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Article

Ethical Perceptions and Consumer Behaviour in Green Purchasing: An Exploratory Study of Non-Resident and Resident Indian Consumers

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Abstract: Sustainable consumption indicates preferring products that do the least damage to the environment as well as those that support ethical behaviour. Therefore, this study refers and combines ethical and green issues to get a more holistic understanding of consumers' sustainable practices. The author examines the green and ethical purchases of consumers in an exploratory base. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out with 60 NRI and Resident Indian consumers. Results reveal that both Non-Resident and Resident Indian consumers believe that greenness is a part of ethical behaviour and convert their knowledge of corporate ethics into ethical purchase. Non-Resident Indian consumers have been aware of green issues for a long time now.

Keywords: sustainable consumption; consumer ethics; green purchase; India; non-resident Indian; resident

1. Introduction

In the past ten years, there has been substantial growth in global consumer interest and awareness of sustainable consumption (SC). The literature on consumer behaviour provides various definitions of SC. For instance, Vermier and Verbeke characterize it as a decision-making process that incorporates both the consumer's individual needs and wants, as well as their social responsibility. SC encompasses different ethical behaviours such as animal welfare, fair trade practices, labour standards within society, and considerations for health-related issues like increased sales of organic food (Sulaiman et al., 2023). Two important components of SC are ethical consumerism and green consumerism where the latter can be viewed as part of the former. Some studies in relevant literature use terms like "green" or "environmentally friendly" interchangeably when referring to "sustainable consumption" (Chou et al., 2023). Consequently, investigating the factors and impacts of ethical and environmentally friendly product consumption has emerged as a significant area of research within consumer behaviour literature. Moreover, consumers' environmental concerns play a crucial role in shaping their ethical decision-making processes (Ghodbane & Alwehabie, 2023) (Yunus et al., 2023).

Hence, it is crucial to consider human-environment interaction as an ethical concern. Consumer behaviour that prioritizes environmentally friendly choices should be recognized as a complex form of consumer behaviour, where ethical considerations play a significant role. However, current literature on consumer behaviour tends to overlook the examination of ethical and green consumer behaviour in conjunction with each other. While some studies have explored specific aspects of green consumer practices from an ethical standpoint (e.g., Mostafa, 2007; Chan et al., 2008; McDonald et al., 2009), there is limited research exploring the intersection between green consumer practices and ethical issues in a comprehensive manner. Generally, consumers who are ethically conscious exhibit responsible behaviours towards society driven by their underlying values and principles.

In contemporary decision-making, the concept of green consumerism has become increasingly important. Purchasers are now considering the ecological impacts of products and services before making their buying decisions. Green consumers are individuals who take into account social and

environmental factors when choosing what to purchase, often prioritizing environmentally friendly options out of altruistic motives (Ashwini & Aithal, 2022). When there is sufficient demand for eco-friendly products and services, businesses that incorporate environmental initiatives into their strategies can distinguish themselves in the market.

Being an ethical consumer extends beyond just making green choices and involves adopting attitudes and behaviours that aim to minimize the environmental impact of one's purchasing, ownership, use or disposal of products. The concept of being both ethical and green stems from Norm Activation Theory, which suggests that environmentally conscious behaviour is influenced by a moral responsibility and personal norms related to ethics (Des Jardins, 1997; Honkanen et al., 2006). This perspective is supported by existing research in consumer behaviour literature (e.g., Strong, 1996; Cowe and Williams, 2001; Honkanen et al., 2006). However, previous research has not extensively examined the relationship between green consumer behaviour and ethical considerations. McEachern and McClean studied organic food purchasing in relation to ethical decision making, showing that concerns about the environment and animal welfare contribute to the increased demand for organic products. Chan et al. developed a model that incorporates both teleological and deontological evaluations of ethical judgments on consumers' intentions to bring their own shopping bags while visiting supermarkets. Furthermore, when discussing sustainable consumption, there is a tendency to focus on the individual characteristics that influence consumers' decision-making behaviours. Attitudes, preferences, and choices of individuals are influenced by their culture and value systems, which in turn may impact ethical and green consumption (Thøgersen, 2010; Reijonen, 2011). Ethical consumerism is described as an individual's motivational tendency towards responsible consumption. Additionally, limited research has been conducted on Eastern European countries regarding ethical and green consumer behaviour. Papaoikonomou et al. suggest that further empirical studies should explore the micro-cultural contexts within ethical consumption. Thus, this study aims to address two dimensions: To gain a comprehensive understanding of consumer buying behaviour that incorporates ethical and green purchasing practices, this study compares the sustainability awareness and perceptions of two different groups in developing Indian markets. The study examines the factors influencing sustainable consumption, such as consumers' level of knowledge and awareness about ethical and green issues. It also explores the influences and barriers to sustainable consumption, consumers' willingness to boycott companies based on ethical concerns, and any differences in these issues between developed and developing countries.

