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Understanding the Ethical Attitude-behavior Gap in Consumption: A Shred of Empirical Evidence from Nepal

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Abstract

This paper explores factors impeding the ethical consumption of grocery products in the Nepalese context, which will enhance our understanding of various socio-psychological aspects of consumer behavior. Moreover, this paper explores the existing cavity between ethical consumption intentions and consumers' actual purchasing conduct. This study is based on an explanatory research design, including both primary and secondary data. In this study, the population represents consumers' shopping grocery products in Big Marts, and 270 consumers have been selected as the sample. We have used the awareness index to study the ethical consumption of grocery products in Nepal to reduce the errors associated with lying. Empirical results reveal that the surveys and research on value-based consumption, constructing an instrument of questions, socio-political statements, and behaviors that, through item analysis and data reduction, can categorize a respondent as an "ethical consumer," or a "utilitarian consumer" could reduce the loopholes created by respondent lies in the studies. Results of the awareness index depicts that more than ninety percent Big Mart's grocery consumers are moderately aware about ethical consumption. The regression result indicates that random product selection is an impending factor towards ethical consumption. Respondents were found to be less concerned about ethical consumption towards a certain brand. The result of this study will help to enhance our understanding on various socio-psychological aspects of consumer behavior. From the policy prescription standpoint, this study provides direction for the researcher to conduct analyses related to consumer understanding of ethical consumption and their purchasing behavior in Nepal.

Keywords: Ecological, Ethical product attributes, Big Mart, Buying behavior, Ethics, Ethical consumption

1. Introduction

Consumers' activities directed towards purchasing goods and services responsibly and avoiding the purchase from unethical companies refer to a form of ethical consumption (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). Ethical consumption is bounded with five steps (i.e., need recognition, information search, judging options for buying conduct (Akehurst et al., 2012). Earlier, the consumers' primary focus was price and quality, but at present, it has shifted towards ethical values. Also, firms these days have started regarding ethical behavior crucial factor for their survival and gaining a competitive advantage in the market (Oh & Yoon, 2014). Ethical consumption is an emerging global issue in today's context. Hines and Ames (2000) mentioned that 46 % of the consumers were willing to pay for products produced and sold ethically (MORI, 2000). In contrast, McGillivray (2000) and Boulstridge and Carrigan(2000) provide evidence that ethical concern like organic, ethical labeling, child labor free products only covers less than 1% market share which is similar to the attitude-behavior gap of Robert (1996) and Simon (1995) and also the complex consumer purchase behavior of Folkes and Kamins (1995).

Moreover, as ethical consumption deals with ethical production, consumption, and activities concerning less harm to society and the whole environment, it has been emerging as a matter of study. With the advancement of information and communication technologies, consumers' awareness of ethical consumption has also increased, which has encouraged them to move towards ethical consumption to a greater extent (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). Today, organizations engage themselves concerning ethical management and distribution of the products to survive and gain a competitive advantage in the long run (Oh & Yoon, 2014). According to Pelsmacker et al. (2007), not only businesses or consumers benefit from ethical consumption, but the whole community and natural environment are witnessing the positive side. However, Baseline Study Report (2013) presented that politics and corruption affected ethical consumption. As Ramya & Ali (2016) stated, consumption activities can differ and be mainly influenced by various factors. Likewise, multiple factors like quality goods and product price obstruct consumers while opting for ethical products (Bray et al., 2010). Rather than giving preference to other ethical consumption factors, consumers tend to provide more choice to the factors associated with their health and well-being (Burke et al., 2014).

Nepal ranks 125th out of 144 economies for ethical behavior in business activities according to the 2013 Global Competitiveness Index published by the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2013). Despite the buzz concerning ethical consumption practices globally, its understanding and implementation in developing countries like Nepal are still slow-paced. Factors like political instability, increasing corruption, lack of implementation of laws encouraging a healthy business environment have proved to be an obstacle towards ethical production, consumption, and disposal of products (Baseline Study Report, 2013). According to the report published by National Business Initiative (2013), ethical production and consumption of products through goodwill to the society and environment results in increased benefits to the producers and consumers. It is an essential element for the sustainability and development of business. In Nepal, various research concerning business ethics in pharmaceutical companies, medicine distributors, and the private sector has been conducted. The Baseline Study Report (2013) findings indicate that 79 percent of respondents from 29 different companies of Nepal possessed a basic understanding of the ethical business approach. Further, 21 percent of respondents did not have a clear understanding of business ethics and its practices. However, research in the area of ethical consumption from the consumers' perspective was not found to be conducted in the context of Nepal.

Similarly, various other drivers such as price and self-identity are influential factors of ethical consumption (O'Connor et al., 2017). Consumers have to be aware of its benefits and misconceptions related to removing the attitude-behavior gap (Wiederhold, 2018). Unlike developed nations, it is still in the primitive phase in developing countries. The knowledge of consumers on ethical consumption is not generally reflected in their purchasing behavior through the implementation of ethical consumption has been an emerging issue in the global context. In Nepal, various research concerning business ethics in pharmaceutical companies, medicine distributors, and the private sector has been conducted. However, research from the ethical consumption of customers' perspective is rarely conducted in Nepal's context to date, and several questions related to ethical consumption are unanswered. A proper study is required to explore these questions in the context of ethical consumption in Nepal. Therefore, this study offers an improved understanding of ethical consumption and factors impeding ethical consumer behavior in the context of Nepal. This study analyzes the factors restraining the ethical consumption of Big Mart grocery items in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The contribution of this study is that it helps to understand the ethical attitude-behavior gap in consumption that enhances our understanding of various socio-psychological aspects of consumer behavior. It further explores the existing cavity between ethical consumption intentions and consumers' actual purchasing conduct. This analysis used utility maximization theory to understand consumers’ perception of grocery buying, which was not attempted in any

previous studies on ethical consumption. It also used the consumers' awareness index to study the ethical consumption of grocery products in Nepal to reduce the errors associated with lying. Therefore, it has produced more information on ethical behavior, which can contribute to policy formulation. This study finds that if producers, retailers, and the government encourage ethical consumption behavior, proper attention should be given to assisting such consumers who cannot decide on the ethicality of the product themselves. Similarly, producers should educate the consumers on the ways to practice ethical consumption behavior more effectively vis-à-vis to discourage unethical production and consumption activities, the government should introduce alterations in old acts and policies according to the need of time and situation.

