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The Role of Ethical Consumerism and Consumers' Social Responsibility in Sustainable Development

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Abstract: ***Purpose of the Study: Corporate side of social responsibility has gained significant attention by researchers but there are only few articles which discusses the role of consumer in successful execution of CSR activities. The study aims to explore the impact of socio-cultural, economic, and digital media aspects on ethical consumerism in India. It explores how uneven star such as culture, social media exposure, education, affordability, and customer awareness impact ethical winning decisions among Indian buyers.***
Materials and Methods: A quantitative research design was adopted, using a structured questionnaire to collect primary data. Statistical techniques including Principal Component Analysis (PCA), reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha), and Multivariate Analysis of Variation (MANOVA) were employed to analyse the data. PCA was used to recognize and group key influencing factors, whereas MANOVA assessed the effect of demographic and socio-cultural variables on ethical consumer selections.
Key Findings: The results indicate that cultural values and education substantially guide ethical consumer behaviour, whereas affordability and perception remain critical barriers. High consistency scores ($\alpha = 0.833$ and 0.896) confirm the consistency of the scales used. The multivariate analysis revealed that age, gender, culture, social media usage, price sensitivity, and education collectively influence consumer decisions, with culture and education explaining the largest portion of variance ($R^2 = 0.922$ for ethical buying behaviour and $R^2 = 0.933$ for consumer ethical choices).
Conclusion: Ethical consumerism is increasing momentum in India, twisted largely by cultural norms, digital engagement, and educational levels. However, monetary constraints and lack of consumer perception offering significant experiments. These insights can guide marketers, policymakers, and instructors in crafting strategies to foster more liable consumer actions.
Keywords: Ethical consumerism, socio-cultural factors, economic influence, consumer behaviour and affordability.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the increasing awareness of social and environmental challenges has fuelled the growth of ethical consumerism. Ethical consumerism is a phenomenon wherein consumers actively consider the broader societal impact of their purchasing decisions [1]. Ethical consumerism implies selecting products and services that uphold principles of sustainability, fair labour practices, animal welfare, and ecological conservation [2]. In an era marked by raising concern over climate change, labour exploitation, and resource depletion, ethical consumption has shifted from being a peripheral concern to an necessary part of responsible consumer actions. While ethical consumerism has been widely assessed in Western contexts, its relevance in developing economies such as India is developing increasingly prominent [3].

A. Framework of Ethical Consumerism

Ethical consumer behaviour can be understood through various theoretical lenses. The Theory of Planned Behaviour [4] and the Consumer Decision-Making Model [5] are such frameworks. The Theory of Planned Behaviour suggests that an individual's behaviour is shaped by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control, which in the case of ethical consumerism, translate into personal values, societal expectations, and the feasibility of making ethical choices. People are more liable to make ethical getting results when they feel a strong sense of moral liability and see ethical consumption as part of who they are. In other words, the more someone feels it's their duty and part of their identity to shop ethically, the more likely they are to actually do it [6]. The Consumer Decision-Making Model, on the other hand, suggests that purchasing behaviour is a structured process influenced by psychological, social, and economic factors, all of which play a role in buying habits [7].
These theoretical frameworks, look after a inclusive understanding of internal motives and external effects that shape ethical consumer behaviour within the exceptional socio-economic and cultural circumstance of India. Internal motives, such as an individual's personal values, moral beliefs, and sense of social obligation, play a critical role in fostering a duty to ethical consumption. These intrinsic factors drive consumers to align their purchasing decisions with their ethical principles.

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At the same time, external factors such as social media, pricing considerations, educational background, and broader societal expectations either facilitate or hinder the expression of these ethical intentions in actual behaviour.

In India's perspective, where traditional traditions regularly highlight community welfare and environmental respect, these external impacts become particularly substantial. However, practical challenges such as affordability, access to ethical results, and varying levels of awareness also make difficult the decision-making process.

