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## International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (IJMRSET)

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# Consumer Behaviour and Brand Perception in Sustainable Marketing

Harshita Bihani, Dr. Anupama Panday

Department of Management, NIMS Institute of Business Studies, NIMS University, Jaipur, India

Department of Management, NIMS Institute of Business Studies, NIMS University, Jaipur, India

**ABSTRACT:** Companies are being faced with consumer demands for sustainability and many companies have sought to make marketing a part of their overall strategy in response. Today's consumer is much more conscious of the impact their purchase has on the planet and therefore, tend to favour brands holding values that resonate with theirs about sustainability. But the interplay of consumer behaviour, brand perception and sustainability claims authenticity is tricky. Taking both primary data, Asia Cloud's own consumer survey and secondary data from the literature review (as well as case studies), this paper investigates how sustainability impacts purchase behaviour on consumers & brand perception. Based on a summary of key findings, consumers are drawn to sustainability features alongside the basic functionalities they want as buyers; moreover, its importance rests in whether or not these are seen from genuine social actors (brands) who put their money where their mouth is. In addition, greenwashing—overstating or lying about positive environmental attributes—is toxic to consumer trust.

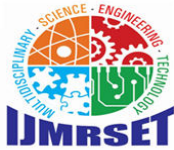
**KEYWORDS:** Sustainability, Consumer Behaviour, Brand Perception, Greenwashing, Authenticity, Eco-friendly Products, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Sustainable Marketing, Trust, Attitude-Behavior Gap

### I. INTRODUCTION

As we know that global awareness of social and environmental issues continues to grow, consumer behavior is increasingly frame by concerns over sustainability. This issue has led businesses to adopt sustainable marketing strategies, promoting eco-friendly products/services and ethical practices to cover the changing demands of the marketplace. Brands that align with sustainability are often seen as more socially responsible, and this perception is mainly influencing consumer purchasing decisions. However, the difficulties of consumer behavior in the circumstances of sustainable marketing remain an area of ongoing investigation, with the various factors—such as sensitivity, authenticity, price and trust—playing major roles in shaping how consumers perceive brands that state to be sustainable.

There are many studies that have mention and explore the rise of green marketing and ethical consumption, there are still major gaps in our knowledge of how consumers form perceptions of sustainability claims, particularly in the name of **greenwashing**—the applications where companies overstate or falsely promote their eco-friendly efforts. Regardless of a booming demand for eco-conscious products, consumers often fight to differentiate between genuine sustainable brands and those engaging in misleading practices, leading to confusion and doubtfulness. This introduce a significant challenge for brands aiming to build consumer trust and loyalty in the rapidly increasingly competitive sustainability market.