2. Data and Methodology

Theoretical debates on ethical consumption

For this research, reasoned action, planned behavior, norm activation, and ethical consumerism theories are applied. Consumers' attitudes, subjective norms (Macovei, 2015) in reasoned action, a cognitive progression lead by attitude and behavior (De Pelsmacker & Janssens, 2007; Chatzidakis et al., 2007) and self-identity for ethical purchasing intention (Shaw et al., 2000) are pretty important. Similarly, consumers like demographics, outlooks, and psychographics also affect ethical consumption, linked to ethical consumerism. (Cho & Krasser, 2013; Bliesner et al., 2013). Again, after reviewing various scholars' conceptual reviews, the vital dependent and independent variables are identified with ethical consumption. The dependent variables important for these studies are consumers' understanding of ethical consumption, ethical motives, brand loyalty, and random product selection. Likewise, the independent variables are considered for bio-degradable and environment-friendly products (Budhathoki et al., 2019). Hence, we assume that these dependent and independent variables are essential for studying factors that impede ethical consumption.

The awareness level of customers regarding ethical consumption has focused on labor rights, organically produced food products based on social norms, attitude, and controlled behavior (Bray, 2010; Shaw, 2002; Zollo, 2018; Macovei, 2015; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) Likewise, Harrison et al. (2005) similar to the theory of planned action assert that the factors like beliefs, intention, obligation and self-identity influence ethical consumption behaviors. In the decision-making process, product price, post-purchase consequences, and brand choice are less significant than consumers' value (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Vitell et al., 2001). Benevolent and self-directed consumers are more ethical than consumers relied on power and hedonism (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2004). Truthful communication keeps tremendous importance in the consumer's purchasing decision (Dickson, 2001). Also, according to the consumers' background, the purchase and consumption are affected (Essoo & Dibb, 2004; Shaw et al., 2010).

The model

Ethical consumption is a behavioral science that depicts that consumer behavior is subject to change and is dependent on several socio-psychological, moral, behavioral factors which cannot be predicted.

Suppose j and k are two goods and $Y_j$and Y_k are consumers' purchasing decision for j and k denoted by U_j and U_k, respectively. Following utility maximization theory, the perceived benefits derived from the goods chosen j are higher than benefits acquired from selecting other options (i.e., k) if the consumer decides to use option j, which is explained as follows:

$$U_{ij}(\beta_j' X_i + \varepsilon_j) > U_{ik}(\beta_k' X_i + \varepsilon_k), k \neq j \quad (1)$$

Where, U_{ij} denotes perceived benefits for consumer goods j and $U_{ik}$for perceived benefits by goods k to the consumers, $X_i$represents a vector of explanatory variables, $\beta_j$and $\beta_k$are regression the parameters, and ε_j and $\varepsilon_k$are errors term, respectively, which follow the normal distribution. The probability that a consumer will consume ethical commodity j from the set of available commodities could then be defined as follows:

$$P(Y = 1/X) = P(U_{ij} > U_{ik}/X) \quad (2)$$

Qualitative choice models are commonly used in previous studies to capture the probability of the respondents' choice. In this case, logistic regression is usually used to measure peoples' perceptions (Devkota & Paudel, 2018).

Binary logit model

Following the prior empirical literature (Paudel & Devkota, 2018; Rai et al., 2020), the binary logit regression model has been used in this study, which identifies significant variables determining consumers' ethical behaviors while purchasing Kathmandu valley and its important determinants factors as explanatory variables. Let us assume that 0 is assigned for consumers' who do not purchase ethically; 1 involves consumers who buy ethically. Y represents a

dichotomous variable, and the sets of explanatory variables denote the socio-cultural and economic factors, X. Using binary logit model, estimating the effect of X on the response probability, $P(Y^i/X)$ as:

$$P\left(\frac{Y^i}{X}\right) = F(Z_j) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \cdots + \beta_n X_{ni} + \mu_i \quad (3)$$

Eq. (3) used to estimate factors influencing ethical consumptions in Kathmandu Valley. The dependent variable is the consumer's ethical consumption, separated into six separate headings and measured based on 34 independent variables undertaken as factors. The independent variables undertaken are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of the variables