Traditionally, Indian consumers have highlighted affordability and availability due to socio-economic restrictions [8]. Most Indian users are aware of their environmental impact, with 83% willing to adopt sustainable practices and 70% educated about issues like water conservation. However, despite this growth awareness and interest in ethical living, actual acquiring of eco-friendly products stays limited. Yet, the extent to which this shift is reflected in actual purchasing behaviour remains unclear [9]. A report by Business Today highlights that India's dynamic and discerning consumer base is experiencing a significant transformation, influenced by factors such as a rich demographic dividend and a large youth population. The report notes that Gen Z, probable at 377 million, has a purchasing power of $860 billion and values experiences, indicating a shift in consumption patterns [10].

It is within this context that the present study goals to examine the driving forces of ethical consumerism by examining various driving factors such as demography, cultural values, social media, price compassion, and education in determining the ethical buying habits of consumers.

The structure of this study is organized in a systematic way. It begins with brief introduction then followed by literature review that offers an in-depth examination of previous research. The methodology section discusses the research design, sampling methods, data collection procedures, and the statistical techniques used to analyse the data. The results and discussion section presents the key findings of the study. Finally, the conclusion section briefly summarizes the main findings, and proposes the directions for future research to further explore the dynamics of ethical consumption.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Despite widespread advocacy for ethical consumerism, there residues a notable gap between consumers' expressed ethical intentions and their actual purchasing outcomes. This discrepancy, commonly referred to as the "attitude-behaviour gap," is frequently credited to practical constraints such as price, availability, and convenience [11]. Therefore, the literature is reviewed in the following sections:

A. Ethical consumerism and Socio-Cultural Factors

In the Indian context, cultural values and societal norms significantly influence ethical consumption practices, with young consumers particularly motivated by concerns for the environment, a commitment to supporting local producers, and a sense of responsibility towards community well-being [12]. For instance, consumers may prompt strong support for fair trade products but default to cheaper alternatives when faced with budgetary limitations. Understanding the demographic factors of this gap, particularly age, is critical, as age-related principles and priorities often shape customer habits [13]. Cultural values serve as foundational impacts on consumption patterns worldwide. According to Hofestede (2001) Cultural beliefs shape attitudes toward ecological sustainability, social responsibility, and ethical methods [14]. Verma and Singh (2021) argue that these cultural underpinnings provide a fertile ground for promoting sustainable consumption, particularly when reinforced by modern marketing and governmental initiatives [15].

However, culture is not a static influence. The interplay between traditional values and contemporary consumerism often leads to contradictions, especially as globalization introduces competing values and lifestyles [16]. Therefore, understanding the extent to which cultural factors promote or inhibit ethical consumption in India is central to this research.

Gender also plays a nuanced role in ethical consumerism. Studies in the Indian context suggest that women may prioritize ethical considerations more than men due to traditional caregiving roles and heightened community engagement [17]. Research by Shaw, Grehan, Shiu, Hassan, and Thomson (2005) indicates that women tend to exhibit stronger ethical consumption patterns, driven by greater social and environmental awareness [18]. However, such gendered assumptions require careful investigation, as societal changes are reshaping traditional gender roles in both household and bazaar dynamics.

Education is widely identified as a vital determinant of ethical consumerism. Gupta and Kumar (2021) found that Indian consumers with developed education were more likely to purchase fair trade and environmentally friendly products. [19]. Also, education enhances media literacy, enabling consumers to better detect credible ethical claims from presentation tactics. Higher education levels correlate strongly with heightened awareness of global issues, critical thinking skills, and the capacity to value ethical implications in consumption [20].

B. Economic Constraints in Ethical Choice

One of the most significant impediments to ethical consumption is economic constraint. Chatterjee et al. (2021) examined the influence of ethical certifications and product involvement on consumers' willingness to purchase principled products at price premiums in the Indian market. They realized that while customers express interest in ethically certified products, higher prices can deter actual buys [21]. Additionally, a 2020 report by the Capgemini Research Institute indicated that although 79% of consumers are changing their purchase preferences based on social responsibility, inclusiveness, or environmental impact, price remains a significant factor influencing their final buying decisions [22]. In emerging economies like India, where a extensive portion of the population is highly price-conscious, the cost of ethical goods can deter even well-benevolent consumers from making sustainable choices [23]. Ethical produce, which often involve higher creation costs due to organic sourcing and fair labour methods, are typically priced at a premium [24].

