

Consumer Perception and Attitude Towards Sustainable Products: Implications for Green Business and Climate Action

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Abstract- Sustainable consumption has become an important dimension of contemporary business because consumer choices influence resource use, waste generation, production practices and the wider transition towards a low-carbon economy. This paper examines consumer perception and attitude towards sustainable products and discusses the implications for green business and climate action. The paper adopts a descriptive, secondary-data and review-based research design. Published empirical studies on Indian consumers, together with the Sustainable Development Goals framework, are reviewed and thematically interpreted. The literature indicates that environmental concern, eco-literacy, green awareness, interpersonal influence, environmental advertising and perceived credibility of sustainability information can shape consumers' perceptions and purchasing behaviour. At the same time, price, availability, information gaps, uncertainty about product claims and the well-known attitude-behaviour gap can prevent favourable attitudes from becoming consistent purchasing behaviour. The review further indicates that businesses can strengthen sustainable consumption by providing credible environmental information, improving product availability, adopting transparent green marketing and integrating sustainability into product and value-chain decisions. The paper concludes that consumer participation is an important complement to policy and technological interventions for achieving responsible consumption and supporting climate action.

Keywords- Sustainable products, consumer perception, green purchasing, green business, sustainable consumption, climate action, environmental awareness.

I. Introduction

Climate change and environmental degradation have increased attention towards the way goods and services are produced and consumed. Sustainable development cannot be achieved only through changes in energy systems or industrial technology; it also requires changes in patterns of consumption. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals give particular importance to responsible consumption and production under SDG 12 and to climate action under SDG 13 (United Nations, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Responsible consumption involves using resources efficiently, reducing waste and encouraging consumption patterns that are compatible with long-term environmental and social well-being.

In this context, sustainable products have received increasing attention from consumers, marketers and policymakers. Sustainable or green products may incorporate characteristics such as reduced environmental impact, resource efficiency, recyclable or reusable materials, responsible sourcing, lower energy consumption or environmentally preferable packaging. However, the environmental value of a product alone does not guarantee consumer acceptance. Consumers evaluate products through

multiple criteria, including price, quality, convenience, availability, brand reputation and trust in environmental claims.

Indian consumer research provides evidence that awareness and environmental attitudes matter, but the relationship between favourable attitudes and actual purchasing behaviour is not always straightforward. Jaiswal, Singh, Kant, and Biswas found, using 549 valid responses from Indian metropolitan regions, that perceptions of eco-labels and environmental advertisements positively influenced green purchasing behaviour, while the direct effects of eco-brand and perceived environmental knowledge were not supported in their model. This suggests that the way sustainability information is communicated can be as important as the existence of environmental information itself.

Similarly, Naini and Reddy reported that environmental attitude, green awareness, interpersonal influence and green behaviour were important elements in explaining sustainable consumption in their study of Indian consumers. Kharbanda, Singh and Sharma, in a study of 504 urban Indian consumers, identified environmental concern and eco-literacy as important determinants of awareness of eco-friendly products. More recent evidence from Tamil Nadu also indicates that green product orientation and social influence are associated with green purchase attitudes and sustainable lifestyle outcomes.

The present paper therefore focuses on consumer perception and attitude as an important bridge between sustainability-oriented business practices and actual consumption. It also considers the implications for green business and climate action. Rather than presenting fabricated survey results, the study synthesizes findings from published empirical research and authoritative sustainable-development frameworks.

Purpose of The Study

The purpose of the study is to examine how consumers perceive sustainable products, identify the major factors that influence favourable or unfavourable attitudes towards such products, and discuss how businesses can convert sustainability awareness into more consistent green purchasing behaviour. The paper also seeks to connect consumer-level decisions with broader objectives of responsible consumption, green business and climate action.

Objectives of The Study

1. To provide an overview of sustainable products and sustainable consumption.
2. To examine consumer perception towards sustainable products based on findings reported in recent empirical literature.
3. To identify the major factors influencing consumers' attitudes and purchasing behaviour towards sustainable products.
4. To examine the barriers that contribute to the attitude-behaviour gap in sustainable consumption.
5. To discuss the implications of sustainable consumer behaviour for green business and climate action.

II. Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and review-based research design using secondary data. It does not claim to have collected primary responses for this paper. The approach is appropriate for synthesizing existing evidence on consumer attitudes, green purchasing and sustainable consumption and for developing business and policy implications from that evidence.

Sources of Data

The secondary evidence consists of peer-reviewed journal articles dealing with green purchasing, sustainable consumption and consumer attitudes in India, together with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework. Particular attention is given to empirical studies published between 2021 and 2026 so that the discussion reflects recent developments.