2. Literature Review Information and Awareness of Green and Ethical Issues

Increased consumer awareness and consciousness about the environment has led to a higher demand for eco-friendly products and the adoption of green marketing. This rise in environmental awareness not only affects consumers' purchasing decisions but also motivates businesses to promote green marketing initiatives. Various channels, including the internet, print, television, mobile devices, and direct mail are used by enterprises to communicate their environmentally friendly messages (Jose, 2012; Leire and Thidell, 2005; Sullivan, 2008). In recent years, there has been a rise in the number of online shopping platforms that offer environmentally friendly products. Increased environmental awareness in the US and Europe is driving consumers to invest in energy-efficient products and engage in recycling. As a result, companies are developing targeted strategies for segmentation and positioning while implementing effective advertising campaigns and product programs centered around green initiatives to raise awareness, particularly in developing countries. For instance, retail displays and product packaging now incorporate "green" concepts as a means of visual communication. One important ethical issue within marketing ethics research pertains to consumer knowledge regarding firms' ethical marketing practices. Consumers now have a greater interest in obtaining information about the production of products they purchase, as highlighted by Alexander and Nicholls. Ethical behaviour is considered important to these informed consumers, leading them to prefer companies that produce ethically. However, there is still a significant portion

of consumers who lack awareness regarding corporate ethical issues. For instance, Carrigan and Attala found that only 26% of respondents could name a socially responsible firm. This suggests that many consumers have low awareness and limited knowledge when it comes to unethical behaviours exhibited by companies. To better understand how consumers become aware of ethical activities conducted by firms, researchers and marketers prioritize the examination of information sources. In order for consumers to make informed ethical choices, they require accurate and reliable information. Media platforms such as television are often considered the primary source through which individuals gain awareness about ethical issues. Anon found that in the UK, approximately 70% of consumers gather information about ethics from television programs and documentaries; however, newspapers, books, and magazines contribute as secondary sources. Publicity also plays a significant role in raising awareness among consumers regarding unethical behaviours. Negative publicity related to unethical actions tends to occur more frequently than positive publicity highlighting ethical practices. Nonetheless, Sun's study demonstrated that there are three barriers inhibiting individuals from becoming ethically conscious consumer: lack of adequate information, savings, satisfaction, misperception higher prices. These factors can potentially impact consumer's level awareness on ethics in order to comprehend the level of consumer awareness regarding ethical behaviour, it is crucial to explore the factors that impede this awareness.

The awareness of ethical issues can have both positive and negative influences on consumers' purchasing behaviour, as stated in the ethics literature. It has been found that when a firm exhibits ethical behaviour, consumers are more willing to pay premium prices for their products. However, European consumers have shown limited support for the idea that ethical issues significantly impact their purchase decisions; instead, they prioritize their personal needs. Additionally, consumers consider a company's ethical behaviour as an important criterion when making purchase decisions. Conversely, unethical actions or irresponsible corporate behaviour can lead to negative outcomes such as boycotts if trust is violated.

According to a survey conducted by Associated Press in 1999, more than half of American respondents choose to "punish" unethical firms. This rate has been increasing over the past decade due to the growing global awareness of environmental issues. In order to enhance and promote ethical awareness, it is crucial to have a comprehensive understanding of how consumers respond to the ethical behaviours and attitudes of firms. This includes both positive and negative responses, which play a significant role in shaping consumer consciousness.

Green buying behaviour can be influenced by various factors. These include consumer values towards sustainability, previous purchase experiences, time invested in research, knowledge about environmental issues, affordability of green products, and their availability. Grankvist and Biel also highlight that increased awareness regarding environmental concerns, price considerations, and perceived social norms are three key drivers for organic food purchases.