Variables	*Details of the variables*	*Hypothesis*
Socio-Demographic Characteristics		
Age (age)	Respondent's age (In years)	±
Sex (sex)	Respondent's sex (Dummy 1=male)	+
Education (edu_lvl)	Formal education (Dummy, 1=above SEE)	+
Marital Status (marital_stat)	Respondent's marital status (Dummy, 1=married)	±
Ethical Product Attributes		
Safe and healthy *(avoid_harm~t), (Dont_buy_~ls)*	Give importance to health and safety component in products (Dummy, 1=yes)	±
Organic *(prefer_sho~s)*	Prefer organic products (Dummy, 1=yes)	+
Ecological *(buy_reusab~s), (consider_b~s), (buy_nonbio~s), (consider_p~y)*	Give consideration to bio-degradable and environment-friendly products (Dummy, 1=yes)	+
Consumer's Ethical Motives		
Personal factors		
Random selection *(random_sel~n), (location_c~e)*	Select products randomly (Dummy, 1=yes)	-
Product labeling and information *(buy_prdt_n~g)*	Do not purchase products without labeling and information (Dummy, 1=yes)	-
Brand loyalty *(give_imp_b~g), (brand_loya~y), (consider_e~s)*	Loyal towards a brand (Dummy, 1=yes)	±
Preference for stores promoting fair-trade *(fair_trade)*	Prefer fair-trade products (Dummy, 1=yes)	±
Environmental factors		
Product disposal *(dispose_pckg), (Dont_recycle)*	Dispose of product packaging properly through reuse and recycle (Dummy, 1=yes)	+
Eco-labeling *(buy_ecolab~s)*	Give importance to eco-labeled products (Dummy, 1=yes)	+
Social factors		
Social responsibility *(avoid_comp~v), (aviod_prdt~k), (buy_prdts_~s), (buy_soc_ir~p), (Dont_buy_~es), (Dont_hesit~k)*	Avoid products from companies that discriminate against minorities, operate outside the legal framework, and are socially irresponsible (Dummy, 1=yes)	+
Sustainable consumption factors		
Intention to change buying habits *(Dont_chang~l), (diff_bm_lo~s), (local_shop~m), (necessity_~g)*	Change buying habits to be more ethical (Dummy, 1 = yes)	±
Concern *(awareness~12), (consider_i~n), (govt_role_~t)*	Concern for ethical consumption (Dummy, 1 = yes)	+

Source: Authors' calculation based on the assumptions.

Note: Short form in parenthesis represents variables for inferential analysis

Study area, population, and data

This research employs an explanatory design using primary data. Based on the study's objectives, primary data are obtained from Kathmandu valley to investigate factors impeding ethical consumption. Kathmandu valley, which is 899 square km in area, is the country's capital city covering three districts, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur. Its latitude and longitude are 27°32'13" and 27°49'10" north 85°11'31" and 85°31'38" east respectively(Paudel & Devkota, 2020). The valley lies above 1300 meters from average sea level (Mohanty, 2011; Paudel et al., 2020). There is a large number of supermarkets in the Valley (Yuvaraja & Dulal, 2014). In total, there are 25 outlets of Big

Marts in Kathmandu Valley. It becomes popular by creating its unique identity and most desirable service provider in the valley, especially grocery items. Karna (2019) finds that Mart currently has 45000 customers who are from the high-income group. Most of the Big Mart outlet is located near foreigners' tourist center place, ex-pats high-income groups, and the VIP area in the valley.Under this study, all individuals purchasing grocery items from Big Mart within the valley, i.e., Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur, are considered the study population.

As there are 25 Big Mart outlets within the valley, individuals only within the valley have been considered for the study. For selecting the sample for the analysis, following Singh (2007) and Paudel and Devkota (2018), purposive sampling has been chosen. This sampling method is best suited when the researcher needs to reach the target sample quickly, and the sample is not the main concern (Paudel & Devkota, 2018). Factors impeding the ethical consumption of Big Mart's customers are estimated through interviews by using a structured questionnaire. The total number of customers for the sample was determined using the following formula as mentioned by Panta (2016) and Karki et al. (2021) which is as follows:

$$n = Z^2pq/l^2$$

where n represents the sample size required for study, standard tabulated value for 5% level of significance = z,p represents the prevalence or proportion of an event (More et al., 2012), $q = 1 - p$, the allowable error that can be tolerated = e.This study also undertakesa 6% non-response error, allowinga sample size of 280 for considerable analysis. Though the study intended to collect data from 280 respondents, in the final data collection, only 270 respondents could be reached for collecting data for several reasons, such as time limitation for data collection, repetition of same customers daily, and respondent errors. Data analysis is performed using descriptive and inferential statistics. For inferential statistics, the STATA computation software is used.

3. Empirical Results and Discussion

Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

The sex composition of the respondents is 48 percent male and 52 percent female. This shows that the number of female consumers shopping in Big Mart is slightly higher than that of male consumers in Kathmandu valley. The result shows that most respondents (35.63%) lie in 21-30 age groups. Further, the survey reveals that most respondents (68%) were below Secondary level while only 14.4% of respondents have completed their masters and education higher than master level. Similarly, the marital status of respondents shows that 43.7% of them are married, and the rest (56.29%) are unmarried. Regarding the occupation of consumers, the survey suggests that the majority of the respondents (21.11%) are industrial workers, followed by businessmen (16.29%), farmers holding agriculture (17.03%), and bankers (12.2%). Other working groups are teachers, health workers, and NGO/INGO workers are very few.

Regarding the understanding level of respondents, in the personal dimension, most of the respondents (87.4%) prefer to buy products that are involved in corporate social responsibility. Other categories as mentioned in the Table 2 cover 62.5 %, 70.7%, 75.0% and 79.2%, respectively. So, the result shows corporate social responsibility of the products/companies places great value on the consumers for purchasing the brands. Similarly, in respect to the environmental dimension, most consumers (60.2%) express that they are buying products packaged in reusable or recyclable containers, suggesting that consumers are becoming more conscious of the products' recyclable containers in the environment. Other respondents also show their intention to protect the environment by following different categories of environmental concern. In the context of the social dimension, most consumers (89.6%) do not prefer to buy the products from the socially irresponsible company, i.e., they do not take any responsibility for societal welfare are unlikely to overcome social problems caused by them.

