and corporate sustainability initiatives are progressively shaping the consumption pattern, but strong implementation is required.

Basically, in India, sustainable shopping is the initial phase and requires more effort to mediate the gap between awareness and actual adoption of sustainable shopping through advancement of accessibility, affordability, and consumer trust.

### **Recommendations**

#### **1. Making Sustainable Products Affordable**

- Companies manufacturing eco-friendly products must receive government subsidies and tax incentives.
- To narrow the price disparity between traditional and eco-friendly products, businesses should invest efficiently in sustainable production.
- In order to encourage the purchase of sustainable products, retailers can offer discounts and reward points to consumers.

#### **2. Magnify consumer awareness and knowledge**

- Brands should educate consumers through transparency in labelling and packaging.



- Government campaigns should focus on awareness programs about sustainable shopping, targeting both rural and urban populations.
  - In order to encourage long-term behavioural change, schools and colleges must include sustainability education in their curriculum.
3. **Strengthening Green Marketing and Avoiding Greenwashing**
- Strict regulations on misleading sustainability claims should be implemented by government agencies.
  - Brands must use credible third-party certifications (e.g., FSC, Organic India, Fair Trade) to ensure authenticity.
  - Consumers should be able to verify eco-friendly product claims.
4. **Expanding Accessibility to Sustainable Products**
- Retailers and e-commerce platforms should increase availability of sustainable products in both urban and rural markets.
  - Investments should be made in local supply chains to reduce transportation costs and enhance affordability.
  - Government initiatives should support local sustainable businesses and startups to improve accessibility.
5. **Leveraging Digital and Social Media for Promotion**
- Influencer marketing and social media campaigns should be used to promote sustainable brands.
  - E-commerce platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and Big Basket should have dedicated eco-friendly shopping sections.
  - Companies should adopt digital storytelling strategies to engage consumers in sustainability narratives.
6. **Strengthening Government Policies and Regulations**
- Stronger enforcement of sustainability policies (e.g., plastic bans, recycling laws, green incentives) is needed.
  - Policies should promote sustainable packaging and ethical sourcing practices.
  - Government should collaborate with private sectors to create large-scale sustainability initiatives.

Sustainable shopping has the potential to drive environmental and economic benefits in India, but major challenges such as high costs, consumer skepticism, and accessibility issues need to be addressed. Collaboration between businesses, consumers, and policymakers is crucial for fostering a culture of sustainable consumption. By implementing strategic pricing, improving transparency, and leveraging digital platforms, India can accelerate its shift toward an eco-friendly shopping ecosystem.

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#### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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