

A Study on Consumer Awareness in Promoting Ethical Sourcing and Sustainable Consumption

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Abstract

The growing concerns over environmental degradation, labour exploitation, and unsustainable consumption patterns have made ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption critical issues in contemporary society. This study investigates the level of consumer awareness regarding ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption and examines its influence on purchasing behaviour. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 130 respondents through structured questionnaires, employing proportionate random sampling to ensure representation across demographic groups. The findings reveal that while a majority of consumers demonstrate moderate to high awareness and hold positive attitudes toward ethical and sustainable products, a significant gap exists between awareness and actual purchasing behaviour. Price sensitivity, limited product availability, and skepticism toward ethical labelling were identified as major barriers. The study highlights the role of transparent information, credible certification, and awareness initiatives in bridging this gap. The findings provide insights for businesses, policymakers, and consumer educators to promote responsible consumption and support ethical sourcing practices.

Keywords: recent years, growing environmental degradation, social inequality, and unethical business

1. Introduction:

practices have intensified global concern over the sustainability of production and consumption patterns. As a result, ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption have emerged as critical components of responsible economic development. Ethical sourcing refers to the procurement of goods and services in a manner that ensures fair labour practices, environmental protection, and respect for human rights throughout the supply chain. Sustainable consumption, on the other hand, emphasizes the use of products and services that meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. Consumers play a pivotal role in promoting ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption, as their purchasing decisions directly influence corporate behaviour and market trends. Increased consumer awareness regarding issues such as labour exploitation, environmental pollution, carbon footprints, and resource depletion has encouraged businesses to adopt more transparent and responsible sourcing

practices. However, despite the availability of ethically produced and environmentally friendly products, a gap often exists between consumer awareness and actual purchasing behaviour.

Consumer awareness involves understanding the social, environmental, and ethical implications of products and services. Well-informed consumers are more likely to support companies that demonstrate responsible sourcing, use sustainable materials, and adhere to ethical standards. Education, media exposure, labelling, and corporate communication significantly influence consumer awareness and perceptions. Nevertheless, factors such as price sensitivity, lack of information, limited accessibility, and scepticism about ethical claims can hinder sustainable consumption choices. This study aims to examine the level of consumer awareness regarding ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption and to analyse how such awareness influences purchasing behaviour. By exploring consumer attitudes, knowledge, and decision-making patterns, the research seeks to identify key factors that encourage or restrict ethical and sustainable consumption. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights for businesses, policymakers, and consumer advocacy groups in developing strategies to enhance consumer awareness and promote responsible consumption practices.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To study the level of consumer awareness regarding ethical sourcing practices and sustainable consumption concepts.
2. To analyse the influence of consumer awareness on purchasing decisions and preference for ethical and sustainable products.

3. Scope of the Study

The scope of the study defines the boundaries within which the research is conducted and clarifies the areas covered. This study focuses on examining the level of consumer awareness regarding ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption and its influence on consumer purchasing behaviour. The research primarily emphasizes consumers' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions toward ethically sourced and sustainably produced products. The study is limited to analysing factors such as awareness of ethical sourcing practices, understanding of sustainability concepts, influence of eco-labels and certifications, and the role of information sources such as media, education, and marketing communication. It also considers how awareness affects consumer decision-making, willingness to pay, and preference for ethical and sustainable brands. In addition, the research is restricted to a particular time period and relies on primary and secondary data available during the course of the study. While the results provide insights into consumer awareness and behaviour, they may not be universally generalizable due to limitations in sample size, location, and changing consumer trends.