C. Social Media Influence

The rise of social media has reformed the way consumers engage with ethical consumption. Grewal, Stephen, and Coleman (2019) highlight that the credibility of these platforms can significantly impact consumer trust and motivation toward ethical behaviour [25]. Beyond merely informing, social media fosters communities around shared values and causes, amplifying consumer advocacy and peer influence [26]. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp have become primary vehicles for disseminating information about sustainable brands and ethical practices [27]. In India, where smartphone penetration and social media use have risen, the digital landscape is an essential factor in shaping spending habits, particularly among younger demographics. Evaluating the convince of social media in advertising ethical consumption is thus necessary for understanding modern customer behaviour in India.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design and Data Collection

The present study employs a quantitative investigation design to investigate the factors shaping ethical consumer behaviour. A target sample of 500 respondents was initially counted for this study. However, only 457 replies were included in the final analysis, as the continuing responses were ignored due to incomplete information. A convenience sampling method was used to access and collect data from a diverse group of applicants across India. Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire, which was distributed through Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. The structured survey was divided into four key sections. The first portion focused on the demographic profile of accused to collect information on age, gender, education of the accused. The second section studied ethical buying habits to evaluate the extent to which users consider ethical factors in their purchasing decisions. The third section studied consumer ethical choices to find out how ethical concerns influence product selection and acquiring behaviour. Finally, the fourth section assessed influencing factors, degree the role of social media, cultural background, price understanding, and education in shaping ethical consumer behaviour.

B. Measures and Variables

Dependent variables: Ethical Buying Habits and Consumer Ethical Choice

Independent variables included: Demographic factors (age, gender, education), Social influence factors (social media, cultural background) and Economic factors (price sensitivity)

C. Statistical Tools

The Split-Half Reliability Test was conducted to assess internal consistency. A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed to test the significance of independent variables on ethical consumer behaviour. The results from Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root were used to test the hypotheses.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) To investigate the relationship between level of consumers' awareness and ethical purchasing behaviour.
2) To explore the impact of socio-cultural factors, including cultural values and gender, on consumer preferences for sustainable products.
3) To assess the role of economic constraints in shaping consumers' ethical buying habit.
4) To evaluate the influence of social media platforms in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours towards ethical purchasing decisions.
5) To analyse the impact of level of education on ethical buying behaviour and ethical choice among consumers.

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V. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

$H_0$1: There is no significant association between consumers' level of awareness and ethical buying behaviour.
$H_0$2: Socio-cultural factors (such as culture and gender) do not significantly impact consumers' preference for sustainable products.
$H_0$3: Economic constraints (such as price sensitivity) do not significantly affect consumers' ethical buying habits.
$H_0$4: Social media platforms have no significant influence on consumers' ethical purchase decisions.
$H_0$5: Consumers' education level is not significantly associated with their ethical buying behaviour.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE I
COMMUNALITIES OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM FACTORS

Statement	Initial	Extraction
Cultural values influence my preference for eco-friendly or fair-trade products.	1.000	0.945
My religious or traditional beliefs impact my choice of sustainable products.	1.000	0.797
I prefer buying products from brands that align with my cultural/social values.	1.000	0.841
My social environment plays a role in my ethical consumption choices.	1.000	0.871
I consider sustainable products to be more expensive than conventional ones.	1.000	0.719
I would buy more ethical/sustainable products if they were more affordable.	1.000	0.870
My purchasing decisions are primarily based on price rather than sustainability.	1.000	0.700
I am willing to pay a premium for ethically sourced and sustainable products.	1.000	0.752
Economic constraints prevent me from making sustainable choices.	1.000	0.738
Social media has increased my awareness of sustainable and ethical products.	1.000	0.762
I rely on social media for information about ethical brands and products.	1.000	0.691
I am influenced by influencers and online reviews when purchasing sustainable products.	1.000	0.959
I follow brands that promote ethical and sustainable products on social media.	1.000	0.769
Social media advertisements impact my preference for sustainable products.	1.000	0.830
My level of education has made me more aware of ethical consumerism.	1.000	0.890
Higher education levels lead to greater engagement in ethical consumption.	1.000	0.770
I have learned about sustainability and ethical consumerism through formal education.	1.000	0.923
I actively apply knowledge from my education to make ethical purchase decisions.	1.000	0.785

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 1 presents the communalities of the circumstances manipulating ethical consumerism. Communalities indicate the extent to which each variable's variation is clarified by the extracted factors. Higher worth, approaching 1, suggest a strong relationship between the variable and the underlying factor building [28]. Statements related to social influences, cultural values, and learning exhibit high communalities. This clearly show that these factors play a crucial role in shaping customer's behaviour in the context of ethical consumerism.