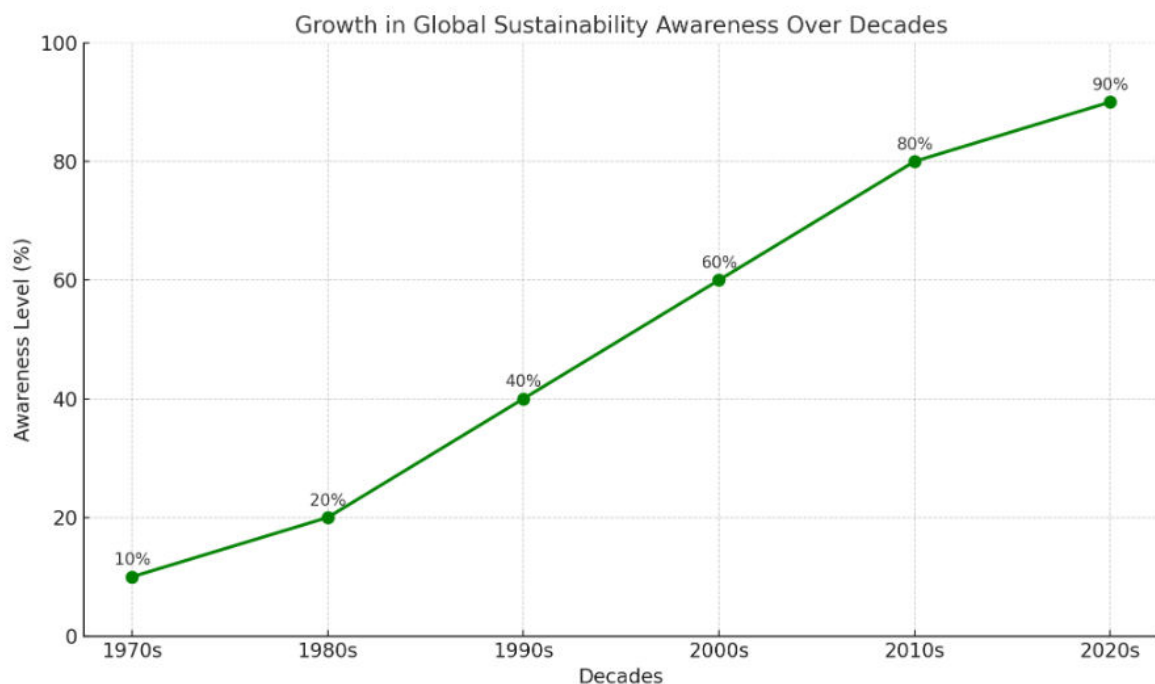
The aim of this research is to aspect at the factors that impact consumer behavior and brand perception within the domain of sustainable marketing. Particularly, this study seek to discover (1) the role of rightfulness, reliability and transparency in determining consumer trust, (2) the effect of greenwashing on brand perception and purchasing decisions, and (3) how price sensitivity affects consumer engagement with eco-friendly products. By conveying these issues, the study focus to provide insights that can help brands improve their sustainability strategies, practices and better connect with eco-conscious consumers.



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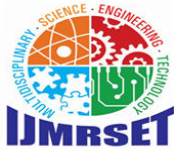
Understanding the dynamics of consumer behavior and brand perception in sustainable marketing is important for businesses looking to remain competitive in the era where sustainability is no longer optional but expected. This research contributes to the existing literature by filling major gaps related to greenwashing, consumer trust, and the evolving expectations of sustainability-conscious consumers. By doing this, it offers practical recommendations for marketers looking to build strong, credible and reliable brands in the setting of sustainable consumption.



### Marketing and Sustainable Consumer Behaviour

There are many reasons why understanding facilitators of sustainable consumer behaviour should be of interest to marketers. One reason is reflected in the [Ripple et al. \(2017\)](#) quote: marketers should be cognizant that the consumption mindset that conventional marketing encourages is a key driver of negative environmental impacts ([Csikszentmihalyi 2000](#); [Peattie and Peattie 2009](#)). Second, as the Ray Anderson quote suggests, businesses able to adapt to the demands of our changing world, including the urgent demand for sustainability, will be more likely to thrive in the long term and enjoy strategic benefits ([Banerjee, Iyer, and Kashyap 2003](#)). A sustainable business focus has advantages such as identifying new products and markets, leveraging emerging technologies, spurring innovation, driving organizational efficiency, and motivating and retaining employees ([Hopkins et al. 2009](#)). Moreover, research suggests that socially and environmentally responsible practices have the potential to garner more positive consumer perceptions of the firm, as well as increases in profitability ([Brown and Dacin 1997](#); [Luo and Bhattacharya 2006](#); [Olsen, Slotegraaf, and Chandukala 2014](#); [Sen and Bhattacharya 2001](#)).