4. Statement of the Problem

The Ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption have become increasingly important in addressing environmental degradation, social inequality, and unethical business practices. Although many organizations have adopted sustainability initiatives and ethical sourcing policies, their effectiveness largely depends on consumer awareness and willingness to support such practices through purchasing behaviours. In recent years, consumers have been exposed to information regarding sustainability and ethical issues; however, the level of awareness and understanding varies significantly among individuals. Despite growing concern for environmental and social responsibility, a considerable gap exists between

consumers stated concern and their actual purchasing behaviour. The problem addressed in this study is the lack of clear understanding of how consumer awareness influences ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption decisions. There is a need to assess the extent of consumer awareness, identify the factors affecting ethical purchasing behaviour, and examine the challenges that prevent consumers from translating awareness into action. Addressing this problem is essential for developing effective strategies that encourage ethical sourcing practices and promote sustainable consumption among consumers.

5. Research Methodology

The methodology refers to the systematic approach adopted to collect, analyse, and interpret data in order to achieve the objectives of the study. The present study follows a descriptive research design to examine consumer awareness in promoting ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption. The study adopts a descriptive research design, as it aims to describe and analyse the level of consumer awareness, attitudes, and perceptions toward ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption. The population for the study consists of consumers who purchase goods and services in the selected study area. From this population, a sample of 130 respondents was selected for data collection. The study employs Proportionate Random Sampling, a method of stratified sampling in which the population is divided into relevant strata (such as age, gender, income, or occupation), and samples are selected from each stratum in proportion to their representation in the population. This technique ensures fair representation of different consumer groups and reduces sampling bias.

6. Data Collection Instrument:

A structured questionnaire was designed to gather information on consumer awareness, attitudes, purchasing behaviour, and challenges related to ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean score analysis, and graphical representation. The analysis was carried out using statistical software to ensure accuracy and clarity.

7. Limitations of the study

The present study has certain limitations that should be considered while interpreting the results. The study is based on a sample size of 130 respondents, which may not fully represent the entire population. Therefore, the findings may have limited generalizability. The use of proportionate random sampling, while ensuring representation of different groups, depends on accurate identification of strata. Any imbalance in stratum classification may affect the results. The study relies primarily on self-reported data collected through questionnaires, which may be subject to personal bias, inaccurate responses, or social desirability bias. The research is confined to a specific geographical area and time period, limiting the applicability of the findings to other regions or changing consumer trends. The study focuses mainly on consumer awareness and perception, and does not include a detailed analysis of organizational sourcing practices or supply chain verification. Constraints related to time, cost, and accessibility of respondents may have influenced the depth and scope of data collection. In spite of these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into consumer awareness and its role in promoting ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption.

8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected on consumer awareness regarding ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption. It examines knowledge levels, attitudes, purchasing behaviour, and perceptions of consumers, identifying patterns and factors that influence responsible consumption and the promotion of ethical and sustainable practices in the market.

Table 1: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percent
Male	72	55.4
Female	58	44.6
Total	130	100

The table 1 shows the gender composition of the respondents in the study. Out of 130 respondents, 72 (55.4%) were male and 58 (44.6%) were female, indicating a slightly higher participation of males compared to females. The total distribution confirms a balanced representation of both genders, which ensures that the study captures perspectives from both male and female respondents.

Table 2: Level of Awareness about Ethical Sourcing

Level of Awareness	Respondents	Percent
High	46	35.4
Moderate	58	44.6
Low	26	20.0
Total	130	100

The table presents the distribution of respondents based on their level of awareness about ethical sourcing. Out of 130 respondents, 46 (35.4%) exhibited high awareness, 58 (44.6%) showed moderate awareness, and 26 (20.0%) had low awareness. This indicates that while a majority of respondents (80%) have at least a moderate understanding of ethical sourcing, only a smaller proportion possess a high level of awareness. The results suggest that although awareness exists among consumers, there is significant scope for enhancing knowledge and educating consumers about ethical sourcing practices.