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TABLE II
TOTAL VARIANCE EXPLAINED BY EXTRACTED FACTORS

Total Variance Explained						
Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.773	48.740	48.740	8.773	48.740	48.740
2	2.845	15.803	64.543	2.845	15.803	64.543
3	1.543	8.569	73.113	1.543	8.569	73.113
4	1.451	8.059	81.172	1.451	8.059	81.172
5	0.919	5.103	86.275			
6	0.615	3.414	89.689			
7	0.565	3.137	92.826			
8	0.389	2.160	94.986			
9	0.270	1.499	96.486			
10	0.227	1.261	97.747			
11	0.156	0.866	98.613			
12	0.114	0.633	99.245			
13	0.071	0.396	99.641			
14	0.031	0.170	99.811			
15	0.018	0.100	99.911			
16	0.009	0.050	99.962			
17	0.007	0.038	100.000			
18	######	######	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 2 shows the total variance explained by the extracted factors. According to Kaiser's criterion (1974), factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are considered significant [29]. In this analysis, the first four components meet this criterion which clearly indicates their substantial contribution to explaining variations in ethical consumer behaviour. The first factor accounts for 48.74% of the variance, followed by the second (15.80%), third (8.57%), and fourth (8.06%). These factors result in a cumulative explained variance of 81.17%.

TABLE III
RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Reliability Statistics			
Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	0.833
		N of Items	9[a]
	Part 2	Value	0.896
		N of Items	9[b]
	Total N of Items		18
Correlation Between Forms			0.688
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		0.815
	Unequal Length		0.815
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			0.815

a. *The items are: C1, C2, C3, C4, P1, P2, P3, P4, P5.*
b. *b. The items are: S1, S2, S3, S4, S5, E1, E2, E3, E4.*

The results of reliability analysis, measuring the internal consistency of the scale is shown in Table 3. Cronbach's Alpha values denote strong reliability, with Part 1 showing a coefficient of 0.833 and Part 2 demonstrates an even higher reliability of 0.896. These values indicate that the items within each section of the scale are measuring the proposed constructs consistently. The Spearman-Brown coefficient, calculated for both equal and unequal lengths, is 0.815, further defending the reliability of the instrument. Similarly, the Guttman Split-Half coefficient is also 0.815 which is reinforcing the whole internal consistency of the scale. The connection between the two parts of the scale is 0.688. the test results indicates that the scale used in our study is a reliable tool for measuring ethical consumer behaviour. All reliability coefficients exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 [30].