According to Leire and Thidell, a significant portion of consumers attribute importance to the ethical behaviours and attitudes of firms, which is crucial for increasing and enhancing ethical awareness. Several factors can influence green buying behaviour, including consumer's values related to sustainability, previous purchase experiences, time dedicated to research, knowledge about environmental issues, affordability considerations, and availability of green products. Grankvist and Biel highlight that heightened awareness about environmental problems as well as price perceptions and perceived social norms play pivotal roles in prioritizing organic food purchases among environmentally mindful consumers. However, consumers often overestimate their incorporation of environmental information into their product decisions (Asikainen, 2000; Björk, 1997). Consequently, there is typically a discrepancy between consumers' attitudes towards green issues and their actual purchasing behaviours. Moreover, additional factors such as price, quality, habit, brand strength, culture, and lifestyles also play significant roles when examining why green values have less impact on the decision-making process (Biel and Dahlstrand, 2005; Sener and Hazer, 2008; Wheale and Hinton, 2007). The lack of brand loyalty among green consumers means that they are constantly seeking out "greener" products. It is imperative for companies to comprehend the various factors that

influence green buying behaviour in order to both attract and retain environmentally conscious consumers.

National Differences

Sustainable consumption relies on both individual consumer choices and macro-level factors (Thøgersen 2005; Kilbourne, McDonagh and Prothero, 1997). There is a noticeable disparity between developing and developed countries regarding green awareness (Tantawi, O'Shaughnessy, Gad, Ragheb, 2009). In developed Western societies, sustainable consumption is influenced by a greater emphasis on education and knowledge regarding consumer rights and product standards (Carrigan and Attala, 2001).

According to Mostafa, consumers in the US and Western Europe are increasingly adopting environmentally responsible habits and lifestyles. In contrast, countries like Egypt in Eastern regions are just beginning to address environmental issues. Sustainable consumption is regarded as a significant element of sustainable development, especially in Western societies. Consequently, prioritizing environmental safety becomes relatively more important in developing nations. Similarly, Moisander suggests that while environmental awareness is growing among Western markets, barriers still exist due to cultural differences, infrastructure limitations, west created development activities, information problems and economic factors that influence green consumer Bhagirathi's trend has also been evident between northern European countries compared with Mediterranean countries when it comes to purchasing organic food items. Amine draws attention to scandals involving the manufacturing or promotion of potentially harmful products in less developed countries, such as the sale of high-dosage contraceptives, aggressive marketing of baby food, and unhealthy production practices related to asbestos. In addition to green consumption, consumers from different countries tend to evaluate ethical issues differently. For instance, Al-Khatib, Vittel and Rawwas demonstrate that American and Egyptian consumers hold significantly distinct ethical beliefs. Polonsky, Brito, Pinto and Higgs-Kleyn identify disparities between consumers in Northern and Southern European Union nations regarding perceptions of ethical consumption.

Therefore, in this study, a comparative, cross-sectional approach is employed to examine the difference between resident and non-resident Indian consumers in terms of green consumption and ethical purchasing behaviour.

3. Methodology Research Questions

The study investigates consumer experiences by addressing key research questions, which are closely connected to a qualitative research design.

RQ1: What is the connection between ethical concerns and the purchasing behaviour of Resident and Non-Resident Indian consumers when it comes to environmentally friendly products?

RQ2: To what extent are consumers knowledgeable about ethical issues and how aware are they of such concerns?

RQ3: Do consumers show a willingness to boycott or make purchases based on a firm's ethical issues?

RQ4: Do consumers receive adequate information about green products and are they sufficiently aware of their existence?

RQ5: What are the factors that influence and hinder the purchase of green products?

RQ6: Are there any discrepancies in green and ethical concerns between Resident and Non-Resident Indian consumers?

Sampling

A total of 58 individuals were interviewed for this study. The initial participants were conveniently selected from those who identified themselves as green and ethical consumers. The

sample size was later expanded using the snowball sampling method to include individuals from different age, gender, income, and education groups.

Method

This study employed semi-structured, in-depth interviews to gather the perspectives of respondents on a specific topic. An interview guide was prepared with questions that covered various aspects related to green consumption and ethical issues. The interviews were conducted by the researchers, lasted approximately 40-50 minutes each, and were conducted in the native language of both groups to ensure clarity and ease of expression.