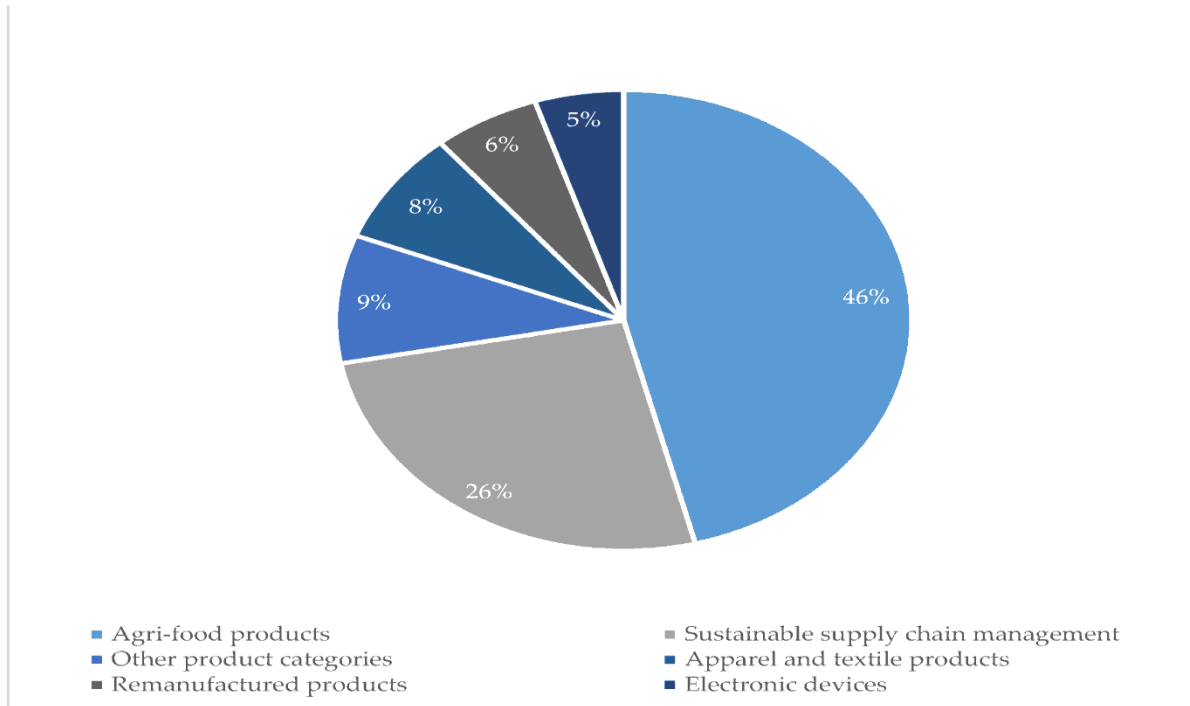
Firms that are able not only to operate more sustainably but also to consider new models of business that offer and encourage sustainable consumption can potentially earn greater long-term profits ([Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan 2010](#)). In one example, the growth of the “sharing economy” demonstrates the substantial environmental and economic gains possible through shifting consumers sustainably—in this case, from *owning* products to *accessing* existing products and services. Although the question of how marketing relates to sustainable consumption has historically received attention in the form of identifying the “green consumer” segment ([Anderson and Cunningham 1972](#); [Kilbourne and Beckmann 1998](#)), scholars now call for work on the predictors of sustainable consumption ([Kotler 2011](#); [Menon and Menon 1997](#); [Mick 2006](#)). Rather than merely targeting the green consumer segment, marketers can expand their market for the long-term mutual benefit of the firm and the planet. Thus, as firms operate and offer



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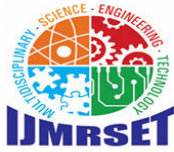
products and services in a more sustainable manner, they might simultaneously wish for consumers to recognize, embrace, and reward their sustainable values and actions in ways that spur sustainable consumption and maximize the firm’s sustainability and strategic business benefits.