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics

Field		*Number (N) = 270*
Gender	Male	130 (48.2%)
	Female	140 (51.8%)
Age (in years)	Below 21	47 (17.4%)
	21-30	113(41.8%)
	31-40	37 (13.7%)
	41-50	50 (18.51%)
	50 above	23 (8.51%)
Education	Below SLC/SEE	68 (25.18%)
	Upto SLC/SEE	62(22.9%)
	Higher Secondary Level	51(18.8%)
	Bachelors	50(18.51%)
	Masters and Above	39(14.4%)

Marital Status	Married	118(43.7%)
	Unmarried	152(56.29%)
Occupation	Business	44(16.29%)
	Industrial Worker	57(21.11%)
	Agriculture	46(17.03%)
	Banker	33(12.2%)
	Teacher	21(7.7%)
	Health worker	30(11.11%)
	NGO/INGO	25(9.25%)
	Others	14(5.18%)

Understanding the level of customers concerning ethical consumption

Next, concerning the ethical dimension, as shown in Table3, most of the respondents (89.2%) explain that they are reluctant to buy products from the companies that are not paying to their workers. Like in other dimensions, in the ethical dimension, consumers prefer and do not like to buy the product due to various ethical reasons (see Table 3).

Table 3: Customers Understandings on Ethical Consumption

Dimensions	*Items*	*Male*		*Female*		*Total*	
		Yes	%	Yes	%	Yes	%
Personal Dimension	I make my purchase decisions based on location and convenience.	83	30.9	85	31.6	168	62.5
	I prefer to purchase from brands involved in corporate social responsibility.	122	45.4	113	42.0	235	87.4
	I like to do my purchasing from stores that help in promoting fair trade	99	38.1	96	36.9	195	75.0
	I give importance to brand image before making a purchase decision.	101	38.8	105	40.4	206	79.2
	I avoid purchasing products that have negative impacts on health.	84	32.4	99	38.2	183	70.7
	I dispose of my product packaging properly after usage.	66	24.7	58	21.7	124	46.4
Environmental Dimension	I reuse or recycle plastic containers.	61	22.7	52	19.3	113	42.0
	I purchase products with eco-labeling.	11	4.1	13	4.8	24	8.9
	I avoid products from companies that negatively impact the environment.	54	20.1	92	34.2	146	54.3
	As far as it is possible, I want to buy recyclable- container- packed products.	80	29.7	82	30.5	162	60.2
	Despite the non-biodegradable products being authorized by the government, it is not fair to buy them.	79	29.4	83	30.9	162	60.2
	I avoid products from producers that operate outside the legal framework.	98	36.4	81	30.1	179	66.5
Social Dimension	I prefer to buy locally produced food products to support local farmers.	119	44.2	107	39.8	226	84.0
	As far as I know, the product is not socially responsible. I will not buy it.	126	46.8	115	42.8	241	89.6
	I do not buy products from companies that discriminate against minorities.	113	42.0	118	43.9	231	85.9
Ethical Dimension	I want to buy the products from the shops which provide products of ecological or organic nature	131	48.7	122	45.4	253	94.1
	I do not purchase products without product information and labeling.	121	45.0	113	42.0	234	87.0
	I look at the manufacturing and expiry date of products before making a purchase.	98	36.7	91	34.1	189	70.8
	I get inconvenience to buy the products produced by unpaid workers, despite this is the government's responsibility to make the company pay to their workers reasonably.	126	46.8	114	42.4	240	89.2
	I do not purchase products with contaminants (exposed to chemicals and additives).	121	45.0	110	40.9	231	85.9

Sustainable Consumption Dimensions	I want to change my buying behavior for ecological concern, despite its role in making companies follow the environmental standard of products.	38	14.1	51	19.0	89	33.1
	I prefer to buy those products which do not use child labor.	139	51.7	130	48.3	269	100.0
	I take care of whether the products use green energy or not.	41	15.2	21	7.8	62	23.0
	I am aware of SDG Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production.	22	8.2	23	8.6	45	16.7
	I am concerned about the environmental implications of my product disposal.	92	34.2	98	36.4	190	70.6

The result suggests that more consumers feel bad about buying products made by those who used underpaid workers. In addition, Sustainable Consumption Dimension covers 100% of respondents who prefer to purchase those products that do not use child labor, followed by the respondents (70.6%) concerned about the environmental implications of their product disposal. Out of 25 items within five dimensions' malesshow a greater percentage in responding to 14 items, whereas females show more rate in giving 11 items. This indicates that males are more sensitive to relate to themselves to different dimensions in purchasing the products.

Factors impeding ethical consumption

In the context of shopping frequency, it is found that 57.67 percent of respondents only shop sometimes in Big Mart, and their monthly spending on Big Mart's products lies between Nrs.1001 and Nrs.5000. Likewise, the proportion of respondents who always shop in Big Mart is 14.60 percent. Among various reasons to purchase from big marts, most male and female customers choose Big Mart as it is near their home and the least number of customers choose Big Mart as it provides various offers and discounts (See Figure. 1).