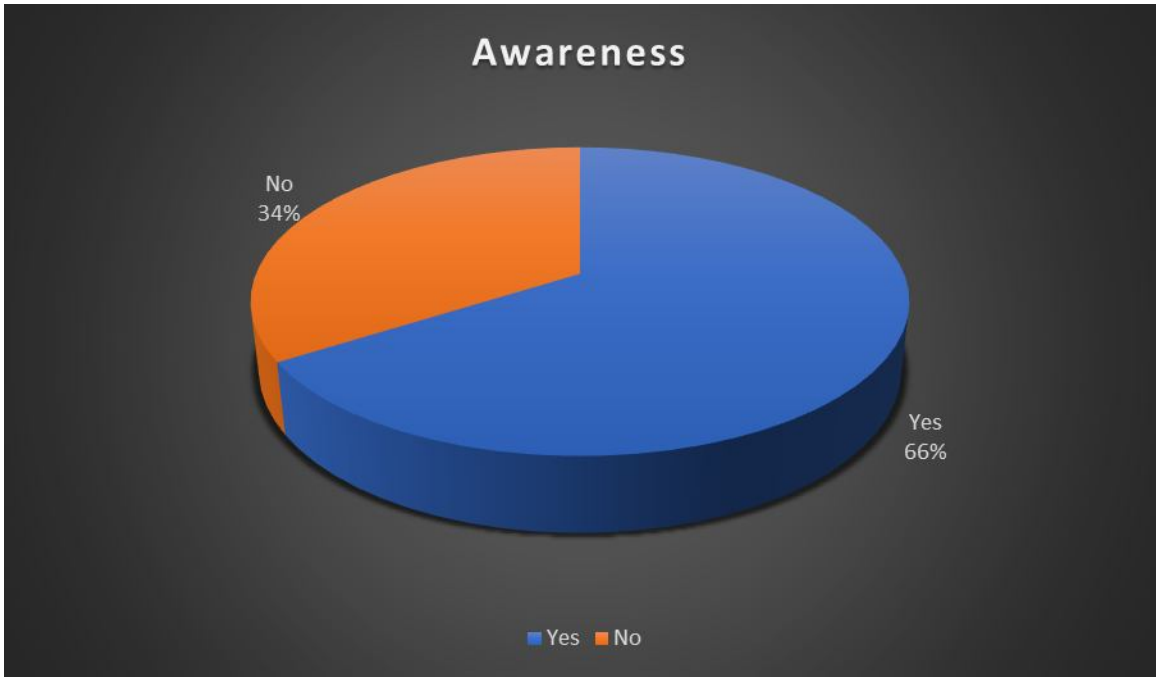


Fig.1: Awareness of Ethical Consumerism

When respondents were inquired about their mindfulness of ethical consumerism and ethical purchasing practices, the findings revealed a considerable level of awareness among consumers. As shown in Figure 1, 66% of participants reported being aware of ethical consumerism, while 34% indicated that they were not familiar with the concept. These findings suggest that while a mass of consumers recognize ethical consumption practices, a significant proportion remains unaware.

A. Multivariate Analysis

Multivariate analysis is used in our study to measure the collective influence of multiple independent variables on consumer preferences for ethical products. This method presents a comprehensive understanding of how separate independent factors such as age, social media exposure, cultural values, price sensitivity, gender, and education relate in shaping ethical purchasing behaviour. By utilizing multivariate analysis test, the study can identify the relative significance of each factor at the same time accounting for their interdependencies.

TABLE IV
MULTIVARIATE TEST RESULTS

Multivariate Tests[a]						
Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	0.015	3.460[b]	2.000	444.000	0.032
	Wilks' Lambda	0.985	3.460[b]	2.000	444.000	0.032
	Hotelling's Trace	0.016	3.460[b]	2.000	444.000	0.032
	Roy's Largest Root	0.016	3.460[b]	2.000	444.000	0.032

Age	Pillai's Trace	0.583	310.388[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Wilks' Lambda	0.417	310.388[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Hotelling's Trace	1.398	310.388[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Roy's Largest Root	1.398	310.388[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
Social media	Pillai's Trace	0.463	191.448[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Wilks' Lambda	0.537	191.448[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Hotelling's Trace	0.862	191.448[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Roy's Largest Root	0.862	191.448[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
Culture	Pillai's Trace	0.650	411.633[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Wilks' Lambda	0.350	411.633[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Hotelling's Trace	1.854	411.633[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Roy's Largest Root	1.854	411.633[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
Price	Pillai's Trace	0.437	172.554[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Wilks' Lambda	0.563	172.554[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Hotelling's Trace	0.777	172.554[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Roy's Largest Root	0.777	172.554[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
Gender	Pillai's Trace	0.724	583.016[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Wilks' Lambda	0.276	583.016[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Hotelling's Trace	2.626	583.016[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
	Roy's Largest Root	2.626	583.016[b]	2.000	444.000	0.000
Education	Pillai's Trace	0.859	111.600	6.000	890.000	0.000
	Wilks' Lambda	0.170	211.281[b]	6.000	888.000	0.000
	Hotelling's Trace	4.726	348.930	6.000	886.000	0.000
	Roy's Largest Root	4.690	695.724[c]	3.000	445.000	0.000

a. *Design: Intercept + Age + social media + Culture + Price + Gender + Education*
b. *Exact statistic*
c. *The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.*

The collective influence of various independent variables on consumer preferences for ethical products choice and behaviour is analysed with the help of multivariate analysis (Table 4). The analysis utilizes Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root to evaluate the significance of each factor, with corresponding F-values and significance levels.

