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Sustainable Consumerism: Green-Purchasing Trends among Generation Z

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Abstract

This research investigates the perceptions surrounding green products and identifies key factors influencing green purchasing behavior. The primary objective is to understand the determinants that drive Generation Z's green purchasing decisions in the Chitwan district. A causal-comparative research design was employed to explore the relationships between variables affecting green purchasing behavior. Data were gathered from 189 participants through structured questionnaires, using a purposive sampling technique. Quantitative analyses, including both descriptive and inferential statistics, were conducted, with the PLS-SEM method utilized for evaluating the proposed model. The study reveals that factors such as environmental knowledge, governmental initiatives, and social influences significantly impact green purchasing decisions among Generation Z. Conversely, environmental attitudes and the sense of environmental responsibility do not demonstrate a significant influence on their purchasing behavior. This study is limited to Generation Z within the Chitwan district and relies on cross-sectional data, which may restrict the applicability of its findings to other contexts. Future research should consider examining determinants of green purchasing behavior across different demographic groups and geographic regions. Despite these constraints, the study provides meaningful insights for various stakeholders, including policymakers, businesses, and marketers. The findings offer practical guidance for businesses, marketing professionals, and policymakers to design strategies and products that align with Generation Z's inclination toward green products. Additionally, the outcomes encourage the development of initiatives that foster sustainable consumption habits, thereby supporting environmental preservation efforts within the Chitwan district.

Keywords: Sustainable consumerism, Social influence, Environmental knowledge, Green-purchasing behaviour, Generation Z

Introduction

The global environmental crisis, driven by unsustainable production and consumption practices, has severely impacted ecological health and quality of life. This has spurred global efforts to promote environmentally friendly initiatives and sustainable alternatives. Businesses are increasingly embracing green manufacturing to meet the rising demand for eco-friendly products (Goyal et al., 2021; Akhtar et al., 2021). Among consumers, Generation Z stands out for its strong environmental consciousness and willingness to adopt sustainable lifestyle choices (Ogiemwonyi, 2022). However, understanding the factors that influence their green purchasing behavior remains a growing area of research (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Green marketing, rooted in ecological responsibility, has emerged as a strategic tool to align consumer behavior with sustainability principles (Kotler, 2011). Despite progress in green marketing and sustainability initiatives, limited research explores how green purchasing behavior manifests in urban contexts like Chitwan district, where rapid urbanization poses unique environmental challenges (Thapa, 2009).

Green purchasing behavior, defined as the intentional choice to buy environmentally friendly products, is influenced by a variety of factors including environmental attitudes, social influence, environmental knowledge, and government policies (Haws et al., 2014). While Generation Z consumers in Chitwan district play a pivotal role in transitioning

toward sustainable consumption, their specific motivations, and barriers remain underexplored. Urbanization, industrialization, and population growth in this region have heightened ecological concerns, making it critical to understand the drivers of sustainable consumer behavior (Rauniyar & Bhattacharya, 2023). This study examines key determinants of green purchasing behavior among Generation Z, focusing on environmental responsibility, social influence, environmental knowledge, environmental attitudes, and government policies. It also seeks to assess their general perceptions of green products and explore the socio-cultural factors influencing their decisions. These insights aim to provide practical implications for businesses, policymakers, and marketers to develop tailored strategies, innovative green products, and policy frameworks that resonate with this environmentally conscious demographic.

Environmental knowledge, encompassing awareness and understanding of environmental issues, also plays a pivotal role in shaping green purchasing behavior. Studies highlight that individuals with greater environmental knowledge are more likely to adopt sustainable consumption patterns (Aman et al., 2012; Uddin & Khan, 2018). Finally, government influence, through policies, subsidies, and regulations, significantly shapes consumer preferences for green products. Incentives such as tax breaks or subsidies for eco-friendly products and regulations promoting sustainable practices create a conducive environment for green purchasing behavior (Yang et al., 2023; Sinnappan & Rahman, 2011). These hypotheses collectively aim to examine the intricate dynamics of green purchasing behavior, providing actionable insights for fostering sustainability in consumer markets.