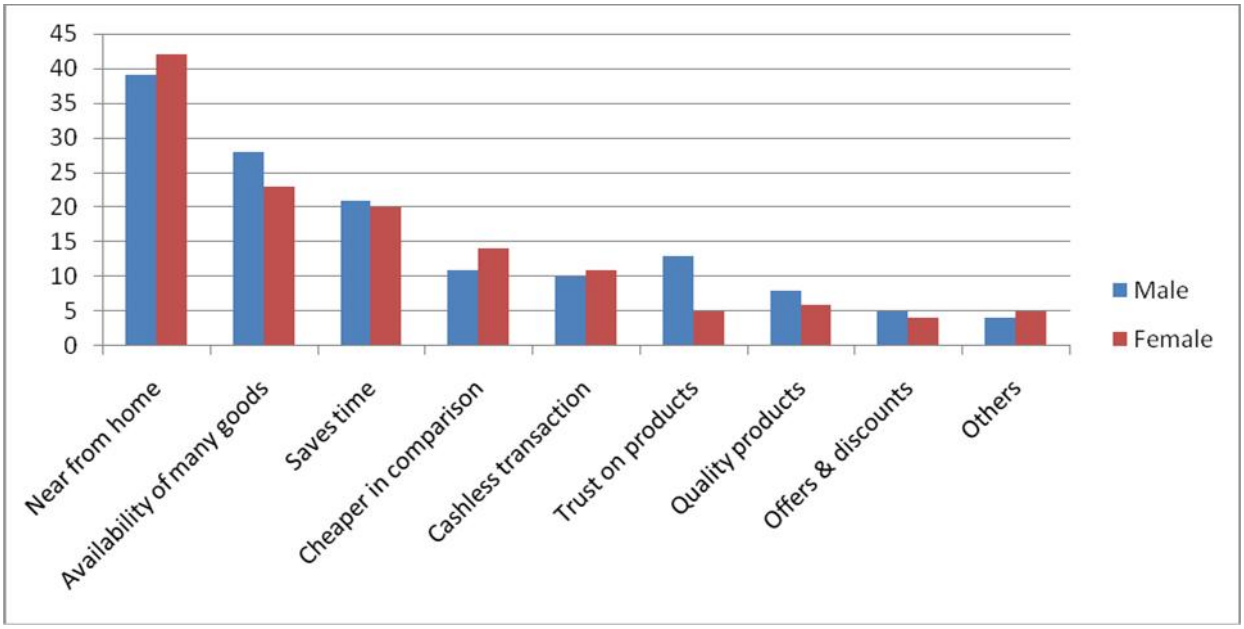

Figure 1: Respondents' choice for Big Mart

Fifty percent of respondents look at the brand name of the product before the purchase decision. This is followed by price at 21 percent, expiry date at 13 percent, product ingredients at 12 percent, and certification at 4 percent. A high proportion, i.e., 79.48 percent of respondents, does not give importance to bio-degradable products, citing that they give more importance to the price and quality of the products. Likewise, 53.73 percent of respondents do not dispose of their product packaging properly. Fifty-five percent of respondents give importance to environment-friendly products, and the rest of the consumers express that they have lack information about environment-friendly products.

Table 4: Factors impeding ethical consumption

Field		*Number (N)*
Shopping Frequency	Always	39 (14.44%)
	Sometimes	154 (57.40%)
	Very often	77 (28.5%)
Product Details	Certification	11 (4%)
	Product Ingredients	32 (12%)
	Brand Name	135 (50%)
	Price	57(21%)
	Expiry Date	35(13%)
Consideration for Bio-degradable Products	Yes	125(46.29%)
	No	145(53.71%)
Consideration for Environmental Friendly Products	Yes	149(55%)
	No	121(45%)

The notable findings from the survey, presented in Table 4, reveal that 87.03 percent of respondents feel the difference in purchasing at Big Mart and other local shops. The highest numbers of respondents, i.e., 39.57%, find shopping difference in Big Mart due to the availability of various national and international brands, which is not readily available at local shops, followed by 25.53% of respondents responding that they purchase due to the ease in finding products and due to proper organization of products. During the survey, 78.88 % of respondents answered that local shops could learn from Big Mart, whereas 21.12% responded that local shops could not learn from the big mart. According to the 40.84% of respondents, local shops can learn to organize their products to become less time-consuming and easy for customers. Likewise, 28.16% responded that having products from multiple national and international brands is another lesson that could be learned, despite some of them disagree with it, referring to the causes like over price and no bargaining and no credit at the big mart.

Regarding the question for management of local shops to be integrated like big mart, 91% respondents agreed that shopping should be managed in an integrated way whereas 9 percent did not agree with the same. 39.13 % responded that integrated markets like Big Mart have costlier products that would not be affordable by customers of all economic sections of the society. So managing shopping in a completely integrated manner would not be viable for all. Similarly, 30.43% responded that as it is not possible to bargain in integrated markets like Big Mart, it is unnecessary to manage shopping in a completely integrated manner. The 57.40% of respondents expressed that government can play a vital role in enhancing the integrated market in their area. The rest of them disagreed with it. 47% of respondents believe that government can play a vital role by promoting a good business environment. The majority of respondents, i.e., 39.67%, responded that the way to encourage effective and easy shopping is by ensuring the availability of goods, i.e., national and international brands, whereas 16.84% responded that practical and easy shopping could be promoted by providing consumers assistance in shopping.

Managerial solution

The majority of respondents believed that government has a role in enhancingthe integrated market in their area. They suggested various ways how it can be possible. Figure 2 entails these reasons cited by the respondents. During the survey, respondents asked about their opinion on the ways to promote effective and easy shopping. The majority of respondents, i.e., 39.67 percent, responded that the way to encourage effective and easy shopping is by ensuring the availability of goods, i.e., national and international brands. In contrast, 16.84 percent responded that practical and easy shopping could be promoted by providing the consumers' assistance in shopping.