Method of Analysis

The selected literature was examined through descriptive review and thematic interpretation. Findings were organized under recurring themes such as environmental awareness, eco-literacy, social influence, green marketing communication, trust, price, availability, attitude-behaviour consistency and implications for sustainable business. No artificial respondent data, invented percentages or fabricated statistical tests are included.

III. Sustainable Products – An Overview

Sustainable products are goods designed, produced, distributed, used and disposed of with greater consideration for environmental and social consequences across their life cycle. Depending on the product category, sustainability may involve efficient use of energy and water, reduction of material intensity, use of recycled or responsibly sourced inputs, durability, repairability, reuse, recycling, reduced packaging and lower environmental impact during use.

From a consumer perspective, the sustainability of a product is not always directly observable. Consumers may therefore depend on labels, certifications, packaging information, brand communication, recommendations and digital content. This creates an information problem: where sustainability attributes are difficult to verify, consumer trust becomes important. Businesses that communicate sustainability claims without adequate evidence may weaken consumer confidence and contribute to perceptions of greenwashing.

Sustainable consumption is consequently broader than simply purchasing a product described as green. It includes the frequency and necessity of consumption, product longevity, reuse, repair, recycling and disposal decisions. A strong sustainable-consumption approach therefore requires coordination among consumers, businesses, regulators and civil society.

Consumer Perception Towards Sustainable Products

Consumer perception refers to the way individuals interpret and evaluate the characteristics, benefits, costs and credibility of a product. In sustainable consumption, perception is shaped by both functional and environmental considerations. A consumer may perceive a sustainable product positively because it protects the environment, reduces waste or provides health-related benefits. Conversely, the same consumer may perceive it negatively when the product is expensive, difficult to obtain or believed to offer lower quality.

The Indian evidence indicates that environmental awareness is an important foundation for green consumption. Kharbanda et al. reported that environmental concern and eco-literacy were important determinants of awareness of eco-friendly products among urban Indian consumers. This finding highlights the importance of consumer education. Awareness should not be limited to slogans; consumers need understandable information about environmental impacts, product labels, responsible usage and disposal.

Marketing communication also shapes perception. Jaiswal et al. found that eco-label perceptions and environmental advertising had positive effects on green purchasing behaviour in their Indian consumer study. This suggests that clear and credible sustainability communication can reduce information barriers. However, the findings also indicate that not every green marketing element automatically produces purchase behaviour. Consumers may recognize a green brand but still evaluate price, quality and convenience before purchasing.

Social influence is another important component. Naini and Reddy found interpersonal influence to have a strong direct influence on green purchase behaviour. This is relevant for marketers because sustainable consumption can spread through family, friends, peer groups, educational institutions and digital communities. The implication is that green business communication can be strengthened through community-oriented campaigns rather than relying exclusively on conventional advertising.

Consumer Attitude Towards Sustainable Products

Consumer attitude represents a relatively enduring favourable or unfavourable evaluation of sustainable consumption. A positive attitude may arise from environmental concern, personal values, perceived health benefits, social responsibility or confidence in the product. A negative or neutral attitude may result from price concerns, inconvenience, doubts about quality or distrust of environmental claims.

Recent Indian evidence supports the importance of attitude while also demonstrating that attitude does not operate in isolation. Kennedy, Susainathan, George and Parayitam, using evidence from Tamil Nadu, found that green product orientation and social influence were positively related to green purchase attitude, while attitude was associated with purchase behaviour and sustainable lifestyle outcomes. This indicates that consumers' environmental orientation can become meaningful when supported by social and market conditions.

The 2026 study by Adlinda et al. in Coimbatore District further developed this behavioural perspective by examining conscious consumerism as a mediator between

Theory of Planned Behavior constructs and sustainable consumption intention. Based on 430 respondents, the study reported significant relationships involving attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control and emphasized the role of conscious consumerism in translating these factors into sustainable consumption intentions. The study is particularly relevant to the present paper because it provides recent Tamil Nadu evidence linking consumer psychology with sustainable consumption.

Overall, the literature suggests that positive attitudes towards sustainability are necessary but not sufficient. Consumers need practical opportunities to act on those attitudes. Product availability, affordability, information quality, trust and social reinforcement can determine whether favourable attitudes become actual purchasing behaviour.