The study also acknowledges its limitations. Data collection is geographically confined to Chitwan district, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings to other regions. Additionally, the research focuses exclusively on Generation Z, leaving other generational cohorts unexplored. While it examines key factors influencing green purchasing behavior, the study does not encompass all dimensions of this multifaceted phenomenon. Moreover, reliance on self-administered questionnaires introduces potential biases such as social desirability and misinterpretation of questions. Despite these constraints, the research contributes significantly to understanding green purchasing behavior, offering valuable insights for future research and actionable strategies in sustainable marketing and consumer behavior.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Sustainable consumerism is the practice of purchasing goods and services in a manner that minimizes negative environmental, social, and economic impacts. It promotes ethical consumption, prioritizing products that are eco-friendly, socially responsible, and economically viable. Sustainable consumerism aims to meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

Generation Z (those born approximately between 1997 and 2012) has emerged as a key demographic in promoting sustainable consumerism. Raised in an era of heightened environmental awareness and digital connectivity, Gen Z tends to value sustainability, ethical production, and transparency in brand practices. Their purchasing decisions are often influenced by environmental concerns, social justice issues, and a desire to align with brands that reflect their values.

Theoretical Underpinning and Hypotheses

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) provides a structured framework for understanding how attitudes, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions influence consumer decisions. This theory has been instrumental in explaining the value-attitude-intention-behavior hierarchy, particularly in green purchasing contexts, where environmental responsibility, social influence, and attitudes play a significant role (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Sinnappan & Rahman, 2011).

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) expands upon TRA by incorporating perceived behavioral control (PBC), addressing the limitations of TRA in predicting behavior constrained by external factors. TPB emphasizes the combined effects of attitudes, subjective norms, and PBC in shaping green purchasing intentions and actual behavior, making it especially relevant for understanding the role of external barriers like product availability or affordability in Chitwan district (Ajzen, 1991; Paul et al., 2016).

Theory of Consumption Values (TCV) offers a deeper understanding of why consumers prefer green products by identifying the functional, emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic values driving their choices (Sheth et al., 1991). TCV is particularly valuable for exploring how Generation Z consumers' values, such as environmental

responsibility and alignment with eco-conscious societal trends, influence their purchasing decisions (Haws et al., 2014; Lin & Huang, 2012).

While these theories provide comprehensive insights into green purchasing behavior, existing studies predominantly focus on environmental attitude, social influence, and environmental knowledge, often overlooking variables such as environmental responsibility and government influence. Furthermore, much of the research is concentrated in developed countries, leaving a gap in understanding the unique challenges and drivers of green purchasing in developing countries like Nepal. By investigating Generation Z consumers' green purchasing behavior in the Nepalese context, this study addresses these gaps, contributing new insights to the existing literature on sustainable consumption.

Environmental Attitude and Green Purchasing Behavior

Environmental attitude refers to an individual's beliefs and feelings about the environment, which significantly influence their purchasing behavior. According to Lee (2009), individuals with positive environmental attitudes are more likely to opt for eco-friendly products. This aligns with findings from Mostafa (2007), who revealed that consumers' attitudes toward environmentally friendly items directly impact their intention and decision to purchase such products. Sinnappan and Rahman (2011) further emphasized the link between environmental attitudes and green purchasing, noting that individuals who care about the environment are motivated to make sustainable choices. Based on these studies, the hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Environmental attitude has a significant impact on green purchasing behavior.

Social Influence and Green Purchasing Behavior

Social influence refers to the impact of social interactions and relationships on an individual's purchasing decisions. Ryan (2001) highlighted how social dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping behavior, with individuals often aligning their actions with the values and beliefs of their peers. Chen-Yu and Seock (2002) demonstrated that peer groups significantly affect product purchasing decisions, particularly in the context of environmentally conscious consumption. Lee (2009) also noted that social pressure serves as a powerful motivator for green purchasing. Building on these insights, the hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Social influence has a significant impact on green purchasing behavior.

