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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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A STUDY ON ETHICAL SHOPPING AND CONSUMERISM

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ABSTRACT

Consumer demand for sustainable or ethical products is on the rise faster now than at any other point in history. As a result, the market has responded and 'sustainability' is all over trend reports. Along with sustainability, consumers are constantly looking for new and unique products. The impact of the brands that consumers purchase from have as much of an impact as the actual product itself. Ethical shopping has been proven to make a difference and create new standards for shopping. Our primary objective in conducting this study is to understand consumer behaviour towards ethical shopping and consumerism. We also aim to examine the rapid growth of ethical shopping and consumer awareness of the same.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethical shopping and consumerism have seen significant growth in recent times as consumers have become more aware and concerned about various ethical issues, including social, environmental, and animal welfare concerns. The growth of ethical shopping can be attributed to several key factors:

- 1. Increased awareness and access to information:** The internet and social media have made it easier for consumers to access information about the ethical practices of companies and brands. Consumers can now research and learn about a company's labour practices, environmental impact, animal welfare policies, and more, leading to increased awareness about ethical issues.
- 2. Heightened consumer consciousness:** Consumers are becoming more conscious about the impact of their purchasing decisions on the world around them. They are increasingly interested in supporting companies that align with their values and principles, and are willing to take actions that reflect their ethical concerns.
- 3. Demand for transparency:** Consumers are increasingly demanding transparency from companies regarding their ethical practices. They expect companies to be accountable and disclose information about their supply chains, labour conditions, and environmental impact.

This demand for transparency has led to increased scrutiny of companies' practices and has encouraged them to adopt more ethical and sustainable business practices.

- 4. Ethical certifications and labelling:** The rise of ethical certifications and labelling has made it easier for consumers to identify and choose products that meet certain ethical standards. For example, certifications such as Fair Trade, Organic, B Corp, and others provide assurance to consumers that the products they are purchasing meet specific ethical criteria. This has facilitated the growth of ethical shopping by providing consumers with a recognizable way to identify ethical products.
- 5. Social and environmental concerns:** Growing concerns about social issues such as fair labour practices, human rights, and environmental issues such as climate change, deforestation, and pollution have driven consumers to make more ethical choices in their purchasing decisions. Consumers are increasingly looking for products and brands that have a positive impact on society and the environment.
- 6. Influence of younger generations:** Younger generations, such as millennials and Gen Z, are driving the growth of ethical shopping. These generations tend to be more socially and environmentally conscious, and they actively seek out products and brands that align with their values. As younger generations gain more purchasing power, their ethical preferences are influencing the market and driving companies to adopt more ethical and sustainable practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. (Freestone and McGoldrick, 2007) The purpose of this article was to discover the factors that encourage or discourage some people to act more ethically in their shopping decisions. A questionnaire was created and given to a representative sample of consumers after a qualitative analysis using ZMET and focus group talks; over 1,000 usable questionnaires were gathered. A measure derived from the Stages of Change idea found in the Transtheoretical model was used to examine the level of awareness, concern, and action about 16 ethical issues.
2. (Papaoikonomou, Ryan and Valverde, 2011) The idea of "ethical consumer behaviour" has drawn a lot of interest from academic scholars and practitioners, leading to the development of a growing yet fragmented body of knowledge. This article offers researchers a blueprint for future research by analysing the empirical research on moral consumer behaviour. The theory of ethical consumer behaviour and the identification of the major trends in the literature on ethical consumers are the article's main contributions.
3. (Andorfer, Ulf Liebe, 2013) The purchase of Fair Trade (FT) coffee is used in this article to discuss ethical consumer behaviour and to learn more about what constitutes "moral behaviour" in the marketplace. Clarifying which theoretical ideas and factors are more beneficial than others in explaining FT consumption is the main goal. Budget constraints, consumer identity, social and personal norms, social standing, beliefs in justice, and trust are compared for their explanatory power.
4. (Gillani, A. and Kutaula, S., 2018) The goal of the study is to deepen our understanding of sustainability and ethical consumerism while also presenting fresh research avenues. They begin by explaining the two essential ideas that underpin this special issue: sustainability and ethical consumerism. After that, they give a summary of the articles in this issue, highlighting numerous themes related to this research area.
5. (Stringer, T., Mortimer, G. and Payne, A.R., 2020) The emergence of fast fashion has significantly changed the global fashion sector. Despite sector expansion, opponents have raised concerns about fast fashion's unsustainable business practises, level of obsolescence, and encouragement of excessive spending. Particularly, there are growing worries about the effects on worker, animal, and environmental welfare.