Reliability and Construct Validity:

For the purpose of ensuring the reliability of this study, all interviews were audio-recorded with participant permission and then transcribed into written form for analysis. The transcription process included a detailed explanation of how coding and interpretation were conducted. To establish construct validity, we followed recommendations (Chikudate, 2000; Dentchev, 2004) to consider "variance saturation" and assess the range of 12-18 interviewees to achieve saturation. Therefore, a total of 58 reviews (29 for each group) were conducted. Additionally, in order to maintain validity in our process, data gathering was separated from data analysis following guidelines outlined by Seidman, where analysis began only after completing both groups' interviews.

Analysing

To interpret the interviews, Wagner's qualitative research analysis process was utilized. The recorded interviews were transcribed into text and assigned names to each participant. Non-Resident participants were labelled as N01, N02, N24 while Resident participants were identified as R01, R02, and R24 in chronological order. Following transcription, a bracketing framework was applied for data analysis. This involved selecting variables and codes aligned with the interview questions and research inquiries at hand. During this phase, the interview data was carefully reviewed multiple times to identify coded groups. Key phrases, thematic patterns, and similarities were documented by noting iterations. The data underwent further examination for cultural variations after separate investigation of both groups.

Table 1.

VARIABLE		NRI #	NRI %	R#	R%
EDUCATION	HIGH SCHOOL	2	7%	4	14%
	COLLEGE	14	48%	16	55%
	MASTER	9	31%	8	28%
	Ph.D.	4	14%	1	3 %
AGE	20-25	2	7%	4	14%

	26-35	6	21%	5	16%
	36-45	6	21%	4	14%
	46-55	4	14%	6	21%
	56-65	6	21%	6	21%
	66-75	5	16%	4	14%
GENDER	FEMALE	16	55%	18	62%
	MALE	13	45%	11	38%
INCOME	LOW	6	21%	9	31%
	MEDIUM	14	48%	10	34.5%
	HIGH	9	31%	10	34.5%

4. Results and Discussion

In general, the findings of our study provide an overview of the differences between two groups. It was discovered that there are discernible discrepancies in green and ethical concerns between Non-Resident and Resident consumers. The following presents the findings from our in-depth interviews, with a primary focus on exploring these distinctions between the two groups:

Information and Awareness of Green Issues

A notable distinction between Non-Resident and Resident consumers is their level of awareness regarding green issues. Approximately 68% of Non-Resident consumers have been knowledgeable about and concerned with green issues for over 10 years, whereas this figure drops to only 32% for Resident consumers. Additionally, while 45% of Non-Resident participants actively make purchases of green products for more than a decade, the proportion is almost half among Resident consumers. Consequently, it can be inferred that Non-Resident consumers demonstrate greater consciousness and engagement in purchasing environmentally friendly products compared to their Resident counterparts.

(N06): It has been quite a while since I turned 24. During that time, my mother ran a small recycling centre. Since the early 1970s, I have made an effort to purchase green products. One of the earliest green products I remember buying was laundry soap

(R06): This is a new topic for me as I only became aware of green or organic products in the past five years. It was during this time that I began purchasing green detergent.

Additionally, the limited market share of green products may contribute to consumers' lack of knowledge and engagement with sustainable practices.

(R15): Finding green products can be challenging, especially since not every supermarket offers them. For instance, when it comes to cosmetics, there are limited options available. Increasing the availability of green alternatives would encourage more people to make sustainable purchases and develop a habit of choosing environmentally-friendly products.

To understand the level of consciousness among Non-Resident consumers, let's consider the following example related to market share:

(N23): Many individuals are unable to afford organic foods due to their high cost. It is recommended that everyone allocate 10% of their food budget towards purchasing as much organic food as they can. By increasing the demand for green products, farmers will have a larger market which may lead to lower prices. If all residents in the United States dedicate 10% of their food budget to buying organic foods, it will stimulate market growth and potentially decrease prices.

The majority of respondents mentioned using the internet and newspapers as sources of information about being environmentally friendly, along with evaluating product features themselves. Word-of-mouth from friends and family was identified as another important source of information. Television commercials and salespeople were generally not trusted by interviewees

(R19): When looking for information, my main resource is the internet. I find user forums to be particularly helpful. Additionally, I value the opinions and ideas of my friends and family. However, I am somewhat sceptical about relying on television as a reliable source of information.