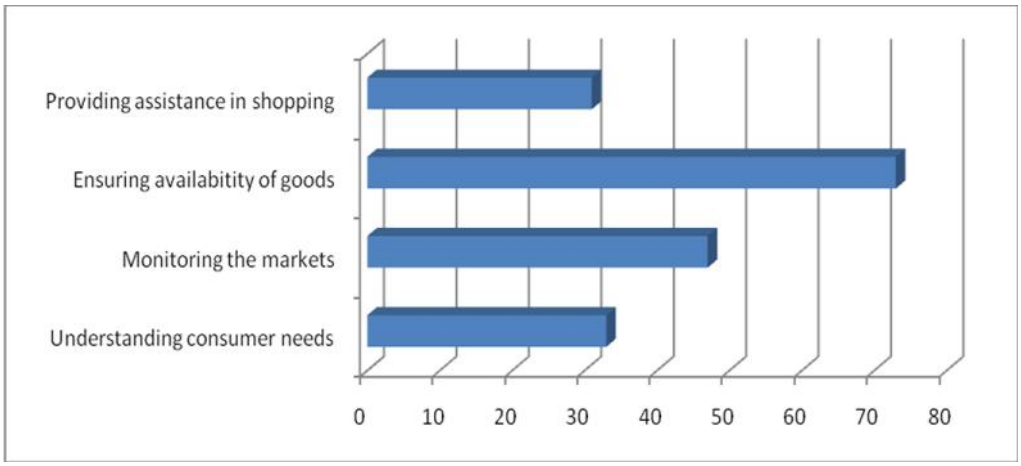

Figure 2: Managerial solutions

Big Mart's customers' awareness index

Under this study, the overall awareness level of Big Mart's grocery consumers was also ascertained and analyzed with the help of an awareness index. For the awareness index, four socio-demographic characteristics – sex, age, marital status, and experience of the consumers are taken into consideration. The results presented in Table 5 show that 4.07 percent are less aware of ethical consumption among the total respondents. The proportion of highly aware respondents of ethical consumption was even lower at 2.22 percent. Likewise, the results of the awareness index indicate that 93.70 percent of respondents are moderately aware of ethical consumption.

Table 5: Overall awareness level

Subject	*Less Aware*	*Moderately Aware*	*Highly Aware*
Sex (Total)	18	240	11
Male	9	125	5
Female	9	115	6
Age	11	232	18
Education	16	198	9
Marital Status (Total)	18	240	11
Married	9	102	4
Unmarried	9	138	7
Overall	11	253	6

Econometrics estimation

Further, correlation analysis was performed where the existing positive or negative correlation between dependent and independent variables was ascertained. Similarly, binary logistic regression was analyzed with an odds ratio to make the interpretation more effective. Further, various post estimation tests like multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity were performed to determine any existing repetitions or similarities between multiple data sets and ascertain whether the data sets are free from multicollinearity. The data set was found to be free from multicollinearity, butheteroscedasticity was found in the first, third, and fifth models of the study. Concerning this, after rectifying the problem of heteroscedasticity, final regression results have been ascertained (seeTable 6).

Table 6: Binary regression result

	Model 1	*Model 2*	*Model 3*	*Model 4*	*Model 5*	*Model 6*
Variables	*random_ selection*	*brand_ loyalty*	*consider_ bioprodts*	*consider_ envifr_prodts*	*diff_bm_ local_shops*	*govt_role_ intg_market*
Sex	-0.239	0.700	-0.505	-0.317	0.00532	0.0417
	(0.485)	(0.462)	(0.457)	(0.357)	(0.559)	(0.376)
Age	0.0340*	0.00429	0.00525	0.0107	0.0590**	-0.00328
	(0.0190)	(0.0170)	(0.0153)	(0.0149)	(0.0291)	(0.0184)
edu_lvl	-0.647	0.252	-1.187**	-0.425	-1.057	-0.449
	(0.491)	(0.504)	(0.482)	(0.388)	(0.910)	(0.464)
marital_stat	-0.456	-0.742	-0.274	-0.0582	-0.276	0.913**
	(0.469)	(0.517)	(0.518)	(0.363)	(0.497)	(0.400)
location_convenience	-0.410	-0.783	0.361	0.402	-0.181	0.842*
	(0.503)	(0.643)	(0.496)	(0.423)	(1.026)	(0.449)
fair_trade	-0.0998	-0.459	0.0904	-0.735*	0.824	-0.0759
	(0.531)	(0.610)	(0.547)	(0.398)	(0.849)	(0.420)
give_imp_brand_img	0.564	-0.105	-0.593	0.168	-0.175	-0.586
	(0.710)	(0.626)	(0.545)	(0.454)	(1.131)	(0.467)
dispose_pckg	-0.472	0.609	0.0928	-0.278	-0.696	0.0101
	(0.585)	(0.425)	(0.413)	(0.315)	(0.683)	(0.389)
dont_recycle	1.354**	0.449	-0.395	-0.332	-0.741	1.246***
	(0.620)	(0.464)	(0.427)	(0.335)	(0.825)	(0.410)
avoid_comp_impact_env	-1.632**	0.686	0.313	1.009**	0.674	-0.632
	(0.671)	(0.602)	(0.508)	(0.432)	(0.828)	(0.493)
buy_reusablypckgd_prodts	1.180**	-0.840	0.0784	-0.0226	-0.843	1.619***
	(0.568)	(0.578)	(0.554)	(0.339)	(0.727)	(0.461)
buy_nonbiodegd_prodts	0.539	-0.116	-0.155	-0.0473	-0.289	1.192***
	(0.514)	(0.568)	(0.491)	(0.395)	(0.605)	(0.438)
aviod_prdts_out_legfmwk	-0.422	3.071***	-0.204	-0.180	0.227	-1.193**
	(0.569)	(0.615)	(0.668)	(0.421)	(0.867)	(0.491)
buy_prdts_supp_framers	1.562*	0.651	1.102	0.557	1.608**	0.0850
	(0.835)	(0.663)	(0.779)	(0.467)	(0.818)	(0.528)
buy_soc_irresp_comp	0.0743	0.448	-1.621**	0.889	1.631	0.0204