Objectives of the Study

- i. The goal of this study is to assess consumer awareness and understanding of ethical shopping practices. This aims to gauge consumers' knowledge about ethical shopping practices, including their understanding of ethical labels, certifications, and other indicators of ethical products. It also aims to evaluate consumers' awareness of issues such as fair trade, sustainability, animal welfare, and social responsibility in the context of consumerism.
- ii. Another objective is examining consumer attitudes and behaviours towards ethical shopping. This objective seeks to understand consumers' attitudes, motivations, and behaviours related to ethical shopping. It also explores factors that influence consumer decision-making, such as personal values, ethical considerations, price sensitivity, brand loyalty, and the perceived impact of ethical shopping on society and the environment.

Research Gap: Ethical shopping and consumerism are topics of increasing interest in the contemporary world. Consumers are becoming more conscious of the impact of their purchasing decisions on the environment, society, and economy. Despite the increasing interest in ethical shopping and consumerism, there are still several research gaps that need to be addressed. One of the key research gaps is the lack of understanding of how ethical shopping behaviour varies across different cultures and regions. Studies have shown that cultural differences play a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour (Sharma et al., 2016). Another research gap is the lack of empirical

research on the effectiveness of ethical labels in promoting ethical shopping behaviour. While studies have shown that ethical labelling has a positive effect on consumer behaviour, there is a need for more empirical research to determine the extent of its impact. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on the ethical dilemmas faced by consumers when making purchasing decisions.

Some potential research gaps in ethical shopping and consumerism include:

1. **Consumer motivations:** While studies have explored why consumers engage in ethical shopping and consumerism behaviours, there may be a need for more research to delve deeper into the underlying motivations that drive individuals to make ethical consumption choices. For example, understanding the role of personal values, social norms, and identity in ethical consumption decisions could provide valuable insights into consumer behaviour.
2. **Effectiveness of ethical labels and certifications:** Ethical labels and certifications are often used by companies to signal their commitment to sustainability, fair labour practices, and other ethical concerns. However, there may be a research gap in assessing the effectiveness of these labels and certifications in influencing consumer behaviour. Further research could explore how consumers interpret and respond to different ethical labels, and whether they lead to actual changes in purchasing behaviour.
3. **Ethical consumption across cultures:** Most research on ethical shopping and consumerism has focused on Western countries, and there may be a research gap in understanding how ethical consumption varies across different cultures and regions. Cultural factors, such as values, beliefs, and social norms, may shape consumers' ethical consumption behaviours differently in various cultural contexts, and further research could help uncover these nuances.
4. **Intersectional perspectives in ethical consumption:** Ethical shopping and consumerism intersect with various dimensions of identity, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status. However, there may be a research gap in exploring how these intersecting identities influence individuals' ethical consumption behaviours and experiences. Further research could explore how different social identities shape ethical consumption decisions and how ethical shopping practices can be made more inclusive and equitable.

Addressing these research gaps could provide a deeper understanding of ethical shopping and consumerism, and contribute to the development of effective strategies and interventions to promote ethical consumption behaviours and achieve positive social and environmental outcomes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

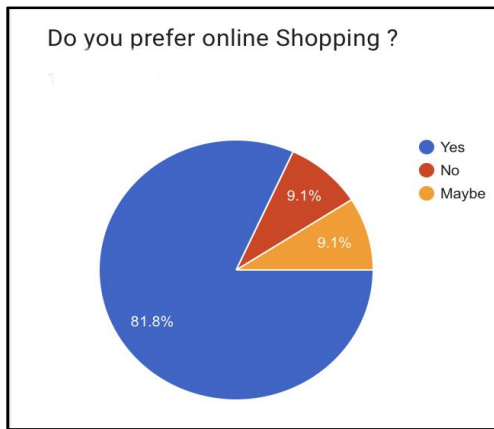
Size of the Study: The size of study for this research was around 25 people which took part in a survey for the sampling and feedback of the topic. These people answered a series of questions which helped in the collection of appropriate information for the research. It involved people of all age groups, all genders to collect ample amounts of information regarding the research topic (Ethical Shopping & Consumerism) to determine and analyse the results in a focused manner.