### Consumer Behaviour Approaches in Times of Crisis (Covid-19)

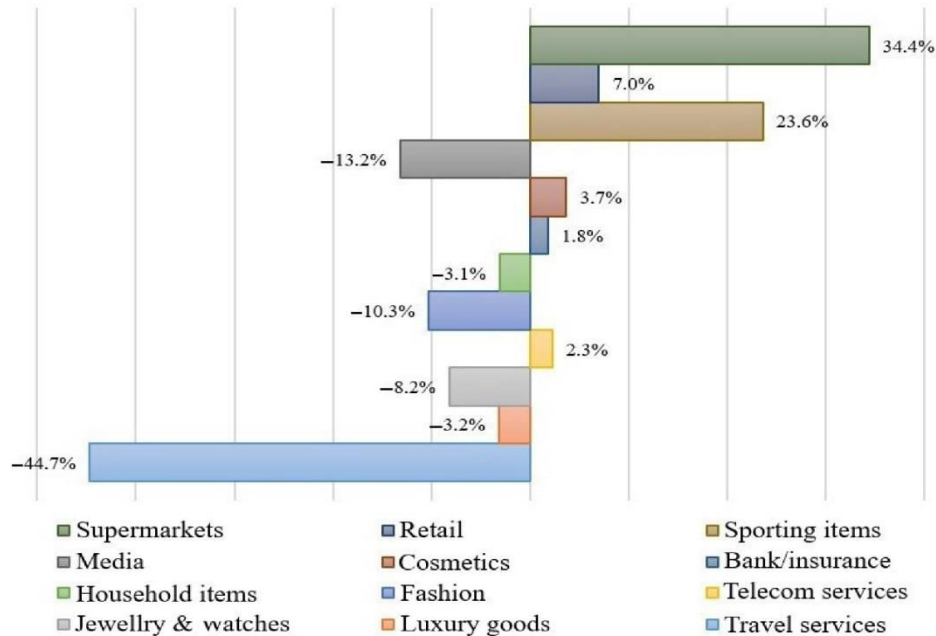
A consumer is a person who identifies a need or desire, makes a purchase and then disposes of the product in the consumption process. A typical consumer’s utility is dependent on the consumption of agricultural and industrial goods, services, housing and wealth (Grundey, 2009). No two of them are the same, as everyone is influenced by different internal and external factors which form the consumer behaviour. Consumer behaviour is an important and constant decision-making process of searching, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services (Valaskova et al., 2015). The macro consumer behaviour is created by social issues, but to reach the factors of micro consumer behaviour, individual factors (Solomon, 2016) are researched. Flatters and Willmott (2009) claim consumers try to maximise their utility, satisfaction, or joy by purchasing consumer goods.

The approaches explaining consumer behaviour are divided into the three groups (Valaskova et al., 2015): psychological-based on the relation between the psyche and behaviour of the consumer; sociological approach—which is devoted to the reactions of consumers in different situations or how the behaviour is influenced by various social occasions, social leaders; and economic approach—grounded on basic knowledge of micro economy in which consumers define their requirements. Subsequently, the consumer interests are confronted and traded on the market. After liberalisation in India, consumer behavioural pattern has been explained by such approaches in the borderless globalised world, while defeating individual identity and giving rise to collective identity through brand culture. The intermittent waves of ‘Swadeshi’ and ‘back to basics’ propagated by social leaders like Baba Ramdev or Gandhian minimalistic lifestyle also emerged as a behavioural approach. The sociological approach of behaviour is also harvested which is adopted by the affluent class as a natural wholeness to self-actualisation. Many lower socio-economic rung consumers too yielded to elitist appeals of material symbols to showcase themselves in higher rungs under economic approach to consumer behaviour.



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## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Consumers interest in Sustainable Marketing (2018-2023)

According to Past few years there is a rapid increase that showing the consumers interest and curiosity in sustainability. According to the 2020 report by Nielsen, 66% of consumers from global level were eager to pay more or can say extra for sustainable products and services, and this number increasing by 73% among Millennials and Gen Z. Consumers are not only focusing on the environmental parts of sustainability but also the ethical behaviour, practices and social responsibility of brands (Nielsen, 2020).

Likewise, IBM’s 2021 consumer study discovered that more than 50% of consumers now prioritize sustainability when making purchasing decisions. This shift is accredited to the increasing awareness of climate change, the reduction of natural resources, and the ethical behavior of workers involved in product manufacturing.

### Consumer Trust and Brand perception

Brand perception plays a vital role in influencing consumer behavior in the setting of sustainable marketing. A study by Grimmer and Woolley (2020) has mention that consumers are more likely to trust and believe the brands that are transparent and crystal clear about their sustainable initiatives and provide provable information about their practices. For example, brands like The Body Shop and Patagonia are often get praised for their strong and sincere sustainability efforts and resulting in higher consumer loyalty.