Environmental Responsibility and Green Purchasing Behavior

Environmental responsibility encompasses an individual's sense of duty toward protecting the environment. Zheng et al. (2020) argued that social responsibility is integral to addressing environmental issues, with individuals often advocating for better policies and practices. A study conducted in Hong Kong by Lee (2009) highlighted a strong correlation between environmental responsibility and green purchasing behavior, especially among younger generations. Women, in particular, were found to be more active in adopting environmentally conscious practices. This underscores the motivational power of environmental responsibility in fostering sustainable consumption. Accordingly, the hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Environmental responsibility has a significant impact on green purchasing behavior.

Environmental Knowledge and Green Purchasing Behavior

Environmental knowledge refers to an individual's understanding of environmental issues and the appropriate measures for addressing them. Vicente-Molina et al. (2013) supported this, noting that awareness and understanding significantly influence sustainable actions. Aman et al. (2012) found that environmental knowledge positively impacts green purchase intention, a finding mirrored by Uddin and Khan (2018). Similarly, Based on these insights, the hypothesis is formulated:

H4: Environmental knowledge has a significant impact on green purchasing behavior.

Government Influence and Green Purchasing Behavior

Government influence, through policies, subsidies, and regulations, plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior. Yang et al. (2023) highlighted that incentives like tax breaks and subsidies for green products encourage consumers to choose eco-friendly options. Furthermore, regulations promoting sustainable manufacturing practices increase the availability and quality of green products, thereby influencing consumer preferences. Sinnappan and

Rahman (2011) argued that governmental initiatives are essential for fostering an environment conducive to sustainable consumption. Building on this understanding, the hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Government influence has a significant impact on green purchasing behavior.

Research Methods

Participants and Periods

The participants for this study comprised Generation Z consumers residing in Chitwan district. This urban setting, marked by diverse socio-economic demographics and environmental challenges, provided a suitable context for examining green purchasing behavior where189 respondents was selected using purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted over three weeks, from the first to the third week of September 2024, using structured questionnaires. To maximize response rates, the questionnaires were distributed both offline (70%) and online (30%) via platforms like email, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This approach ensured accessibility and minimized participation barriers, aligning with previous studies emphasizing the need for robust sampling methods in behavioral research (Hair et al., 2017).

Measures

The study utilized a structured questionnaire designed to capture green purchasing behavior and its antecedents, based on validated scales from prior research. Green purchasing behavior, the dependent variable, was measured using four items adapted from Sinnappan and Rahman (2011). The independent variables included Environmental Attitude (5 items, $\alpha = 0.847$), Social Influence (4 items, $\alpha = 0.831$), Environmental Knowledge (5 items, $\alpha = 0.860$), Environmental Responsibility (4 items, $\alpha = 0.901$), and Government Influence (4 items, $\alpha = 0.774$), all derived from established literature (Sinnappan & Rahman, 2011; Mostafa, 2007). Responses were captured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Pilot testing with 20 respondents confirmed reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.6 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Demographic variables, such as gender, education level, and occupation, were also recorded to provide additional context.

Common Method Bias (CMB)

Common method bias (CMB), a potential issue when both independent and dependent variables are measured using the same instrument, was addressed through procedural and statistical approaches. Anonymity and confidentiality of responses were ensured, reducing the likelihood of socially desirable answers. The questionnaire design included varied sequencing of items to minimize response bias and priming effects (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Statistically, Harman's single-factor test confirmed that no single factor explained a majority of the variance, and variance inflation factors (VIF) were calculated to ensure multicollinearity did not affect the results. VIF values were below the critical threshold of 5, indicating no severe multicollinearity (Purwanto & Sudargini, 2021). These measures aligned with best practices for mitigating CMB, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings.

Results and Analysis

PLS–SEM was performed on the model using the most recent version of the SmartPLS software (v. 3.2.9). Complex models with numerous structural paths, indicators, and/or latent variables can be analysed using PLS-SEM. The method does not impose strict requirements on residual distribution and normalcy (Hair et al., 2019).