Sources of Data Collection: The data was collected using primary as well as secondary sources of data collection. The data collected was done through 3 methods

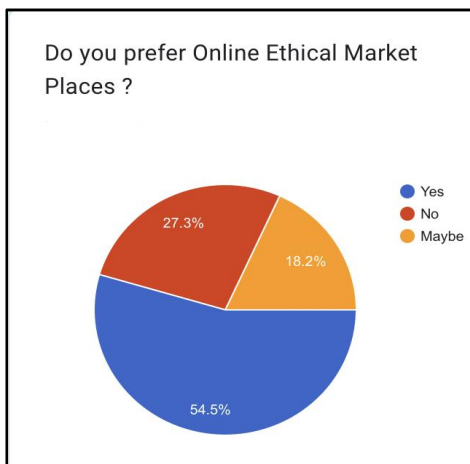
- Filling of Google Forms which had a series of questions and research related topics which helped gather an appropriate amount of data.
- In Person Surveys with various participants on an extensive range for the purpose of data collection.
- Through the help of Internet research on various platforms and websites to gather information.

Sampling Techniques: Random sampling was used for our study. Each sample has an equal chance of being chosen as part of the sampling procedure known as random sampling. This method was chosen as it is direct and involves choosing of random selection and requires basic knowledge about the chosen population for the study.

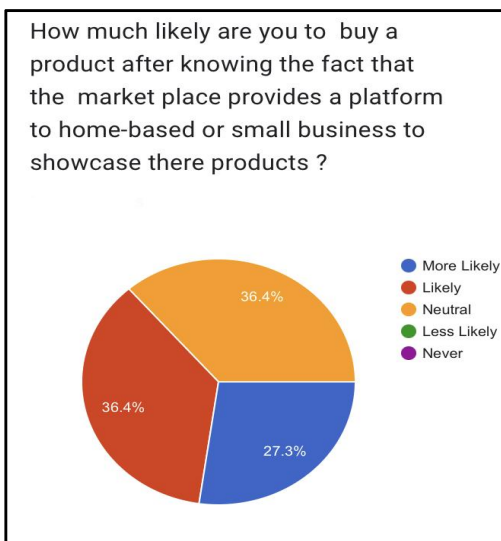
Data Analysis



From this graph we can interpret that the majority of people are interested in shopping from online places rather than offline marketplaces.

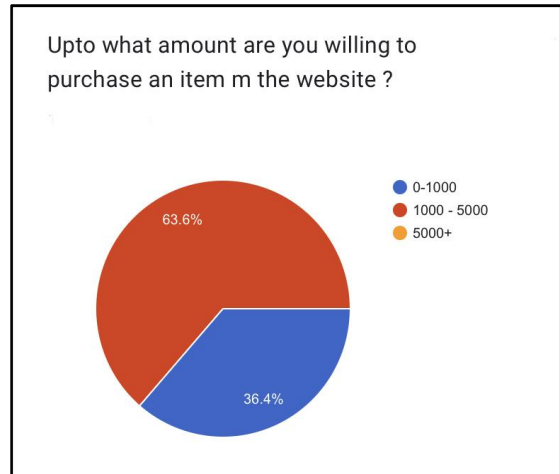


From this graph we can conclude that almost 50+ percent of people are interested in buying goods from Online Ethical Market Places.

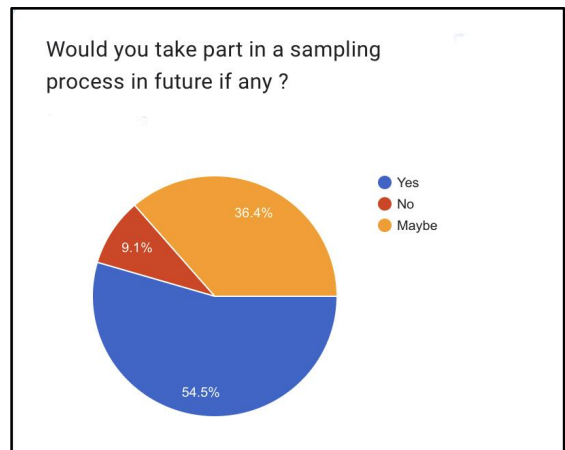


It can be concluded from the graph that people are mostly neutral about buying products from ethical marketplaces. But a significant

