

Understanding The Sustainable Consumption Pattern of Consumers in Chennai City

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ABSTRACT:

Goal 12 of the Sustainable Development Goal talks about “Sustainable Consumption and Production”. Sustainable consumption means the use of products and services that will have minimum impact on the environment. Thus, it becomes necessary to understand the consumers’ consumption behaviour in their day-to-day lives. This research examines the environmental and health consciousness level of consumers, factors influencing them to adopt sustainable consumption and challenges faced by the consumers. The study found that the respondents perceive themselves as environmentally conscious and also adopt sustainable practices in their day to day lives. This is also evident from the results obtained from Kruskal-Wallis test. The respondents strongly agreed that lack of awareness programmes as cited in the results is the cause for not adopting sustainable practices.

KEYWORDS: *Sustainable consumption, environment, awareness, consumers.*

BACKGROUND:

According to the Sustainable Development Goal 12 of the United Nations, every year one-third of all the food production ends up in the garbage which is equivalent to 1.3 billion tonnes costing around 1 trillion dollars. The reason behind this is poor transportation and harvesting habits. The facts in the report also state that the world would save US \$120 billion annually, if people switch to energy-efficient light bulbs. Another disappointing fact states that we would require natural resources of almost 3 planets if the global population reaches an estimation of 9.6 billion by 2050. The world is facing huge environmental issues and the causal factor is humans. To tackle these issues people must switch over from their current lifestyle to a sustainable lifestyle.

A sustainable lifestyle requires both sustainable production and consumption. Many researchers have found that after the spread of the COVID 19 pandemic, there has

been a drastic change in the consumption style of consumers worldwide. Consumers started switching over to more organic food products and are using eco-friendly products (Ngan & Khoi, 2022). Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) is an essential part of UN the Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable consumption refers to the usage of those products and services the and adoption of such a lifestyle that has minimal impact on the environment and its resources, while also meeting human needs in present as well as the future.

Using eco-friendly products, minimizing the use of plastics, reducing and recycling waste, turning off electricity when not necessary, etc, are those small contributions and sustainable habits that human beings can adopt to save the environment.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sustainable Consumption is understood in different types and explained through various research. Each academic domain proposes its own contextual definitions. The review of studies categorizes sustainable consumers as those who are environmental and health conscious. Analyzing various factors that influence consumers to choose sustainable products such as value, belief, knowledge, price, and trust (Hosseinpour et al., 2016) also explained the moderating role of trust and attitude toward the purchase of sustainable products. (Oroian et al., 2017) investigates the perception and attitude of Romanian consumers towards organic food and found that sensory appeals, health, weight concerns, and sustainable consumption influences the consumers to consume organic food. Several studies have also proved that food products that are adverse to health are also adverse to the environment (Kiss & Gazdecki, 2021).

COVID 19 pandemic witnessed consumers switching over to organic food products. (Smiglak-krajewska & Wojciechowska-solis, 2021) attempted to determine the behavior of Polish consumers towards organic food products during the pandemic. Family well-being was the highly valued factor to choose organic food. (Bauerné Gáthy et al., 2022) attempted to study the environmental and health awareness of 500 students of the University of Debrecen by testing the relationship between perceived and actual awareness, based on their consumer behaviour. The results obtained from the study show that the students were less aware of the concept of environmental awareness. (Haider et al., 2022) conducted a systematic review to find out the role of marketing in sustainable consumption and the structure of research conducted in this area. This review paper identified three

schools of thought: micro, meso, and macro level. Exploring the nexus between consumer behaviour and their pattern of sustainable consumption, (Francis & Sarangi, 2022) employed the 'Value Belief Norm' (VBN) developed by (Stern, 1999) in the Indian scenario and categorized the millennials into five categories. People from larger cities had higher knowledge of environmental problems. Based on recent studies, the central focus of this study is to understand the sustainable habits of consumers and stress even the challenges that hinder the path of sustainability.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES & HYPOTHESES:

- To understand the sustainable consumption pattern of the consumers.
- To examine the challenges faced by consumers in adopting sustainable practices.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the sustainable practices adopted by the consumers and the respondents being environmentally conscious consumers.

Null Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the sustainable practices adopted by the consumers and their level of awareness of the term "sustainable consumption."