Table 3 Frequency Distribution of Awareness and Sustainable Consumption Practices

Awareness Level	Respondents	Percent
Aware	92	70.8
Not Aware	38	29.2

Awareness Level	Respondents	Percent
Total	130	100

The table 3 indicate the respondents' awareness of sustainable consumption practices. Out of 130 respondents, a majority of 92 respondents (70.8%) are aware of sustainable consumption practices, while 38 respondents (29.2%) are not aware. This indicates that, nearly one-third of the respondents remain unaware, suggesting the need for further awareness programs and educational initiatives to promote sustainable consumption and encourage adoption of ethical purchasing practices across the broader population.

Table 4 Frequency Distribution of Factors Influencing Purchase of Ethical Products

Factor	Respondents	Percent
Price	48	36.9
Quality	34	26.2
Brand Reputation	28	21.5
Ethical Labelling	20	15.4
Total	130	100

The table 3 proves the key factors influencing consumers' purchase of ethical products. Among 130 respondents, 48 respondents (36.9%) consider price as the most important factor, followed by quality at 34 respondents (26.2%). Brand reputation influences 28 respondents (21.5%), while ethical labelling is considered by 20 respondents (15. 4%).The results indicate that while consumers are aware of ethical products, economic considerations such as price and product quality dominate purchase decisions.

Table 5 Frequency Distribution of Purchasing Ethically Sourced Products

Frequency	Respondents	Percent
Always	22	16.9
Sometimes	64	49.2
Rarely	30	23.1
Never	14	10.8
Total	130	100

The table 5 offerings the frequency with which respondents purchase ethically sourced products. Out of 130 respondents, 22 respondents (16.9%) reported that they always purchase ethically sourced products, while 64 respondents (49.2%) purchase them sometimes. 30 respondents (23.1%) purchase such products

rarely, and 14 respondents (10.8%) reported that they never purchase ethically sourced products. Factors such as price, availability, awareness, and convenience may influence this behaviour.

9. Findings

The study reveals that the sample population has a balanced gender representation, ensuring perspectives from both male and female consumers are reflected.

Awareness of ethical sourcing among respondents is moderate, with 35.4% highly aware and 44.6% moderately aware, indicating that most consumers have at least some understandings of ethical products, but there is significant scope for deepening knowledge.

Similarly, awareness of sustainable consumption practices is relatively high, with 70.8% of respondents aware, reflecting growing recognition of environmentally and socially responsible consumption.

In terms of actual purchase behaviour, 49.2% purchase ethically sourced products sometimes, while only 16.9% always purchase them, highlighting that ethical consumption is still occasional rather than habitual among the respondents.

10. Practical Implications

The study indicates a need for targeted awareness campaigns to improve understanding of ethical sourcing and sustainable consumption practices. Educational initiatives can highlight the long-term benefits of ethical products, helping consumers make informed choices beyond price and quality considerations. For marketers and companies, the results emphasize the importance of balancing affordability, quality, and ethical attributes in product offerings. Since price remains the key driver, ethically sourced products must be competitively priced to encourage wider adoption. Enhancing ethical labelling and certification visibility can also increase consumer trust and influence purchasing decisions.

11. Conclusion

The study on consumer awareness and purchase behaviour regarding ethically sourced and sustainable products reveals several important insights. The research shows that while a significant portion of respondents (70.8%) are aware of sustainable consumption practices, only 35.4% have a high level of awareness about ethical sourcing. This shows that awareness exists but is moderate overall, highlighting the need for further education and awareness campaigns to deepen understanding of ethical consumption. The analysis also reveals that price and quality are the most influential factors in consumers' purchase decisions, while ethical labelling and brand reputation play a secondary role. Although nearly two-thirds of respondents occasionally purchase ethically sourced products, only a small fraction (16.9%) consistently make ethical choices. This proposes that ethical and sustainable consumption is not yet habitual and is often influenced by practical considerations such as affordability and convenience. These results emphasize the importance of educational initiatives, promotional strategies, and accessible ethical products to encourage regular adoption of ethical and sustainable practices. By making ethically sourced products affordable, visible, and trustworthy, businesses and policymakers can enhance consumer participation, promote responsible consumption, and contribute to sustainable development.

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