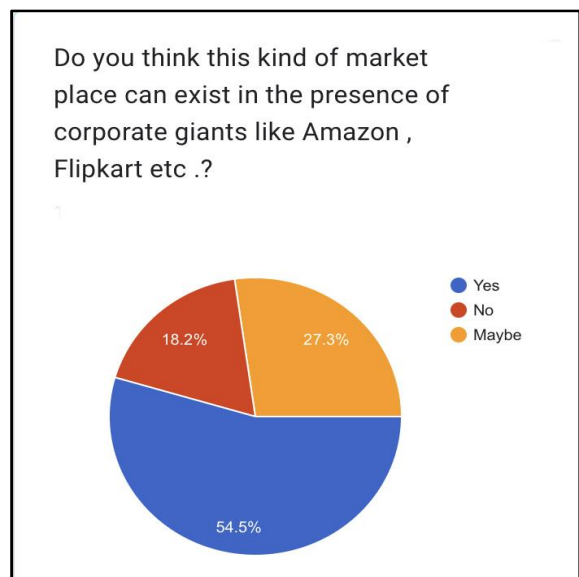
amount of people showed interest in buying the products from the marketplace.



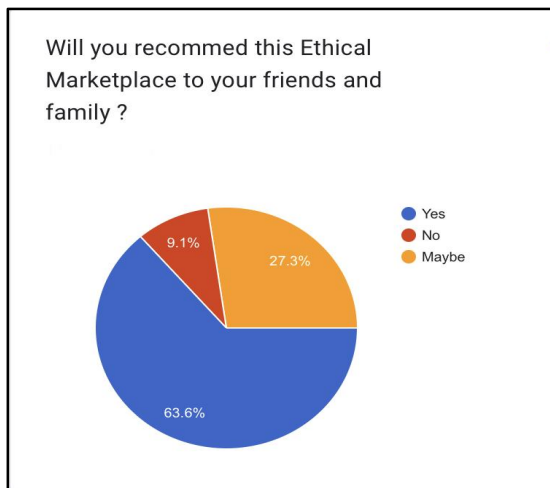
This graph shows that the majority of people are ready to purchase products ranging from ₹1000 to ₹5000.



From this graph we can understand that the audience or the people are willing to participate in a sampling process in a majority manner.



From the graph, it is represented and analysed that there is a greater and higher probability of an ethical market place to exist and function in this market with the presence of corporate giants like Amazon, Flipkart etc.



At last, it is determined that majority of the people who took part in the survey are willing to buy products from the marketplace as well as recommended them to their social groups. Ethical consumerism is expected to continue growing in the future due to several ongoing trends and factors that are shaping consumer behaviour. The above graphs illustrate the rapid growth of ethical shopping in recent times and how important a factor it is becoming while making a purchase decision.

FINDINGS

1. The results of the present study showed that the market seems to be holistically dominated by the ethical consumerism.
2. The study's findings showed that ethical consumption is increasing significantly. For instance, nearly 50% of people believe that ethical consumerism is rapidly expanding. The market shopping habits are probably going to change as a result of this quick increase. This is a significant discovery that suggests ethical consumerism will be crucial for present and future businesses and organisations.
3. Nowadays, nearly every brand has chosen ethical consumerism as their guiding principle. The creation of ethically consumable items and the embrace of ethical consumerism as a paradigm are urgently needed by both public and private sector entities. The prominence of ethical consumption is presumably influenced by a wide range of factors. Social media has also played an important role in shaping the behaviour of consumers. Labels on the products are also a factor which shaped the behaviour of people.
4. Environmental campaigns have also influenced how people behave, fostering ethical consumption and a culture that is growing sustainably. According to the results of a current study, eco-friendly consumerism is expected to prevail as ethical consumerism grows exponentially. According to the study, the majority of people believe that sustainable development depends on ethical consumerism.

CONCLUSION

The growing awareness among consumers about social and environmental issues such as climate change, human rights abuses, labour exploitation, animal welfare, and more has led to a demand for products and services that align with consumers' values and ethical principles. Many consumers want to make a positive impact on the world and believe that their purchasing decisions can contribute to a better future. There has been a significant rise in social and environmental activism, with consumers and advocacy groups pushing for greater transparency, accountability, and sustainability in business practices. This has put pressure on companies to adopt more ethical and responsible practices to meet the changing expectations of consumers. The internet and social media have made information more accessible, allowing consumers to research and learn about the ethical practices of companies and products. This has empowered consumers to make more informed choices and hold companies accountable for their actions, driving the demand for ethical products and services. The growth of ethical shopping and consumerism in recent times can be attributed to increased awareness, heightened consumer consciousness, demand for transparency, ethical certifications and labelling, social and environmental concerns, and the influence of younger generations. As consumers continue to prioritize ethical considerations in their purchasing decisions, the trend of ethical shopping is expected to continue to grow in the future.

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