Yet, the problem of greenwashing has become a major issue, as point out by TerraChoice (2021). These practices are fading consumer trust and can result in long-term undesirable and negative effects on brand perception, with nearly 75% of consumers saying that they would stop purchasing from a brand found guilty of false sustainability claims.

### Brand Loyalty and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR has turn out to be a vital part of brand perception. Brands that line up their values with social and environmental causes tend to experience stronger loyalty from consumers. A 2020 study by McKinsey stressed that 78% of consumers sense more loyal to brands that are devoted to ethical and sustainable practices. Brands such as IKEA and Unilever, which have united sustainability into their business models, reveal how CSR can interpret into consumer loyalty and increased market share.



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## The Attitude-Behavior Gap

In spite of increasing awareness and attention in sustainability, many consumers still do not make purchasing decisions allied with their stated likings. According to Carrington et al. (2019), factors such as convenience, price, and disbelief of green marketing claims are main givers to this attitude-behavior gap. Consumers often show support for sustainable products but may return to less sustainable choices when faced higher costs or uncertainties about the genuineness of sustainability claims.

### Summary of Key Studies and Statistics on Sustainable Consumer Behavior

| Study                    | Key Findings  |
|--------------------------|---|
| Nielsen (2020)           | 66% of global consumers willing to pay extra for sustainable products; 73% among Millennials and Gen Z. |
| IBM (2021)               | More than 50% of consumers prioritize sustainability in purchasing decisions.                           |
| Grimmer & Woolley (2020) | Consumers trust brands that are transparent about sustainability efforts.                               |
| TerraChoice (2021)       | 75% of consumers stop purchasing from brands found guilty of greenwashing.                              |
| McKinsey (2020)          | 78% of consumers feel loyal to brands committed to sustainability.                                      |
| Carrington et al. (2019) | Convenience, price, and distrust in claims contribute to attitude-behavior gap.                         |

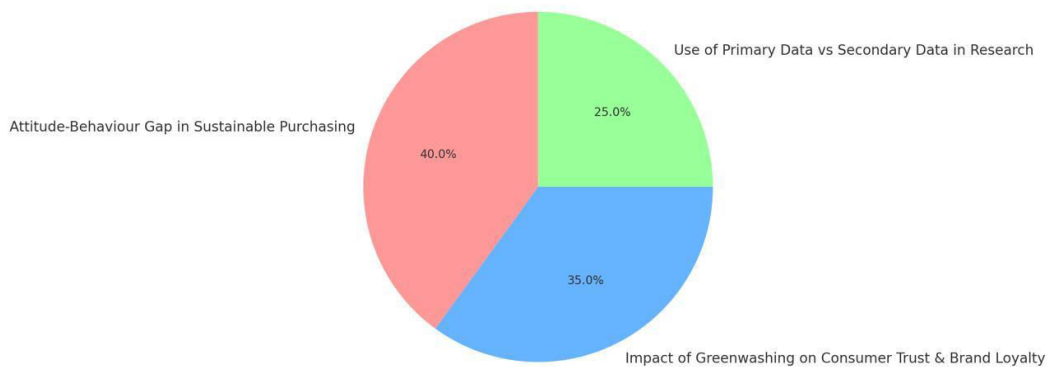
## Gap

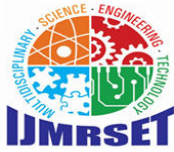
While the literature on sustainable marketing, consumer behaviour, and brand perception is wide-ranging, there are several gaps that this study purposes to address. First, most of the existing research emphasizes on consumer attitudes toward sustainability, but less attention has been shown to how these attitudes interpret into actual purchasing behaviour. This study pursues to bridge this gap by inspecting the factors that impact the "attitude-behaviour gap" in sustainable purchasing.

Second, while there is extensive research on greenwashing, there is less experimental research on how greenwashing distresses consumer trust and brand loyalty over time. This study focuses on to discover how consumers' insights of authenticity effect their long-term relationship with a brand.