The results indicate that the intercept effect is statistically significant (Wilks' Lambda = 0.985, F = 3.460, p = 0.032), which suggests that baseline variations exist in consumer preferences.

Among the independent variables, age exhibits a significant influence on ethical consumer behaviour with Pillai's Trace= 0.583, Wilks Lamda=0.417, F = 310.388 and corresponding p value less than 0.001. the results shows that sustainable purchasing preferences vary considerably across different age groups. Similarly, social media exposure has a noteworthy effect in shaping consumer awareness and scales in context of ethical products as p value is less than 0.001 for all the four multivariate test measurements.

The findings also highlight the significant role of cultural factors suggesting that socio-cultural values strongly influence consumer decisions regarding ethical products. For socio-cultural factors test statistics of Wilks' Lambda is 0.350 with F statistic= 411.633 and corresponding $p < 0.001$. Price sensitivity also emerges as a critical factor that significantly impact sustainable purchasing behaviour of consumers (Wilks' Lambda = 0.563, F = 172.554, $p < 0.001$).

Gender differences and education level are also found to be highly significant in ethical consumption patterns with the p value less than 0.001.

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TABLE V
TESTS OF BETWEEN-SUBJECTS EFFECTS

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects						
Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	Ethical Buying Habits	635.065[a]	11	57.733	477.640	0.000
	Consumer Ethical Choice	399.248[b]	11	36.295	561.070	0.000
Intercept	Ethical Buying Habits	0.656	1	0.656	5.427	0.020
	Consumer Ethical Choice	0.020	1	0.020	0.311	0.577
Age	Ethical Buying Habits	55.542	1	55.542	459.515	0.000
	Consumer Ethical Choice	2.758	1	2.758	42.641	0.000
Social media	Ethical Buying Habits	44.789	1	44.789	370.549	0.000
	Consumer Ethical Choice	0.180	1	0.180	2.780	0.096
Culture	Ethical Buying Habits	25.469	1	25.469	210.707	0.000
	Consumer Ethical Choice	25.824	1	25.824	399.193	0.000
Price	Ethical Buying Habits	0.966	1	0.966	7.994	0.005
	Consumer Ethical Choice	18.580	1	18.580	287.225	0.000
Gender	Ethical Buying Habits	30.853	1	30.853	255.253	0.000
	Consumer Ethical Choice	39.861	1	39.861	616.193	0.000
Education	Ethical Buying Habits	145.993	3	48.664	402.612	0.000
	Consumer Ethical Choice	25.110	3	8.370	129.386	0.000
Error	Ethical Buying Habits	53.788	445	0.121		
	Consumer Ethical Choice	28.787	445	0.065		
Total	Ethical Buying Habits	######	457			
	Consumer Ethical Choice	######	457			
Corrected Total	Ethical Buying Habits	688.853	456			
	Consumer Ethical Choice	428.035	456			

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Table 5 presents the results of the tests of between-subjects effects, which assess the influence of various independent variables on ethical buying habits and consumer ethical choices. The corrected model is statistically significant for both dependent variables. It clearly indicates that the selected predictors collectively explain a substantial proportion of the variance in ethical consumer behaviour.

The findings of the study reveal exceptionally high explanatory power of the model, with an R^2 value of 0.922 (92.2%) for Ethical Behaviour and 0.933 (93.3%) for Impact of Purchase Decision. These results indicate that the independent variables collectively account for over 90% of the variance in both dependent variables which shows a remarkable strong model fit.

The results reveal that age, social media usage, cultural values, price sensitivity, gender, and education significantly impact ethical buying habits and consumer ethical choices since the p-values are below 0.05. Among these factors, age ($F = 459.515$, $p < 0.001$), social media ($F = 370.549$, $p < 0.001$), and gender ($F = 255.253$, $p < 0.001$) reveals strong influence on ethical buying habits. Culture ($F = 399.193$, $p < 0.001$) and price ($F = 287.225$, $p < 0.001$) are significant determinants of consumer ethical choices.