(NRI10): When gathering information, I often rely on various sources. One of my go-to sources is consumer reports that I find online. These reports provide valuable insights. Additionally, I seek advice from friends and individuals with expertise in the matter at hand. While advertisements and salespeople can be informative, I approach their information with caution due to potential biases or hidden agendas. As for supermarkets, my decision to trust them depends on their reputation in terms of providing reliable products and services

Information and Awareness of Ethical Issues

One source indicates that 85% of Indians have confidence in green products and are aware of their positive impact on the environment. However, another extensive research study suggests that although consumers may have a favourable attitude towards purchasing green products, this does not always translate into actual eco-friendly buying behaviour. As a result, the number of green purchases remains relatively low compared to regular products. This lack of knowledge about how these eco-friendly products reduce environmental impact is evident even in developed economies where making green purchase decisions can be challenging due to confusing information. It is crucial to gather accurate and reliable information when making ethical choices as a consumer (Basgoze, 2012).

(R19): *Determining the ethics of a firm is challenging for me as I lack knowledge about their production process and use of underage employees. Therefore, my evaluation relies on the materials used in their products and any available information regarding testing procedures that may be indicated on the product itself.*

(N20): *Becoming an ethical consumer is something I aspire to, but the truth is, it's difficult for me to know which companies are truly ethical. Unless there's news coverage about a company's practices, I usually don't actively seek out information.*

Typically, consumers learn about ethics-related events from sources like TV news, newspapers, the internet, and personal experiences. When discussing the barriers to being an ethical consumer, one major obstacle that arises is a lack of knowledge. Many participants in our study admitted they were unsure how to differentiate between ethical and unethical firms. Furthermore, both groups expressed doubts that this knowledge gap can be fully bridged since companies have control over what information they share with the public.

(N03): *In order to be an ethical consumer, it is essential to gather accurate and reliable information about products or companies. However, many consumers face time constraints or simply do not prioritize this aspect. Being a sceptical consumer requires time and effort but can lead to informed purchasing decisions.*

(R17): *Access to ethical information is crucial, and the media plays a significant role in providing such knowledge. Without media coverage, it becomes challenging for individuals to stay informed about ethical issues.*

(N14): *It can be challenging to understand the actions and practices of companies as they often keep their activities confidential. They employ legal and public relations experts to safeguard their interests, making it difficult for outsiders to gain insight into their operations. Another obstacle faced by NRI participants is the effort required to be an ethical consumer, which demands time, energy, and research. It may seem easier for individuals to disregard ethics altogether.*

(N06): *Being an ethical consumer can indeed be challenging.*

There is often a strong emphasis on obtaining the best possible deal and prioritizing personal financial interests, which can lead to unethical buying practices and stress on materialism. However, it is worth noting that not all participants in our research view being ethical as burdensome. In fact, a majority of respondents (75%) believe that being an ethical consumer is not difficult at all. They see ethics as both a personal value and a social responsibility.

(R02): *Being an ethical consumer is not a daunting task as it aligns with personal values and individuality. These social and personal values are acquired from societal influences, such as family upbringing and cultural norms.*

(R01): *Being a person who upholds ethical values relates to social principles and beliefs.*

Influences of Ethical Issues and Boycott Behaviour

Consumers have the ability to express their views through their purchasing behaviour, either positively or negatively. Our research found that participants tend to punish unethical companies by boycotting their products, rather than rewarding ethical ones through positive buying actions. Participants were more likely to remember and recall unethical firms compared to ethical ones. This makes it challenging for consumers to recognize and support ethical brands in their purchase decisions.

(N14): It can be challenging to recall companies that prioritize ethics. It is uncertain if ethical companies always emphasize their ethical practices. There are likely numerous ethical companies quietly carrying out their work.

Even when consumers do remember, awareness of unethical behaviour tends to be limited to a small number of high-profile cases involving 3-4 specific firms. Examples include the BP oil spill, Enron scandal, and Nike's use of child labour. Other instances such as Exxon, Nestle Baby formula issues, and mine disasters are also cited as unethical events by consumer participants in this study. The majority of respondents identified Nike, BP, and Gap as examples of unethical firms. Consumers acquire knowledge of such incidents primarily through television news, newspapers, the internet, and personal experiences. A significant majority of both NRI (91%) and R participants (88%) indicated that they would boycott products from an unethical company, even if it happens to be their favourite brand.