Finally, most existing studies depend heavily on secondary data or case studies, with limited use of primary data. This study tries to address this gap by combining primary data collected through consumer surveys with secondary data from academic literature and case studies.

Study Focus Areas in Sustainable Marketing Research





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### III. OBJECTIVE

The main aim of this research are:

1. To study the relationship between consumer behaviour and sustainable marketing, concentrating on the factors that impact sustainable purchasing decisions.
2. To know how brand perception is formed by sustainable claims and the part of genuineness in building consumer trust and loyalty.
3. To examine the impact of greenwashing on consumer trust and how it influences long-term brand loyalty.
4. To discover the gap between consumer hopes and business sustainability practices and how this gap effects purchasing behaviour.

### IV. METHODOLOGY

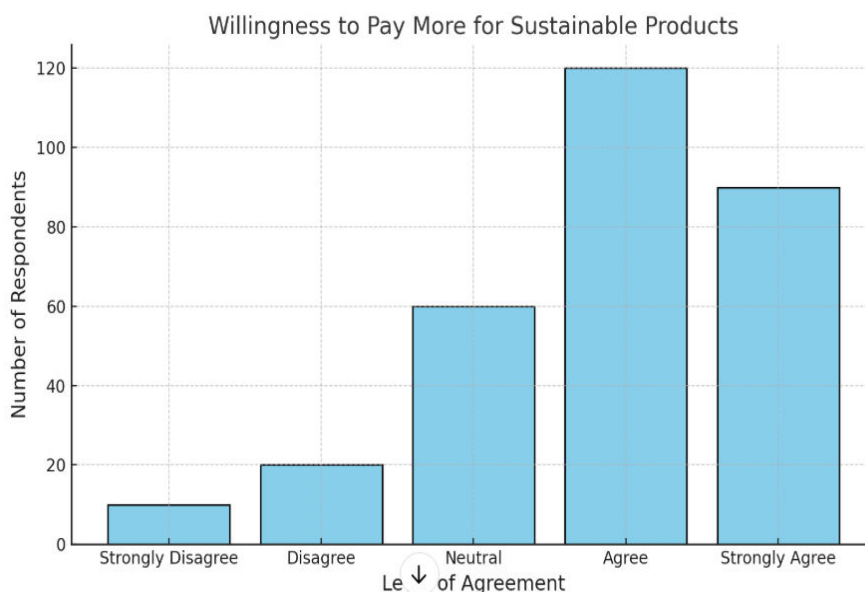
This research is taking a mixed-method approach, merging both qualitative and quantitative data. Primary data is collected through a structured survey circulated to consumers, while secondary data is gained from case studies, academic journals and, market reports.

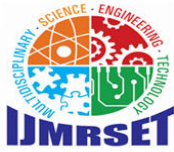
#### Primary Data Collection

A survey was planned to understand the consumer behaviour and perceptions sustainable products and brands. The survey contain question on the following topics:

- Purchasing behaviour related to sustainable products.
- Concerns about greenwashing and scepticism toward sustainability marketing.
- Insights of brand genuineness and trust in sustainability claims.
- Awareness of sustainable brands and products.
- Readiness to pay a premium for sustainable products.

For the survey we have taken the 300 applicants to understand the different samples in terms of age, gender, education level and income. Applicants were asked to rate their level of agreement through some questions using a Likert scale which is a measurable method used in research to evaluate attitudes, opinions and perception (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Data was examined using statistical techniques such as correlation analysis, regression analysis, and descriptive analysis and to find trends and relationships between variables.