Factors Influencing Consumers' Purchase of Sustainable Products

Factor	Implication for consumer behaviour
Environmental awareness	Understanding environmental problems can increase consumers' recognition of the importance of sustainable products.
Environmental concern	Concern about ecological degradation can motivate consumers to consider environmental consequences in purchase decisions.
Eco-literacy	Knowledge of eco-labels, product attributes and environmental information can reduce uncertainty.
Green marketing communication	Clear environmental advertising and credible eco-label information can support green purchasing.
Social influence	Family, friends, peers and digital communities can reinforce sustainable purchase norms.
Price and value	Higher prices can discourage purchase when consumers do not perceive sufficient additional value.
Availability and convenience	Consumers are more likely to act on sustainable preferences when products are easily available.
Trust and credibility	Confidence in environmental claims is essential when sustainability attributes are difficult to verify.
Product quality	Environmental benefits generally cannot compensate for unacceptable quality or performance.
Personal values	Ethical orientation, responsibility and conscious consumption can strengthen sustainable intentions.

Major Barriers to Sustainable Consumption

Despite increasing environmental awareness, sustainable consumption faces several practical barriers. Price is one of the most frequently discussed barriers. Consumers may support sustainability in principle but choose conventional products when the price difference is perceived as too high. This is especially relevant where sustainable alternatives carry higher production, certification or distribution costs.

Availability is another constraint. A consumer cannot consistently choose a sustainable product when the product is absent from local markets or online channels, available only in limited varieties, or inconvenient to purchase. Green consumption therefore depends partly on market infrastructure and distribution strategy.

Information quality also remains important. Sustainability claims can be technical, difficult to verify or presented through unfamiliar labels. When consumers are uncertain about what a claim means, they may postpone purchase or disregard the claim altogether. Greenwashing can intensify this problem by reducing trust in environmental communication.

Quality and performance perceptions constitute a further barrier. Sustainable products need to compete on functional performance as well as environmental value. Businesses therefore need to avoid positioning sustainability as a substitute for quality. The most effective proposition is generally one that combines environmental value, reliable performance, reasonable price and convenience.

IV. Attitude–Behaviour Gap in Sustainable Consumption

One of the central challenges in sustainable consumption is the gap between what consumers say they value and what they consistently purchase. A consumer may express concern about climate change and waste while choosing a conventional product because it is cheaper, more convenient or more familiar. This does not necessarily mean that the attitude is insincere. It may indicate that structural and situational factors intervene between intention and behaviour.

The reviewed Indian studies illustrate this complexity. Naini and Reddy explicitly addressed the attitude–behaviour inconsistency in green purchasing and found that environmental attitude, green awareness and interpersonal influence operate through interconnected pathways. Jaiswal et al. likewise showed that some green marketing variables have direct effects while others operate indirectly. These findings suggest that businesses should not interpret awareness alone as evidence of guaranteed sales.

The solution is to reduce the practical cost of acting sustainably. Businesses can make sustainable choices easier through wider distribution, competitive pricing, transparent information, convenient return or recycling systems and product designs that reduce the need for repeated consumption. Policymakers can complement these measures through standards, consumer education and credible environmental labelling.

Sustainable Products And Green Business

Green business extends beyond marketing products as environmentally friendly. It involves incorporating environmental considerations into product design, procurement, manufacturing, logistics, packaging, retailing and post-consumption management. Consumer perception is therefore one component of a broader sustainability system.

For businesses, sustainable products can create opportunities for differentiation and innovation. Reusable products, energy-efficient appliances, recycled materials, low-waste packaging and durable goods can appeal to consumers who value environmental responsibility. However, sustainability claims should be supported by evidence.

Transparent communication about materials, certifications, environmental benefits and limitations can strengthen credibility.

Green business strategy should also consider the total value proposition. Consumers may accept a sustainable product more readily when environmental benefits are accompanied by good quality, convenient availability and reasonable economic value. Therefore, firms should avoid treating sustainability as a premium niche alone. Scaling sustainable alternatives into mainstream markets can increase their contribution to resource efficiency and responsible consumption.

Digital platforms provide additional opportunities. Social media, websites, product pages and digital labels can communicate sustainability information, explain correct usage and disposal, and encourage communities of responsible consumers. However, digital communication must remain factual and verifiable to avoid mistrust.

Sustainable Consumption and Climate Action

SDG 12 calls for responsible consumption and production, while SDG 13 calls for urgent action on climate change and its impacts (United Nations, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). Consumer choices can contribute to these goals when they encourage resource-efficient products, lower waste, longer product life, reuse, recycling and responsible disposal. The climate contribution of an individual product varies by product category and life cycle; therefore, sustainability claims should be assessed carefully rather than assuming that every product labelled green automatically produces the same climate benefit.

From a climate-action perspective, sustainable consumption can complement supply-side measures. Businesses can respond to consumer expectations by redesigning products, improving resource efficiency and reducing avoidable waste. Consumers can support such changes by selecting durable and resource-efficient products, avoiding unnecessary consumption and using products responsibly. Governments can strengthen the enabling environment through standards, information systems, public procurement and consumer education.