(R09): If a company engages in unethical practices, my response is to boycott their products. I express my dissatisfaction and make the decision not to support them by refraining from purchasing anything they produce. This principle applies regardless of how much I previously enjoyed their offerings. For instance, when L'Oreal acquired the Body Shop, I stopped buying their products due to concerns about potential animal testing during production.

Influences and Barriers on Green Buying Behaviour

Based on previous research, our interviews support the finding of a significant gap between attitudes and behaviour in relation to green issues. Consumers express awareness and concern for environmental issues, but face difficulties in aligning their behaviours with these attitudes.

(N15): In terms of my environmental concerns, I believe that I prioritize the environment at around 90%, but when it comes to taking action, I would say I only act ethically about half the time. This pattern is also reflected in my attitude and behaviour as an ethical consumer.

One possible explanation for this gap could be the presence of external influences and barriers that affect our green buying habits. Despite expressing a strong interest in making environmentally-friendly purchases, it is interesting to note that factors such as price, personal needs, product quality, and overall value still hold significant importance in influencing our purchasing decisions across different generations.

(R04): The necessity for this product is crucial. I purchase a product based on its functionality and whether it satisfies my requirements.

(N05): When making purchasing decisions, the quality of a product is an essential factor to consider. Consumers also prioritize value and are often willing to pay a higher price for products that offer superior quality.

(N14): *Consumers are reluctant to buy green products if there is a significant impact on price and quality.*

(N15): *...I attempted using environmentally friendly dishwasher soap, but it was not effective.*

(R20): *When it comes to recycled products, I perceive them as less qualified.*

Price is also a significant factor for consumers, as they have a specific comfort zone regarding how much extra they are willing to pay for environmentally friendly versions of products. Additionally, there are differences in the reported willingness to pay a price premium depending on the product category. In cases where consumers have high involvement and purchase infrequently such as with appliances, they are more willing to pay more and place greater value on sustainability performance compared to frequently purchased items like groceries. For instance, NRI consumers agreed to a price increase of 10-20% for groceries but were open to an increase of 30-50% for durable goods. The energy consumption level plays a crucial role when it comes to green appliances. However, their motivation primarily stems from saving money rather than environmental concerns.

(R21): *When I buy groceries, the environmental friendliness of the product is not a determining factor for me. Price plays a more significant role when it comes to purchasing essential items. However, when buying appliances, I am willing to spend more money and prioritize energy-efficient options.*

(N24): *Apart from organic foods, I tend to prioritize my own needs rather than considering the environment. Price is usually a determining factor for me, as eco-friendly options often come with a higher price tag. When it comes to durable goods, I do consider energy efficiency to some extent, but ultimately my budget plays a significant role in my decision-making process.*

(N14): *Honestly, I purchase energy-saving appliances not only because they are better for the environment but also because they help save money in the long run.*

In other words, buying energy-saving appliances is often seen as an investment. Many participants acknowledge that engaging in green consume piton can be challenging due to certain barriers. Some mention that it requires a significant time commitment as they need to research available options and find stores selling eco-friendly products. They also express a lack of knowledge about companies and their environmentally friendly offerings.

(N01): *Being an environmentally conscious consumer can be costly and time-consuming. It involves activities like recycling, shopping at green supermarkets, and being mindful of sustainable practices. However, many individuals are hesitant to invest the time required for these actions.*

(N19): *When it comes to purchasing green products, time constraints can be a factor. There are instances when I don't have the time to visit local farmer markets for organic foods and end up buying from supermarkets instead. Additionally, cost is a significant consideration, especially when it comes to organic foods as they tend to be three times more expensive.*

Lack of choice and knowledge also emerged as barriers; over half of the participants in both groups expressed difficulty finding green products and determining whether a product is truly environmentally friendly or not.

