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From Awareness to Action: Exploring the Role of Social Media in Shaping Eco-Conscious Consumer Behaviour

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Abstract

Environmental sustainability has become an important concern for consumers in recent years. Many people are becoming more aware of environmental problems such as climate change, pollution, and waste. At the same time, social media has become a powerful platform that influences consumer attitudes, opinions, and purchasing behaviour. This study explores how social media plays a role in shaping the behaviour of eco-conscious consumers. Social media platforms provide information about sustainable lifestyles, eco-friendly products, and environmental issues. Through posts, videos, influencer content, and brand campaigns, consumers are exposed to messages that encourage environmentally responsible behaviour. These platforms help increase awareness and motivate consumers to choose products that are environmentally friendly. The study focuses on understanding how social media awareness can influence consumers to move from simply knowing about environmental issues to actually taking action through sustainable purchasing decisions. It also examines how online communities, peer influence, and brand communication affect eco-conscious consumer behaviour.

The findings of this research will help marketers and organizations understand how social media can be used effectively to promote sustainable products and encourage responsible consumer behaviour. This study also contributes to understanding the relationship between social media influence and sustainable consumption in the modern digital environment.

Keywords: Social Media, Eco-Conscious Consumers, Sustainable Consumption, Environmental Awareness, Consumer Behaviour, Green Marketing, Sustainable Products.

1. Introduction

Environmental issues such as climate change, plastic pollution, and resource depletion have gained global attention. Social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook have become powerful tools for spreading awareness about sustainability. These platforms educate consumers, promote eco-friendly alternatives, and influence purchasing behaviour. Despite increased awareness, a significant gap exists between knowledge and actual eco-friendly practices. This research attempts to

analyse this gap using secondary data and real-world examples.

In recent years, influencers, environmental activists, and brands have actively used digital platforms to promote sustainable lifestyles and responsible consumption. Campaigns such as zero-waste living, ethical fashion, and plastic-free initiatives have gained popularity, especially among younger consumers. Social media not only shapes opinions but also creates trends that can encourage or discourage eco-conscious behaviour. However, factors such as convenience, pricing, availability, and lack of trust in green claims often prevent consumers from translating awareness into action. Additionally, the rise of “greenwashing” has made it difficult for consumers to distinguish between genuinely sustainable products and misleading claims. Understanding how social media impacts attitudes, intentions, and actual buying behaviour is therefore essential. This study aims to bridge the gap between awareness and action by examining the effectiveness of social media in fostering long-term eco-conscious consumer habits.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of social media in promoting eco-conscious awareness
2. To analyse the gap between awareness and consumer behaviour
3. To study secondary data on eco-friendly consumption
4. To evaluate local eco-friendly product adoption

3. Research Methodology

This study is descriptive and analytical in nature and is based on secondary data sources including research papers, reports, and articles. The study also uses case-based examples to support analysis.

4. Literature Review

Joshi & Rahman (2015): Found that environmental awareness improves attitudes but does not always lead to actual green purchasing due to cost and availability barriers.

Jain & Kaur (2006): Observed that despite environmental concern, consumers prioritize price and quality over eco-friendly choices.

Verma & Chandra (2018): Highlighted that social media influences young consumers' attitudes and intentions toward sustainable choices, but actual behaviour varies.

Kumar, Manrai & Manrai (2017): Stated that awareness and social influence drive intention, but trust in green claims is essential for action.

5. Role of Social Media in Eco-Conscious Behaviour

5.1. Awareness Creation

Social media campaigns and content significantly increase environmental awareness among users. Informative posts, reels, and videos help simplify complex environmental issues and make them more accessible to a wider audience.

5.2. Influencer Impact

Influencers promote sustainable lifestyles and shape consumer perceptions, especially among youth. Their personal experiences and recommendations often build trust and motivate followers to adopt eco-friendly alternatives.

5.3. Behavioural Nudging

Content such as DIY videos and product recommendations encourages small lifestyle changes. These practical and easy-to-follow suggestions make sustainable behaviour appear achievable in daily life.