	(0.796)	(0.660)	(0.701)	(0.636)	(1.000)	(0.655)
dont_buy_prdts_discrminorities	0.169	0.0338	0.103	-0.469	0.250	0.164
	(0.611)	(0.619)	(0.615)	(0.475)	(0.780)	(0.525)
prefer_shop_organic_prdts	1.283	0.824	1.443	0.599		0.458
	(1.122)	(0.856)	(1.746)	(0.757)		(0.657)
consider_prdts_green_energy	-0.143	-0.752	-0.374	-0.165	-1.729**	0.606
	(0.510)	(0.619)	(0.561)	(0.395)	(0.728)	(0.424)
avoid_harmful_prodt	1.872**	0.532	0.357	0.528		-0.0166
	(0.731)	(0.560)	(0.508)	(0.413)		(0.474)
dont_buy_prdts_chemicals	-0.486	0.0700	0.514	0.0827	0.705	-0.308
	(0.593)	(0.723)	(0.530)	(0.468)	(0.701)	(0.589)
buy_prdt_no_labeling	1.631**	0.940	0.369	0.581	0.604	0.517
	(0.700)	(0.773)	(0.659)	(0.494)	(0.721)	(0.607)
buy_ecolabeled_prodts	0.160	0.792	0.391	0.283		-0.317
	(0.783)	(0.771)	(0.516)	(0.536)		(0.597)
dont_hesitate_buy_underpaid_work	-0.369	-0.697	0.00643	0.150	1.135	-0.179
	(0.868)	(0.668)	(0.588)	(0.469)	(1.656)	(0.596)
dont_change_habit_be_ecological	-0.602	-0.865*	-0.256	0.525	1.086	-0.0917
	(0.494)	(0.485)	(0.499)	(0.392)	(0.714)	(0.455)
awareness_sdg12	-0.411	-0.907	0.189	-0.0480	-0.874	0.136
	(0.613)	(0.575)	(0.642)	(0.493)	(0.768)	(0.604)
consider_impact_prdt_disposal_en	0.505	0.286	-0.149	-0.432	0.971*	0.637
	(0.532)	(0.467)	(0.542)	(0.383)	(0.560)	(0.435)
local_shops_lesson_bm	-0.0911	0.134	0.572	0.0286	1.683*	1.739***
	(0.568)	(0.478)	(0.587)	(0.384)	(0.880)	(0.447)
necessity_manage_intg_shopping	-0.531	-0.334	-0.514	-0.113	-3.473	-0.738
	(0.698)	(0.727)	(0.602)	(0.564)	(2.183)	(0.616)
Constant	-7.956***	-3.376	-2.064	-1.518	-0.824	-2.838*
	(2.541)	(2.532)	(2.540)	(1.723)	(2.812)	(1.681)
Obs.	201	191	201	200	125	201

Note: *The numbers in parentheses show standard errors. *** indicates significance at a 1% level of significance. ** and * indicates significance at 5% and 10%, respectively.*

The binary logistic regression result reveals the significance between the dependent variables, random product selection, brand loyalty, consideration for bio-degradable products, concern for environment-friendly products, government role in enhancing integrated markets, and difference felt by consumers while purchasing at Big Mart as compared to local shops with several independent variables.

Model 1 is related to a random selection of goods by consumers and obstruction in ethical consumption. The result reported in Table 5 illustrates that age, not recycling and reusing plastic containers, buying reusable packaged products, buying products that support local farmers, avoid purchasing products, and purchase products with no labeling significantly affect ethical consumption by consumers in Big Mart. It also indicates that buying products without labeling increases due to random goods selection by consumers, which impedes ethical consumption. The odds ratio of buying products without labeling is 4.21 times higher. Hence, ceteris paribus, the probability of purchasing products without labeling is four times higher when consumers randomly select goods. The model also depicts the likelihood of avoiding companies that impact the environment decreases with random product selection. This signifies that when consumers ignore product details like eco-labeling and purchase randomly, there are fewer chances of avoiding companies that might impact the environment. The model also shows that obstruction in ethical consumption due to a random selection of goods increases 3.51 times with not reusing or recycling plastic containers.

In model 2**,** the relationship between brand loyalty and obstruction in ethical consumption was observed where two out of twenty-eight variables were substantially significant. The model indicates that due to brand loyalty, avoiding products from producers that operate outside the legal framework increases by 0.41 times. Likewise, when there is a presence of brand loyalty, consumers are less concerned about changing their habits to ecological (0.63 times). This hints towards consumers' constant preference towards a brand despite it not being ecological. Model 3 observed the relationship between consideration for bio-degradable products and obstruction of ethical consumption. The model reveals other variables than the above two models are significant to the dependent variables, i.e., concern for bio-degradable products. The model depicts that the probability of avoiding products from socially irresponsible companies decreases due to consideration for bio-degradable products. In Model 4, the relationship between contemplation for environment-friendly products and ethical consumption was captured, where only two out of twenty-eight variables were found substantially significant. It indicates that the probability of evading consequences from socially reckless enterprises increases by 1.07 times due to having consideration for environment-friendly

products. This signifies that other things remaining the same; the probability of avoiding products from socially irresponsible companies is 1.07 times higher when we consider environment-friendly products.

In model 5, the association between the difference found by consumers between local shops and Big Mart and obstruction in ethical consumption has been observed. The model illustrates that buying products to support local farmers, avoiding buying from socially irresponsible companies, and lessons that local shops can learn from Big Mart significantly affect ethical consumption. The odds ratio of buying products to support local farmers is 4.96, which signifies that the probability of buying products to support local farmers is almost five times higher when consumers find the difference in purchasing at Big Mart in comparison to local shops. Likewise, the odds ratio of lessons that local shops can learn from Big Mart is 1.11. This indicates that ceteris paribus, the probability of lessons that local shops can learn from Big Mart, increases by 1.11 times when consumers find a difference in purchasing at Big Mart compared to local shops. Finally, Model 6observes the relationship between government role to enhance integrated market and ethical consumption. The result presented in Table 5 suggests that marital status, not recycling or reusing plastic containers, buying products packaged in reusable or recyclable containers, buying non-biodegradable products substantially affect ethical consumption. It also indicates that the probability of purchasing non-biodegradable products increases when consumers feel that government has to play a vital role in enhancing the integrated market. The odds ratio for buying non-biodegradable products is 1.85, which signifies that ceteris paribus, probability of purchase non-biodegradable products increases by 1.85 times when consumers feel that government has a vital role in enhancing integrated market. Likewise, the odds ratio of purchasing decisions based on location and convenience is 0.55. This indicates that the probability of purchasing goods based on location and convenience increases by 0.55 times when consumers feel the government needs to play a vital role in enhancing the integrated market. The odds of not reusing and recycling plastic containers increases by 3.51 times, buying reusable packaged products increases by 3.23 times. The model indicates that with the rise in government role to enhance the integrated market, the probability of avoiding products from producers operating outside the legal framework decreases.