(R20): *If the product does not clearly state that it is an environmentally friendly version, I would have difficulty determining if the product is indeed green or not.*

(N03): *I believe I understand the labels. However, I feel restricted in my options when it comes to green products. It is challenging to find a store that carries a wide selection of organic items.*

(N19): *Determining whether a product is considered green or not can be quite challenging, particularly when it comes to cleaning products. The abundance of ingredients and the complexities involved make it difficult to ascertain their eco-friendliness. Additionally, the accuracy of green labels is often questionable. For instance, a label may claim that a product is "biodegradable," but its production process might involve the use of petroleum-based substances.*

Furthermore, most individuals perceive fully embracing sustainable consumption as an arduous task:

(N12): *Being environmentally conscious as a consumer can be challenging. One of the main difficulties is finding the time to properly research and make informed decisions. Additionally, factors like self-alignment within stores can greatly influence consumers' evaluation of green products.*

(N06): *I believe it would be beneficial to have environmentally friendly products displayed alongside non-green options on store shelves. Currently, supermarkets tend to group all organic products together in a dedicated section of the store, making it difficult for consumers to compare and consider alternative eco-friendly options that may be available. Additionally, another barrier is the lack of habit among consumers when it comes to purchasing sustainable products. Many individuals simply stick with familiar brands without giving much thought to their environmental impact or considering alternatives.*

(R14): *Becoming an environmentally conscious consumer may seem straightforward, but actually purchasing green products presents challenges. These products often come with a higher price tag compared to others in the market. Additionally, there is resistance due to ingrained buying habits that prioritize affordability over environmental considerations.*

(N13): *Being environmentally friendly can be challenging in our culture, where there is a prevalence of large cars and excessive packaging. The design of our communities often does not support sustainable practices, making it difficult to live a green lifestyle.*

Additionally, trust becomes a barrier as some consumers believe that companies use environmental issues solely for marketing purposes. This lack of trust may stem from insufficient information:

(N05): *In the past, there was a push for using healthy laundry soaps, but now I am sceptical of marketing claims about products being "green" or environmentally friendly. Many companies that claim to produce green products still use excessive*

packaging. Additionally, I consider where the product is made and the associated transportation costs when deciding on purchases.

(N21): Given the significant political influence surrounding environmental issues, I maintain a healthy scepticism towards them as it is often accompanied by profit-driven motives. Consequently, my trust in this matter is compromised due to a lack of certainty and knowledge regarding the true intentions behind these initiatives.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this research is to examine:

- A. The level of knowledge and awareness regarding ethical and green issues among consumers.
- B. The factors that influence sustainable consumption and the barriers associated with it.
- C. Consumers' willingness to boycott companies based on ethical concerns.
- D. How these aspects differ between developed and developing countries.

To gain valuable insights into consumer behaviour related to ethics and sustainability, this exploratory study takes a cross-national approach. Across both groups, the overall findings indicate that consumers perceive green purchasing as part of ethical behaviour. Existing literature also suggests that ethical or "green" consumerism falls within the same phase of consumer purchasing behaviour. Particularly in India, a majority of residential participants equate being a green consumer with being an ethical one. Marketing managers should integrate ethical and green considerations into their marketing strategies to persuade consumers that sustainable consumption, encompassing both green and ethical behaviours, leads to long-term profitability. The duration of being a green consumer varies among individuals in the group, with NRI consumers demonstrating a higher level of awareness regarding green issues compared to R consumers. The difference between the two groups lies in their duration of being green consumers, with NRI consumers showing a higher level of awareness about green issues compared to R consumers. This study provides reasons for the lower level of consciousness among R consumers towards green issues. According to previous research (Biel and Dahlstrand, 2005; Sener and Hazer, 2008; Wheale and Hinton, 2007), factors such as price, quality, habits, brand strength, culture, and lifestyles have a stronger influence on decision-making processes for R consumers. Additionally, the lack of access to specialized information sources, green labels, and formal or informal education about environmentally-friendly concepts causes less trust among R consumers regarding green issues. According to research (Biel and Dahlstrand, 2005; Sener and Hazer, 2008; Wheale and Hinton, 2007), for most R consumers, green issues are not yet a top priority. Factors such as price, quality, habits, brand reputation cultural factors have more influence on their decision-making process. Additionally, there is limited trust among consumers when it comes to green issues due to a lack of easily accessible information sources, necessary education about sustainability practices, and availability of green labels. These are relatively new concepts for R consumers, resulting in an inadequate infrastructure required to support sustainable consumer behaviour. For example, recycling is not always done systematically and can be time-consuming. Another reason for consumers' lack of knowledge and green behaviour may be the relatively small market share of green products. Therefore, companies should take into account the level of environmental awareness in a given country when developing their green marketing strategies. If a nation has low consciousness and knowledge about environmental issues, it would be beneficial to first implement an education program on marketing strategies for green products. Numerous studies have shown that consumers often struggle to align their attitudes towards ethical and environmental factors with their actual purchasing behaviours. This issue of a gap between attitudes and behaviours has been extensively studied in the field of consumer behaviour. Our findings support this notion, as we also found evidence suggesting that consumer priorities, such as price, needs, and value for