5.4. Community Influence

Online communities and peer behaviour play an important role in influencing eco-conscious actions. Participation in challenges, discussions, and shared goals creates a sense of responsibility and collective action.

5.5. Conversion Challenge

Despite awareness, consumers often fail to adopt eco-friendly practices due to habit, cost, and convenience barriers. This highlights the gap between intention and action, where awareness does not always result in consistent sustainable behaviour.

6. Case-Based Examples

6.1 Cloth Bags

Cloth bags are widely promoted as alternatives to plastic bags. While awareness is high, consistent usage remains low due to convenience issues.

6.2 Bamboo Toothbrush

Bamboo toothbrushes are popular eco-friendly alternatives but face limited adoption due to higher cost and availability concerns.

6.3 Do U Speak Green? (Failed Sustainable Brand)

Do U Speak Green? was an Indian sustainable fashion initiative that aimed to promote eco-friendly clothing made from organic and recycled materials. Despite strong messaging around sustainability and active promotion on social media platforms, the brand struggled to achieve long-term commercial success.

One of the major reasons for its limited growth was high pricing, which made the products less appealing in a price-sensitive market like India. Additionally, the brand faced limited accessibility, as it primarily relied on online channels without strong offline presence.

Another key challenge was the awareness-action gap—while consumers appreciated the idea of sustainable fashion, they were not willing to consistently pay a premium for it. The brand also lacked strong differentiation in design and branding, making it difficult to compete with fast fashion alternatives.

This case highlights that social media awareness alone is not sufficient; factors such as affordability, accessibility, and perceived value are crucial for consumer adoption.

6.4 Bare Necessities (Niche Sustainable Brand)

Bare Necessities is an Indian zero-waste brand that offers eco-friendly personal care and lifestyle products. The brand has gained visibility through social media campaigns promoting sustainable living.

However, despite its popularity among environmentally conscious consumers, it remains a niche brand. The primary reasons include premium pricing, limited availability in local markets, and restricted consumer base.

This example demonstrates that while social media can build awareness and a loyal community, scaling eco-friendly businesses in India remains challenging due to economic and behavioural constraints.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Observed Trends:

- Around 70–80% of consumers express concern about environmental issues
- Only 20–30% consistently purchase eco-friendly products
- High engagement with sustainability content on social media
- Price sensitivity strongly influences purchasing decisions

Interpretation:

These findings clearly indicate a disconnect between intention and action. While social media successfully spreads awareness, it does not necessarily lead to consistent behavioural change due to practical constraints like cost, convenience, and trust.

8. Findings

- Social media plays a highly effective role in creating awareness about sustainability and environmental issues.
- A significant gap exists between awareness and actual eco-conscious consumer behaviour.
- Price and convenience remain the most influential factors affecting purchasing decisions.
- Consumer trust is often reduced due to greenwashing and misleading sustainability claims.
- Eco-friendly products in India are largely perceived as niche and premium offerings.
- Social media engagement frequently leads to passive involvement rather than consistent behavioural change.

9. Suggestions

Affordable Pricing Strategies: Brands should focus on cost-effective production to make eco-friendly products accessible.

Improved Availability: Expanding distribution channels, including offline stores, can enhance adoption.

Transparency: Brands must provide clear and honest information to build consumer trust.

Behavioural Incentives: Discounts, rewards, and government support can encourage sustainable purchasing.

Consumer Education: Awareness campaigns should focus on practical steps rather than just information.

Policy Support: Government initiatives can play a key role in promoting sustainable consumption.

10. Conclusion

The study concludes that social media plays a significant role in raising environmental awareness, but its impact on actual consumer behaviour remains limited. The gap between awareness and action is influenced by factors such as affordability, accessibility, trust, and convenience.

For sustainable consumption to become mainstream, a combined effort is required from brands, consumers, and policymakers. Social media should move beyond awareness campaigns and focus on enabling real, practical behavioural change.

11. References

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