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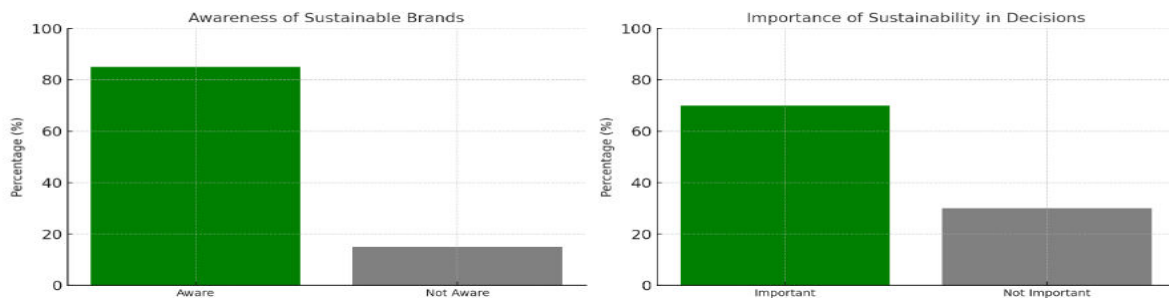
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### Secondary Data Collection

We have collected Secondary data from various sources including case studies, industry reports, and academic journals. Applicable literature on consumer behaviour theories, sustainable marketing, and brand perception was studied to provide a theoretical groundwork for the study. We have also taken some case studies of brands that have executed sustainable marketing strategies, such as IKEA, Patagonia, and Unilever to understand the practical implications of the research results.

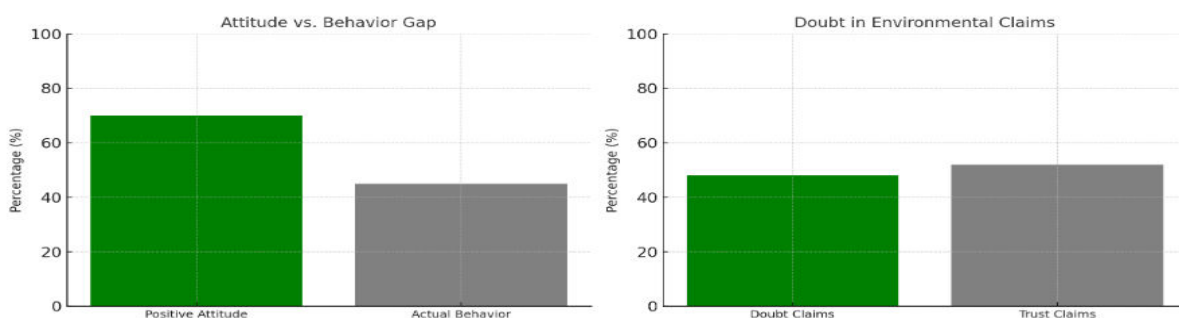
### V. RESULTS

The study of primary data gives valuable insights into consumer perceptions of sustainable brands and how these perceptions influence purchasing behaviour. The results indicate that a significant majority of respondents, 85%, are aware of sustainable brands, reflecting an increasing acknowledgment of sustainability in the marketplace. Besides, 70% of participants consider sustainability to be a vital factor in their purchasing decisions, weighting on the growing importance of ethical and environmental thoughts among consumers. However, a distinguished difference emerges when inspecting the actual buying behaviour: only 45% of respondents are frequently purchasing sustainable products. This gap between positive attitudes toward sustainability and actual buying habits points to a significant attitude-behaviour gap, saying that while consumers show a wish to support sustainable practices, this intention does not steadily interpret into action.

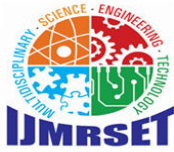


Maintaining trust in sustainability claims is a challenge for brands. The research shows that approx. half of the respondents, (48%) are doubting brand’s environmental claims, main reason can be due to worries about greenwashing—the brands are doing false practices and misleading the consumers about the environmental benefits of a product or service. This doubtfulness reflects a larger trend where consumers are more cautious and also demanding transparency from brands about their sustainability initiatives.

Moreover, the study discloses that consumer readiness to pay a finest amount for sustainable products is depending on the perceived genuineness of the brand's commitment to sustainability. About 60% of respondents showed they would be eager to pay additional for sustainable products, but this readiness depends on the trust that the brand is sincerely devoted to sustainable practices. This discovery highlights the importance of authenticity in building consumer trust; brands must show a true commitment to sustainability rather than just marketing themselves as eco-friendly.