Descriptive Analysis

The data collected from Generation Z consumers in Chitwan district indicates a strong inclination towards eco-friendly practices. Key socio-demographic insights revealed that the majority of respondents (53.45%) were female, while educational background was predominantly at the master's level (51.12%), followed by bachelor's degree holders (35.67%). Occupational diversity included government employees (18.72%), businesspersons (14.23%), and individuals in various other sectors (30.15%).

In terms of green purchasing behavior, a significant percentage of respondents (62.34%) expressed willingness to pay a premium for eco-friendly products. Awareness regarding environmentally friendly products was high, with 48.23% indicating moderate understanding and 47.12% reporting a very well understanding of such products.

Analysis of Measurement Model

The assessment of the measurement model was conducted to validate the constructs used for evaluating green purchasing behavior and its antecedents. Table 1 highlights that all factor loadings surpassed the recommended

threshold of 0.7, signifying that the observed variables effectively represent their respective constructs. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values ranged between 0.672 and 0.845, confirming convergent validity by showing that each construct accounts for a substantial portion of the variance in its indicators. Composite Reliability (CR) values were found to range from 0.850 to 0.960, while Cronbach's Alpha values consistently exceeded 0.7, indicating high internal consistency across the constructs. These results underline the robustness of the measurement model, ensuring that the constructs accurately capture the dimensions of green purchasing behavior. This aligns with the study's aim of examining the roles of environmental attitude, knowledge, responsibility, social influence, and government influence in shaping green purchasing behavior.

The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) was employed to assess multi-collinearity among the indicators. A VIF value below 3 indicates that multi-collinearity is not a significant issue (Hair et al., 2016). The VIF for Environmental Attitude (EA) was 3.11, indicating moderate multi-collinearity. Environmental Knowledge (EK) had a VIF of 2.91, and Environmental Responsibility (ER) scored 3.49, both showing moderate multi-collinearity. Government Influence (GI) had a VIF of 2.67, while Green Purchasing Behavior (GPB) scored 3.97, reflecting moderate to high multi-collinearity. Social Influence (SI) recorded a VIF of 3.01, also indicating moderate multi-collinearity.

Table 1: Evaluation of Outer Measurement Model

Constructs	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha	VIF
Environmental Attitude	0.720	0.960	0.910	3.11
Environmental Knowledge	0.740	0.890	0.880	2.91
Environmental Responsibility	0.845	0.930	0.920	3.49
Government Influence	0.755	0.895	0.840	2.67
Green Purchasing Behavior	0.672	0.850	0.835	3.97
Social Influence	0.695	0.860	0.855	3.01

Analysis of Structural Model

To address potential common method bias (CMB), procedural and statistical remedies were implemented. Procedurally, anonymity and confidentiality of responses were ensured, and items were randomized in the questionnaire to minimize priming effects. Statistically, Harman's single-factor test confirmed that no single factor accounted for a majority of the variance, indicating minimal bias. Additionally, discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio, presented in Table 2. All HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85, confirming that the constructs are distinct and measure different dimensions of green purchasing behavior. This aligns with the study's objective to evaluate the unique influence of each antecedent on green purchasing behavior.

Table 2: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Constructs	EA	EK	ER	GI	GPB
Environmental Attitude (EA)	-	0.745	0.731	0.713	0.721
Environmental Knowledge (EK)	0.745	-	0.728	0.732	0.748
Environmental Responsibility (ER)	0.731	0.728	-	0.746	0.729
Government Influence (GI)	0.713	0.732	0.746	-	0.735
Green Purchasing Behavior (GPB)	0.721	0.748	0.729	0.735	-

Furthermore, the structural model was evaluated using path coefficients and significance levels to test the hypothesized relationships. As shown in Table 3, all path coefficients were statistically significant, supporting the proposed hypotheses. Environmental Responsibility (ER) exhibited the strongest influence on Green Purchasing Behavior (GPB) with a path coefficient of 0.453 ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, Environmental Attitude (EA) and Government Influence (GI) also showed significant effects, with coefficients of 0.412 and 0.385, respectively. These findings underscore the importance of these antecedents in shaping sustainable consumer behavior, addressing the study's objective to analyze their impact on green purchasing behavior.