The connection between consumer behaviour and climate action is therefore indirect but important. Consumers do not control the entire production system, yet aggregate purchasing patterns can influence demand, innovation and corporate priorities. Green business and responsible consumption become mutually reinforcing when consumers reward credible sustainability and businesses make sustainable choices affordable, accessible and trustworthy.

Review of Selected Studies

Study	Sample	Major finding relevant to the present paper
Jaiswal, Singh, Kant, & Biswas (2021/2022)	549 Indian consumers	Eco-label and environmental advertising positively influenced green purchasing; some direct effects of eco-brand and environmental knowledge were unsupported.

Kharbanda, Singh, & Sharma (2022)	504 urban Indian consumers	Environmental concern and eco-literacy were important determinants of awareness of eco-friendly products.
Naini & Reddy (2024)	129 consumers in Hyderabad	Interpersonal influence, environmental attitude, green awareness and green behaviour were important in explaining sustainable consumption pathways.
Kennedy, Susainathan, George, & Parayitam (2024)	422 respondents from Tamil Nadu	Green product orientation and social influence were associated with green purchase attitude and sustainable lifestyle outcomes.
Maqbool & Teeli (2025)	412 Indian consumers	Recent evidence examined green purchasing behaviour from an environmental protection perspective, reinforcing the relevance of consumer-level sustainability factors.
Adlinda et al. (2026)	430 respondents in Coimbatore District	Attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control significantly predicted sustainable consumption intention, with conscious consumerism acting as a key mediating mechanism.

Major Findings

- Consumer environmental awareness and concern provide an important foundation for sustainable consumption, but awareness alone does not ensure consistent purchasing behaviour.
- Eco-labels and environmental advertising can influence green purchasing when consumers perceive the information as useful and credible.
- Eco-literacy helps consumers interpret sustainability information and may reduce uncertainty about environmentally preferable products.
- Interpersonal and social influence can strengthen sustainable consumption by making responsible purchasing a socially supported behaviour.
- Price, product availability, convenience, quality and trust remain critical in determining whether positive environmental attitudes become actual purchases.
- The attitude–behaviour gap is best understood as an interaction between consumer motivation and market conditions rather than as a simple lack of environmental concern.
- Recent Tamil Nadu evidence indicates that conscious consumerism and social influences can help translate favourable attitudes into sustainable consumption intentions.

- Green business can support climate action by integrating sustainability into product design, communication, distribution and post-consumption systems rather than relying only on promotional claims.

Suggestions

1. Businesses should make sustainability claims specific, evidence-based and easy for consumers to understand.
2. Credible eco-labels and transparent product information should be strengthened to improve consumer confidence and reduce uncertainty.
3. Sustainable products should be made more affordable and widely available so that environmentally responsible choices are not restricted to a small consumer segment.
4. Green products should maintain competitive quality and functional performance in addition to environmental benefits.
5. Businesses should use digital and social media not merely for promotion but also for consumer education about product use, reuse, recycling and disposal.
6. Retailers and manufacturers can provide convenient collection, refill, repair and recycling mechanisms that make sustainable behaviour easier.
7. Educational institutions and public agencies can strengthen eco-literacy through practical consumer education and awareness programmes.
8. Policymakers can support responsible consumption through credible standards, environmental information systems, sustainable public procurement and measures that discourage misleading green claims.
9. Future empirical studies can examine consumer attitudes at the regional level using primary data and validated scales, allowing demographic and behavioural differences to be tested statistically.

V. Conclusion

Sustainable products have become an important component of the transition towards responsible consumption and environmentally responsible business. The reviewed evidence indicates that Indian consumers increasingly recognize environmental considerations, but the movement from positive attitude to consistent purchasing behaviour depends on more than awareness. Environmental concern, eco-literacy, social influence, credible communication and conscious consumption can strengthen sustainable intentions, while price, availability, quality and distrust can weaken them. For businesses, the central implication is that green products should be designed and marketed as credible value propositions rather than as isolated environmental claims. Sustainable product development, transparent communication, accessible distribution and convenient post-consumption systems can help reduce the barriers that produce the attitude-behaviour gap. For policymakers and educators, strengthening environmental literacy and trustworthy information can create a more supportive consumer environment.

Consumer behaviour alone cannot solve climate change, but it can reinforce changes in production, innovation and corporate strategy. When sustainable choices become credible, affordable, accessible and convenient, consumer demand can contribute to the broader objectives of SDG 12 and SDG 13. Thus, consumer perception and attitude are

relevant not only to marketing and commerce but also to the wider transition towards sustainable and climate-resilient development.

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