Education also plays a critical role, demonstrating a significant effect on both ethical buying habits ($F = 402.612$, $p < 0.001$) and consumer ethical choices ($F = 129.386$, $p < 0.001$). These findings highlight the importance of awareness and knowledge in promoting ethical consumption practices. However, the influence of social media on consumer ethical choices is not statistically significant ($F = 2.780$, $p = 0.096$), suggesting that while social media may raise awareness, it does not necessarily translate into ethical purchasing decisions.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present research was conducted to gain insights into the factors influencing ethical consumerism in developing country like India. The findings of the study and conclusion drawn on the framed hypotheses are shown in the table below (Table 6). Supported by statistical analysis the study results suggest that consumer awareness is significantly associated with ethical purchasing behaviour which indicates that individuals who are more informed about ethical consumerism are more likely to make sustainable purchasing choices. Additionally, socio-cultural factors play an important role in shaping consumer preferences for sustainable products. This further emphasizes the importance of cultural and traditional values in ethical consumption.

TABLE VI
SUMMARY OF HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULTS

Hypothesis	Statement	Result
$H_0$1	There is no significant association between consumers' level of awareness and ethical buying behaviour.	Rejected
$H_0$2	Socio-cultural factors (culture and gender) do not significantly impact consumers' preference for sustainable products.	Rejected
$H_0$3	Economic constraints (price sensitivity) do not significantly affect consumers' ethical buying habits.	Rejected
$H_0$4	Social media platforms have no significant influence on consumers' ethical purchase decisions.	Rejected
$H_0$5	Consumers' education level is not significantly associated with their ethical buying behaviour.	Rejected

Economic constraints were also found to be a significant determinant. Affordability remains as another key factor in consumer decisions regarding sustainable products. The study results highlight the impact of social media in shaping consumer preferences for ethical choices. Social media platforms contribute to greater awareness and influence consumers' purchasing behaviour. Education also emerged as a significant factor. This can be concluded that higher the levels of education greater the engagement in ethical buying practices.

These findings suggest that ethical consumerism is shaped by a combination of awareness, cultural values, economic considerations, social media exposure, and educational background.

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VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to promote ethical consumerism and also to address the key factors influencing consumer behaviour:

A. Enhancing Consumer Awareness and Education

- There is a need for comprehensive awareness campaigns to educate consumers on the significance of ethical consumerism and its role in sustainability.
- Integrating sustainability and ethical consumption topics into educational curricula at schools and universities can help cultivate responsible consumption habits from an early stage.
- Businesses should ensure that transparent and easily accessible information about sustainable products is available to consumers.

B. Addressing Socio-Cultural Influences

- Marketing strategies should be culturally sensitive and align with traditional values to effectively encourage ethical purchasing behaviour.
- Community-based sustainability initiatives should be promoted to integrate ethical consumerism into everyday social and cultural practices.
- Brands should emphasize authenticity and cultural relevance in their communication to build consumer trust in sustainable products.

C. Mitigating Economic Constraints

- Financial incentives such as subsidies or tax benefits can make sustainable products more affordable for a broader consumer base.
- Businesses should invest in cost-effective production techniques to minimize the price disparity between conventional and sustainable products.

D. Use of Social Media for Ethical Consumerism

- Businesses should optimize social media platforms to promote sustainable products by disseminating educational content, collaborating with influencers, and initiating interactive campaigns.
- Social media platforms could develop dedicated sections to highlight ethical brands and sustainable consumer choices.
- Consumers should be encouraged to share their ethical purchasing experiences online, fostering a collective movement towards responsible consumption.

E. Encouraging Ethical Purchasing Behaviour

- Retailers and e-commerce platforms should provide clear labelling and certifications for sustainable products to assist consumers in making informed purchasing decisions.
- Brands should leverage storytelling and emotional branding strategies to create stronger connections between consumers and ethical products.
- Consumer engagement initiatives, such as sustainability challenges and ethical shopping reward programs, can reinforce long-term responsible purchasing behaviours.