4. Discussion

The development of ICTs has proliferated the consciousness on ethical consumption (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). Many organizations are considering ethical consumption as a management policy (Oh & Yoon, 2014). Also, Pelsmacker et al. (2015) opined that community and the natural environment get direct benefits from ethical consumption. Yet, Baseline Study Report (2013) added that ethical consumption is affected by political instability, shameful corruption, and an inability for law enforcement and implementation in developing countries. Ramya & Ali (2016) explained that the situations of ethical consumption in developing countries are not unanimous due to diverse socio-cultural setup. Bray et al. (2010) argued that consumers primarily emphasize product price and brand image rather than environment-friendly and biodegradable products. O'Connor et al. (2017) also clarify that ethical consumption behavior is affected by price, the credibility of information, and moral values.

Again, Wiederhold (2018) significantly emphasized the advancement and promotion of the correct information flow to consumers to mitigate the attitude-behavior gap for ethical consumption. Sharma et al. (2016) discussed that consumers are considerably exhibiting their interest in consuming high nutritional products with no harm to society and the environment in today's society. In this context, Kraus et al. (2017) have shown that in case the product's label is provided by the producers, the rate of the product purchasing will increase. Also, Asioli et al. (2017) focused that consumers' intolerance towards unhealthy food products has made consumers more conscious about selecting healthier and environmental food products. This viewpoint is substantially bolstered by Rana & Paul's (2017) argument that increasing health consciousness and sustainability trends on consumers have led them to know and consider food products' components. Furthermore, Sebastiani et al. (2013) highlighted two factors- products organically produced and environmentally sustainable products- which help increase ethically concerned consumers in deciding on purchasing the product. However, Ghvanidze et al. (2016) have also stressed the brand image and price factors to determine the consumer behavior for the consumption of the product.

The study focuses on identifying the understanding level of consumers regarding ethical consumption of Big Mart's grocery products within Kathmandu valley, Nepal. Despite the employment of various measures to attain these objectives, certain areas need further research. Although this study has also used the awareness index to study ethical consumption to help reduce the errors associated with lying, the results are undoubtedly impacted by some respondents who have not been truthful. Categorizing respondents as an "ethical consumer," a "political consumer," or a "utilitarian consumer" with a future survey on value-based consumption by constructing an instrument of socio-political behaviors can reduce the ambiguity created by respondents and biasness developed in the study. This effort will help in refining further the methodological procedures and studying such activities as ethical consumption. Likewise, the present study was conducted only in Big Marts located within Kathmandu valley. Therefore, the results

might not represent the consumption behavior of all the consumers of Big Mart throughout Nepal. Future studies could be carried out for more representative results by considering at least one Big Mart from each province of Nepal. This would help in generating results that would be more representative of the consumption behavior of Nepali consumers. In the same way, only limited variables are included in the present study, which may have or have not served their purpose effectively. This is why it would be better if future researchers include many other variables that have a role in encouraging or impeding ethical consumption.

5. Conclusion

This paper explored the consumers' level of understanding concerning ethical consumption and the causes for hindering the exhibition of ethical consumption behavior in the milieu of Big Mart grocery shopping. The respondents' answers on ethical consumption based on personal dimension indicate that 76.29 percent give importance to brand image before making a purchase decision. Concerning environmental dimension, 91.11 percent do not purchase products with eco-labeling. Under the social dimension, 60.37 percent of respondents find nothing wrong with buying non-biodegradable products, and 85.92 percent are reluctant to purchase products from those companies, which showed discriminatory behavior against minorities. Likewise, under the ethical dimension, 87.03 percent do not accept products without product information and labeling. Still, only 70.74 percent look at the manufacturing and expiry date of products before purchasing decisions.

In sustainable consumption, the survey result shows that 67.03% of consumers do not want to change their purchasing habits in promoting environmentally friendly behavior. They argue that such task of protecting the environment lies under the government's jurisdiction. In this regard, Dickson & Littrell (1996) argued that societal-based collective personal attitude makes the consumer purchase any products from those companies that perform the more responsible business activities. Most consumers choose to shop in Big Mart due to its location from their homes, and the least number of consumers prefer it because of the offers and discounts provided. Half of the respondents emphasize brand name while purchasing and most minor give importance to product certification. The study also concludes that 79.48 percent of consumers do not consider consuming bio-degradation products because they feel that such products are highly priced and cheaper in quality than non-biodegradable products. Likewise, more than half of the respondents give importance to environment-friendly products. The remaining respondents emphasize such products due to a lack of proper information regarding availability and use and time constraints in searching for such products.

So, the results obtained from the study indicate that consumers guided by ethical motives become more loyal towards companies producing their products ethically. A negative correlation between brand loyalty and purchase decisions based on location and convenience has observed, indicating that consumers do not base their purchase decisions on factors like location and comfort when they are loyal to a brand. Likewise, according to the results, consumers do not feel the necessity to manage shopping in an integrated way like Big Mart when loyal to a particular brand. Brand loyalty has emerged as a decisive variable responsible for impeding ethical consumption behavior. A strong correlation between consideration for bio-degradable products and buying eco-labeled products explains that consumers who purchase eco-labeled products have a significant concern for bio-degradable products. Concerning differences in purchasing at Big Mart and local shops, consumers who avoid buying products from socially irresponsible companies feel the difference while purchasing from Big Mart. Thus, the research result has provided strategically significant perceptiveness for business people who want to perform their business with CSR as one of their business activities. In addition, the survey result can also be helpful for grocery shopkeepers who rather incline to follow CSR with the thought of enhancing their company image and promoting their brand equity.

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