Null Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the challenges faced by the consumers and the respondents being environmentally conscious consumers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the purpose of the study, online survey forms were circulated. A total of 130 respondents filled the questionnaire. The survey instrument was demarcated into three

sections; Demographic profile, General awareness of sustainable consumption and sustainable practices adopted by the respondents. The third section comprises Likert-scale questions. The respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with each item on the scale.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The demographic profile of respondents is shown in Table 1.1

Table 1.1

DESCRIPTION		SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION	
		N	%
Gender	Male	41	31.5%
	Female	89	68.5%
Educational Qualification	School education	0	0
	Under Graduation	18	13.8%
	Post-graduation	45	34.6%
	Professional Degree	23	17.7%
Occupation	Doctorate	34	26.2%
	Self-employed	29	22.3%
	Salaried employee	98	75.4%
Age	Retired	3	2.3%
	18-29	36	27.7%
	30-49	60	46.2%
	50 & above	34	26.2%
	Below ₹ 30,000	28	21.5%

Family income p.m.	₹31,000-₹50,000	34	26.2%
	₹51,000-₹1,00,000	34	26.2%
	Above ₹1,00,000	34	26.2%
Family life cycle	Single	26	20.0%
	Married; no kids	13	10.0%
	Married; with kid/s	91	70.0%

The survey results showed that 76.9% are environmentally conscious people. 77.7% are health conscious. 81.5% are aware of products that have a negative impact on the environment and their health. 60.8% understand the term sustainable consumption. The respondents were surveyed on the factors that are considered significant before making any purchase. The data shows that 72.3% considered Price to be an important factor, 97.7% considered Quality as an important factor, 71.5% of the respondents considered the environmental impact, and 93.1% considered health impact before purchasing products. The brand, the origin of the product, and packaging were considered less important by the respondents.

The research also surveyed a few items whose consumption causes a negative impact on the environment. Meat, Beef, and Pork consumption were found high as only 38.5% never consumed these products. 42.3% of the respondents sometimes consumed chocolates and used plastic products as well.

INFERENCE ANALYSIS & EMPIRICAL FINDINGS:

The respondents were surveyed on the sustainable habits consisting of 11 items and challenges faced by them to adopt a sustainable lifestyle consisting of 7 items using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagrees; 5 = strongly agrees). The reliability test conducted on both questions showed internal consistency in the scale items based on the values of Cronbach's Alpha results shown in Tables 1.2 and 1.3.

Table 1.2 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Sustainable Practice_N of Items
.813	.812	11

Table 1.3 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	Challenges_N of Items
.827	.829	7

Table 1.4 Ranks

	AIEC P	N	Mean Rank
SUSTAINABLE_PRACTICES	Yes	100	56.80
	No	1	89.50
	Partially	29	94.67
	Total	130	

Table 1.5 Test Statistics

A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to verify whether perceived environmental consciousness has any significant impact on

the sustainable habits adopted by the respondents. From the above Table 1.5, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between both the variables as P value < 0.05 at 5% significance level. Thus, rejecting the null hypothesis 1. The same test as shown in Tables 1.6 and 1.7 also rejects the 2nd null hypothesis as we find a significant difference between the sustainable practices adopted by the consumers and their level of awareness of the term "sustainable consumption. The P-value shown by the Kruskal-Wallis test is (0.012) less than 0.05 at 5% significance level.

Table 1.6 Ranks

	A4TER MAWAWERE	N	Mean Rank
SUSTAINABLE_PRACTICES	Yes	79	57.95
	No	14	69.96
	Partially	37	79.93
	Total	130	

Table 1.11 Correlation Table

SUSTAINABLE_PRACTICES	Gender	Occupation	Age	Income	Lifecycle
1	.019	.114	-.007	.063	.016
	.827	.196	.934	.480	.856
130	130	130	130	130	130

From the above table, it can be inferred that the demography of the respondents do not have any significant correlation with the sustainable practices adopted by the respondents.

The respondents were given a set of statements on the challenges faced by them to adopt sustainable practices. Kendall's W Test was performed to analyze the respondents' agreement with all the statements and identify the statement that is considered a huge challenge.

Table 1.13 shows Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance at 0.054 which shows moderate agreement among the respondents on the statements for challenges. The P-value (0.000) shows statistical significance. The respondents agreed that there is a lack of awareness or developmental programmes to motivate them to use sustainable products as it received a Mean Rank of 3.65 as shown in Table 1.12.

Table 1.14 shows the mean rank computed on the statements of sustainable practices adopted by the respondents. The results show that respondents favourably prefer fresh food (Mean rank=4.35) and turning off electricity when not necessary to save power (Mean rank=4.36).

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY:

The results obtained from the findings of the study show that consumers are both environment and health conscious and try to practise sustainable consumption as much as they can in their day-to-day life. However, they also face a lot of difficulties in adopting sustainable practices as the majority of the respondents moderately agree that lack of awareness campaigns is the major reason for less adoption of sustainable lifestyles, although the study does not find any statistical significance. The respondents also feel that there is a lack of resources, guidelines, and alternatives that could help them in shifting to sustainable products and also find such products expensive. Hence, it is suggested that efforts should be made by

marketers to not only make sustainable products available at a reasonable price but also try to spread more awareness and motivate consumers to use sustainable products. This effort will also require the support of the government and other policymakers.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS:

Although this study has tried to fill the research gap by focusing on the challenges faced by consumers to adopt a sustainable lifestyle which very few studies have thrown light on, still further efforts can be made to conduct such a study on a large-scale population involving many cities and various other factors that has an impact on the sustainability attitude of consumers.

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