IX. LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDY

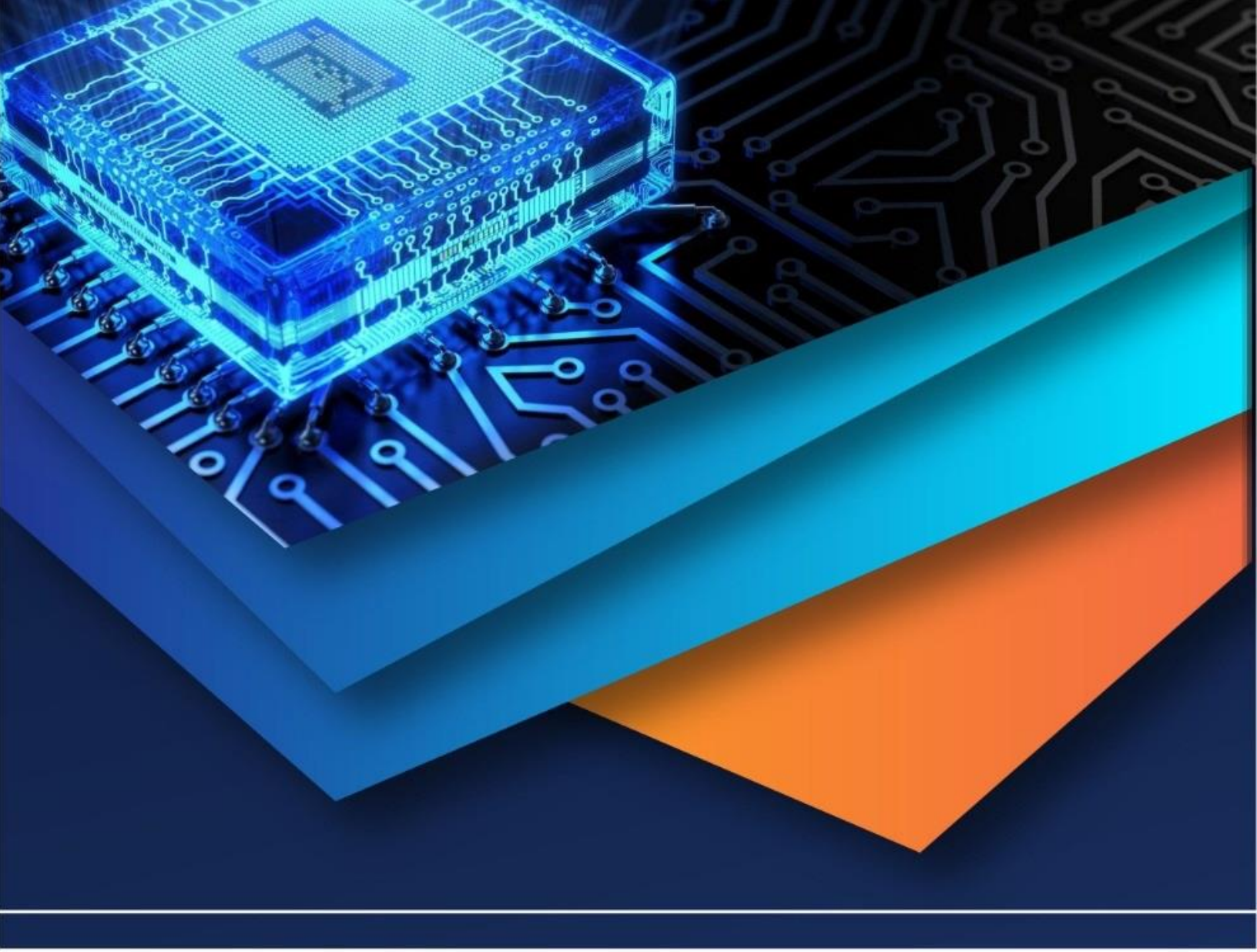
Despite offering valuable insights into ethical consumer behaviour, this study has certain limitations that must be acknowledged. The sample, though substantial, was drawn through online platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram which limits the representation and excludes individuals who are less active on social media. The study's focus on the Indian context, restricts the generalizability of findings to other cultural and economic settings. While key factors such as social media influence, cultural background, price sensitivity, and education were examined, other critical determinants such as government policies, environmental awareness, peer influence, and corporate marketing strategies were not taken into consideration. Future studies could integrate observational methods, behavioural experiments, or sales data analysis to enhance the reliability of insights.

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