

Determinants of The Attitude–Behavior Gap In Sustainable Consumption: An Empirical Analysis of Youth Consumers

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Abstract- Sustainable consumption has gained significant importance in recent years, particularly among youth who are increasingly aware of environmental issues. However, a noticeable gap exists between positive attitudes toward sustainability and actual purchasing behavior. This study examines the attitude–behavior gap among young consumers using primary data collected from 50 respondents. The findings reveal high awareness and favorable attitudes toward sustainable products, but relatively lower levels of actual purchasing behavior. Key barriers identified include high prices, limited availability, and lack of trust in sustainability claims. The study highlights the need for improved accessibility, affordability, and transparency to bridge this gap.

Keywords: Sustainable Consumption, Attitude–Behavior Gap, Youth Consumers, Green Purchasing Behavior, Price Sensitivity, Greenwashing, Environmental Awareness

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainability has become a central concern in modern consumer markets. With increasing awareness of environmental degradation, consumers—especially youth—express strong support for eco-friendly products. However, this support often fails to translate into actual purchasing behavior, creating what is known as the attitude–behavior gap.

Understanding this gap is crucial for businesses and policymakers aiming to promote sustainable consumption. This study focuses on identifying the extent of this gap and the factors influencing it among young consumers.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Joshi and Rahman (2015)** examined factors influencing green purchase behavior and found that although consumers exhibit positive attitudes toward sustainable products, their actual buying behavior is significantly

constrained by factors such as high cost and limited availability. Their study emphasizes that favorable attitudes alone are insufficient to drive consistent green purchasing.

- **Auger and Devinney (2007)** argued that ethical intentions often do not translate into real purchase decisions, as consumers tend to prioritize personal benefits such as price and quality over ethical considerations at the point of purchase. This highlights the conflict between moral intentions and practical decision-making.
- **Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell (2010)** introduced the concept of the attitude–behavior gap and explained that situational and contextual factors, including habits, convenience, and time pressure, play a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior. Their findings suggest that external conditions often override internal attitudes.
- **Young et al. (2010)** explored barriers to sustainable consumption and identified lack of trust in environmental claims as a significant factor influencing consumer decisions. The study highlights that concerns related to greenwashing reduce consumers' willingness to engage in sustainable purchasing.
- **Biswas and Roy (2015)** focused on the Indian context and observed that while awareness of green products among consumers is relatively high, actual adoption remains low due to affordability issues and limited accessibility. Their study underscores the importance of economic and infrastructural factors in influencing consumer behavior.

III. METHODOLOGY

- The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the attitude–behaviour gap.
- The research is based on primary data collected directly from respondents.
- A total of 50 respondents aged between 18–30 years (youth) were selected for the study.

- The sampling technique used is convenience sampling due to ease of access.
- Data was collected using a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale.
- The study considers variables such as awareness, attitude, price sensitivity, social influence, and purchase behaviour.
- Data analysis was carried out using percentage analysis and mean score analysis.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

1. Percentage Analysis

Awareness of sustainable products

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Aware	42	84%
Not Aware	8	16%

A majority (84%) of respondents are aware of sustainable products, indicating high awareness levels among youth.

Regular Purchase of Sustainable Products

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	36%
No	32	64%

Only 36% of respondents regularly purchase sustainable products, showing a clear gap between awareness and action.

2. Mean Score Analysis

Awareness and Attitude

Statement	Mean Score
Awareness of sustainable products	4.3
Importance of sustainability	4.5
Preference for eco-friendly brands	4.1

The results indicate strong awareness and positive attitudes toward sustainability.

Actual Purchasing Behavior

Statement	Mean Score
Regular purchase of sustainable products	3.2
Willingness to pay more	3.4
Checking sustainability labels	3.1

The table shows that actual purchasing behavior is moderate and does not match attitudes.

Factors Influencing the Gap

Factor	Mean Score
High price	4.4
Limited availability	4.0
Lack of trust (greenwashing)	3.9
Social influence	3.5

Price, availability, and trust issues are the main barriers, with social influence having a moderate effect.

Overall Gap Analysis

Dimension	Mean Score
Attitude	4.3
Behavior	3.2

The gap of 1.1 between attitude and behavior confirms a significant disconnect between intention and action.

V. DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study provide clear evidence of a pronounced attitude-behavior gap among youth in the context of sustainable consumption. Although respondents exhibit a high level of awareness and express favorable attitudes toward environmentally sustainable products, this does not consistently translate into actual purchasing behavior.

The divergence between intention and action can be attributed to a combination of interrelated factors:

- **Economic Constraints:** The relatively higher cost of sustainable products acts as a primary deterrent, limiting consumers’ ability to convert positive intentions into actual purchases.
- **Accessibility Issues:** Inadequate availability and limited market presence of sustainable alternatives reduce the convenience of adopting such products.
- **Trust Deficit:** Skepticism regarding the authenticity of sustainability claims (often associated with greenwashing) leads to hesitation and reduced consumer confidence.
- **Social and Behavioural Influences:** While peer influence and social norms play a role, their impact appears moderate and insufficient to override economic and practical barriers.

Overall, the findings suggest that favorable attitudes alone are not strong predictors of sustainable purchasing behavior. Instead, external constraints and perceived risks significantly shape consumer decision-making.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study highlights a significant attitude–behavior gap in sustainable consumption among youth, where high levels of awareness and positive attitudes toward environmentally friendly products do not consistently translate into actual purchasing behavior. This gap is largely driven by a combination of economic, practical, and psychological barriers, with high prices emerging as the most critical constraint, followed by limited availability and a lack of convenience. Additionally, skepticism regarding sustainability claims reduces consumer trust, further discouraging purchases, while social influence plays only a moderate role. These findings indicate that awareness alone is insufficient to promote sustainable consumption, and that external constraints significantly shape consumer decisions. Therefore, bridging this gap requires a comprehensive approach involving businesses and policymakers to improve affordability, accessibility, and transparency. Ultimately, sustainable consumption can only become consistent when structural and market-level changes complement consumer awareness and positive attitudes.

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