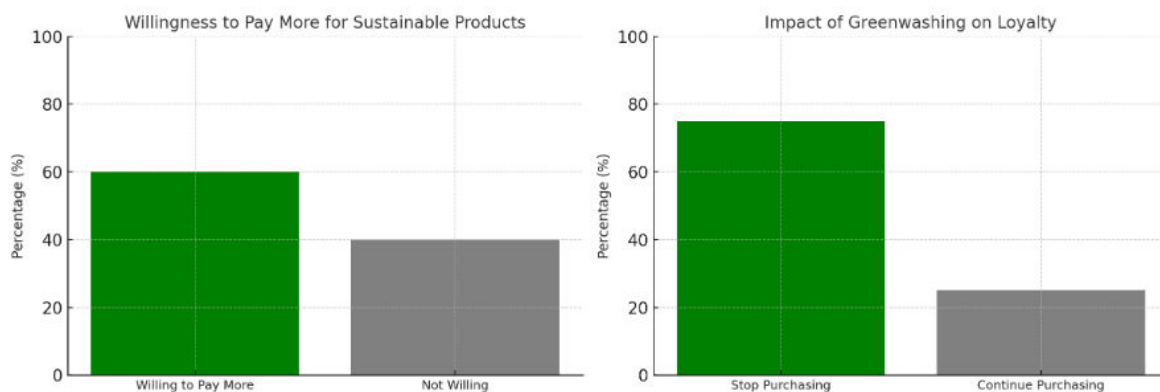




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The impression of greenwashing is mainly marked in shaping consumer behaviour. The research demonstrates that respondents are knowingly less likely to make replication regarding purchases from brands that they thought are engaged in greenwashing. This sentiment is more highlighted by the fact that 75% of respondents said that they would stop purchasing from a brand if they find out that it was involved in greenwashing practices. This highlights the crucial role of sincere sustainability efforts in nurturing long-term consumer loyalty and strengthens the idea that transparency and honesty are vital for brands looking to maintain trust in an increasingly doubtful marketplace. Overall, these perceptions demonstrate the complications of consumer behaviour concerning sustainability, highlighting the need for brands to be authentic, genuine and transparent in their sustainability efforts to effectively involve and retain environmentally mindful consumers.



### VI. DISCUSSION

The outcomes of the primary and secondary data analysis shows that consumers are progressively concerned about sustainability, but their buying decisions are deeply influenced by their perceptions of a brand's genuineness. Brands that are more transparent and genuine in their efforts regarding sustainability are more likely to gain trust and loyalty among their consumers. In contrast, brands that involve in greenwashing are highly taking risk of losing consumers trust and damaging their own reputation in the eye of customers.

The attitude-behaviour gap that we observed in this study advises that while consumers expressing a strong wish to support sustainable brands, they are often hesitant to do so in practice when time comes. This gap may be accredited to factors such as convenience, price and scepticism about the genuineness of sustainability claims.

Greenwashing stances a important challenge for brands trying to market themselves as sustainable. As consumers are becoming more serious about the environmental and climate issues, they are also becoming more conscious about sustainability claims. That's why Brands should prioritize transparency and avoid making overstated or false claims about their environmental practices rather than lying to their customers.

### VII. CONCLUSION

The research has also been significant in helping understand the role of being authentic and transparent in sustainable marketing. The fact that eco-friendly brands are gaining interest with consumers must also be put in context with the resurgence of greenwashing and false sustainability claims. Organizations that can provide credible sustainability communication are better positioned to earn the words of trust and loyalty from consumers for a long time as they will have received 'sustainable maturity' in credibility.

The finding further exposes the need for the brands to close the attitude-behavior gap by making sustainable products easy to access and cheaper. Moreover, companies should be cautious on their sustainability commitments and avoid greenwashing as it would tarnish consumers' trust and confidence in brands permanently.



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For the follow-up studies, the demographic characteristics of the respondents such as their age, income and education level may help in understanding how consumers perceive the concept of sustainability. What is more, cross-section studies can assess the timely brand image and perception changes towards the brands with sustainability claims and engagement.

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