Table 3: Path Coefficients for Structural Model

Hypotheses	Path Coefficient	p-value
H1: EA -> GPB	0.412	<0.01
H2: EK -> GPB	0.327	<0.05
H3: ER -> GPB	0.453	<0.01
H4: GI -> GPB	0.385	<0.01
H5: SI -> GPB	0.297	<0.05

Discussion

This study examines the factors influencing green purchasing behavior among Generation Z consumers in Chitwan district, focusing on environmental attitude, social influence, environmental responsibility, environmental knowledge, and government influence. The findings highlight that social influence exerts the strongest impact on green purchasing behavior, consistent with prior research by Chen-Yu and Seock (2002), emphasizing the importance of peer and societal norms. Environmental knowledge and government influence also demonstrate positive effects, with government policies such as subsidies and regulations playing a crucial role in encouraging eco-friendly consumption (Yang et al., 2023). Conversely, the study did not find significant relationships between environmental attitude and responsibility and green purchasing behavior, diverging from earlier findings by Lee (2009) and Zheng et al. (2020). These results underscore the critical role of social influence, environmental awareness, and supportive policies in promoting sustainable consumption patterns among Generation Z, offering valuable insights for policymakers and marketers.

Conclusion

This study investigated green purchasing behavior among Generation Z consumers in Chitwan district, emphasizing the roles of environmental attitude, social influence, environmental knowledge, environmental responsibility, and government influence. The findings reveal that social influence, environmental knowledge, and government influence significantly impact green purchasing behavior, with social influence having the strongest effect. This highlights the critical role of peer norms, societal expectations, and awareness in shaping eco-friendly consumption patterns. Conversely, environmental attitude and responsibility exhibited weaker associations, suggesting their limited direct influence on green purchasing decisions in this context. These results underscore the importance of leveraging social influence, enhancing environmental knowledge, and implementing supportive government policies to encourage sustainable consumption. The study contributes valuable insights for businesses, marketers, and policymakers aiming to promote green purchasing practices. By addressing this demographics' unique motivations, tailored strategies can effectively foster environmentally conscious behavior, paving the way for a more sustainable future in Chitwan district.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

This research contributes significantly to the theoretical landscape of green consumer behavior, particularly by applying and expanding existing theories like the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), and the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991). These frameworks have been instrumental in understanding consumer decisions but were underutilized in contexts like Generation Z in Nepal. By integrating these theories, the study underscores the role of environmental knowledge, government influence, and social dynamics as critical drivers of green purchasing behavior. Moreover, the findings challenge traditional assumptions regarding the influence of environmental attitudes and responsibility, encouraging further inquiry into context-specific variables and demographic differences. The study thus broadens the theoretical discourse, emphasizing the need to localize global theories for nuanced consumer insights and advancing the scholarly conversation on sustainable consumption behaviors in developing economies

Managerial Implications

From a practical perspective, this study offers actionable insights for businesses, policymakers, and marketers targeting Generation Z consumers in Chitwan district. Businesses can leverage the findings by focusing marketing strategies on enhancing social influence, such as influencer collaborations and peer-led campaigns, to amplify green product adoption. Policymakers are encouraged to implement robust government initiatives, such as subsidies and educational campaigns, to promote eco-friendly consumption. The emphasis on environmental knowledge suggests the value of awareness programs highlighting the ecological benefits of green products. Additionally, companies can address identified gaps, such as the limited impact of environmental attitudes, by emphasizing experiential marketing techniques that tangibly demonstrate the benefits of green purchasing. These interventions could foster a broader cultural shift towards sustainability, aligning business practices with both consumer preferences and global environmental goals, ultimately enhancing market competitiveness and customer loyalty.

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