money, tend to outweigh considerations of green or ethical factors when making purchasing decisions. To address this gap, marketers should emphasize the high quality of green products and highlight how choosing these products can have a positive impact on ethical concerns. To promote green products effectively, marketers should focus on raising consumers' awareness and incorporate green consumption into ethical consumer behaviour. This can be achieved through targeted strategies that provide a sense of reward for sustainable consumption. Expanding the market potential can address issues such as high prices and limited choices. Additionally, overcoming the attitude-behaviour gap requires breaking old habits ingrained in both the groups. Research suggests that personal experiences play a significant role in shaping ethical behaviour, with individuals often sticking to familiar brands without much thought or consideration. Consumers exhibit a willingness to purchase green products, but they are hesitant when it comes to inconveniences associated with such purchases. Additionally, consumers perceive being environmentally friendly as time-consuming and often feel limited in their options for green products. There is also a need for further research on the differences between the two groups regarding the sources of information that influence green and ethical consumption. The study highlights that the internet continues to be an important source of information in both groups, with consumers relying on websites and newspapers to discover green products. These findings align with existing literature (Jose, 2012; Leire & Thidell, 2005; Sullivan, 2008). To make sustainable purchasing decisions easier for consumers - especially those identified as R - credible, accessible, and reliable information is crucial. Consumers' decision-making process is heavily influenced by the credibility of a product. Familiarity plays a key role in consumers' purchasing decisions, as they are more likely to choose products that they are familiar with. Labels play an important role in promoting green purchases among consumers; however, there is limited knowledge about these labels. In developing countries like India, it is crucial for firms to introduce green product labels and educate consumers about their significance. To have a significant impact on sustainable consumer behaviour, companies need to enhance awareness of these labels through effective distribution channels and provide a wider range of green product options. By addressing barriers such as lack of information, time constraints, and limited choices for sustainable consumption, firms can encourage environmentally-friendly purchasing behaviours. Consistent with previous research findings (e.g., McDonald et al., 2009), our study demonstrates that consumer attitudes towards green products vary across different product categories. In the case of high involvement, less frequently purchased appliances, NRI consumers show a willingness to pay a higher price and prioritize sustainability performance. Energy consumption is identified as the most important factor when considering green appliances for both generations. However, it is noteworthy that energy saving measures are primarily motivated by personal financial reasons rather than environmental concerns. Among different product groups, organic food and local cleaning supplies are found to be strongly associated with green issues and have higher levels of purchase among consumers. Our research findings suggest that both R and NRI consumers demonstrate a strong sense of moral responsibility reflected in their ethical purchasing behaviour when evaluating corporate ethics.

NRI consumers appear to be a more educated society, with informed opinions such as poor worker rights, discrimination, child worker and unethical business practices. Although consumers express a desire to support ethical companies and punish unethical ones, they state that they could not know about ethical behaviours of a firm. In other words, the most important barrier to ethical consumerism appears to be the difficulties in obtaining information. Most of the participants believe they do not have the knowledge of distinguishing ethical and unethical firms. This finding is consistent with reviewed literature (Carrigan and Attala, 2001). Further, consumers usually punish unethical firms, but hardly reward ethical ones. Therefore, firms should make their customers feel rewarded when make purchases on ethical reasoning and encourage them to build healthier ethical decisions as a habit in the society.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has certain limitations that prompt further inquiries for future research. Firstly, due to the use of in-depth interviews with small samples and non-random sampling methods, it is difficult to make generalizations about the findings. Overcoming this limitation can be achieved through larger sample sizes and quantitative methodologies in subsequent studies. Additionally, it is important to consider how the role of researchers as interpreters may influence generalization. Secondly, individual factors such as gender, age, income, and lifestyle are likely influential variables that should be explored in future research on sustainable consumption. Our interviews provide some insights into how these factors impact consumer behaviour towards environmentally friendly products; for example, a participant mentioned that if they were wealthy they would prioritize purchasing from exclusive green brands.

Future research could explore the impact of factors such as gender, age, income, and lifestyle on sustainable consumption. This would involve examining how these variables influence both green and ethical purchasing behaviours.

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