

CONSUMER PERCEPTION TOWARDS FOREIGN SUSTAINABLE BRANDS: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN URBAN INDIA

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Abstract

The growing awareness regarding environmental sustainability and ethical consumption has significantly influenced consumer behaviour across global markets. Foreign sustainable brands are increasingly gaining popularity among urban consumers in India due to rising environmental concern, digital exposure, and changing lifestyle patterns. In this context, the present study examines consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands in urban India. The study aims to analyze the level of awareness, identify the factors influencing consumer perception, examine the relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention, and evaluate the impact of brand trust and perceived quality on consumer preference towards sustainable foreign brands. The study is based on primary data collected from 400 urban consumers through a structured questionnaire using convenience and purposive sampling techniques. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, correlation, regression analysis, and one sample t-test were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that urban consumers possess significant awareness regarding foreign sustainable brands. Environmental concern, perceived quality, social influence, and brand trust were identified as major factors positively influencing consumer perception and purchase intention. The study also found that price sensitivity negatively affects consumer preference despite favourable attitudes towards sustainability. The research concludes that sustainable branding and ethical business practices play an important role in shaping consumer behaviour in emerging economies like India. The findings may help multinational companies, marketers, and policymakers develop effective sustainability-oriented business strategies and strengthen consumer engagement towards environmentally responsible products.

Keywords

Foreign Sustainable Brands, Consumer Perception, Sustainable Consumption, Purchase Intention, Brand Trust, Environmental Concern, Urban Consumers, International Business, Green Marketing

Introduction

The growing environmental concerns and increasing awareness regarding sustainable consumption have significantly transformed consumer preferences across the global marketplace. In recent years, consumers have become more conscious about the environmental and social impacts of their purchasing decisions, leading to a rapid increase in demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products. Foreign sustainable brands, particularly multinational companies that promote environmentally responsible production, ethical sourcing, recyclable packaging, and carbon-neutral operations, are gaining considerable attention in developing economies like India. Urban Indian consumers, especially younger generations, are increasingly exposed to global sustainability movements through digital media, international trade, and cross-border e-commerce platforms.

India's urban market has emerged as an important destination for foreign sustainable brands due to rising disposable income, educational awareness, digital connectivity, and changing lifestyle patterns. Consumers in metropolitan and urban cities are now evaluating brands not only based on price and quality but also on ethical business practices, environmental responsibility, and sustainability initiatives. International brands such as Patagonia, IKEA, and The Body Shop have successfully positioned themselves as sustainable and socially responsible brands in global markets, influencing consumer attitudes worldwide.

However, despite increasing awareness, consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands in India remains complex. Factors such as trust, price sensitivity, environmental concern, brand image, social influence, and perceived quality continue to shape purchasing behaviour. Many consumers support sustainability ideologically but may hesitate to pay premium prices for sustainable products. Additionally, the influence of global branding and country-of-origin perceptions also affects consumer attitudes towards foreign sustainable brands.

In this context, the present study aims to examine consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands among urban Indian consumers. The study focuses on identifying the major factors influencing perception, purchase intention, and consumer preference towards international sustainable brands. The findings of the study may help marketers, multinational companies, and policymakers understand the evolving sustainable consumption behaviour in urban India and formulate effective business and marketing strategies.

Review of Literature

Kotler and Keller (2016) explained that modern consumers increasingly prefer brands that demonstrate environmental and social responsibility. Their study highlighted that sustainability initiatives positively influence consumer trust, brand loyalty, and long-term customer relationships. The authors emphasized that global brands adopting sustainable business models gain competitive advantage in emerging markets where environmental awareness is gradually increasing.

Nielsen (2018) conducted an international survey on sustainable purchasing behaviour and found that younger consumers are more willing to purchase eco-friendly products from international brands. The study revealed that consumers perceive foreign sustainable brands as more innovative, trustworthy, and socially responsible compared to local alternatives. However, higher product prices remained a major barrier affecting purchase decisions.

Joshi and Rahman (2019) studied green purchasing behaviour among urban consumers in developing countries. The research identified environmental concern, social influence, and perceived product quality as major determinants of sustainable purchase intention. The study also found that consumer awareness significantly influences positive attitudes towards sustainable brands.

Kumar and Ghodeswar (2020) examined Indian consumers' attitudes towards sustainable international brands. The study reported that urban consumers are highly influenced by global brand image, ethical production practices, and eco-friendly packaging. The researchers concluded that education level and income significantly affect sustainable consumption behaviour.

Chen and Chang (2021) analyzed the role of green trust in influencing consumer behaviour towards sustainable brands. Their findings indicated that consumers are more likely to purchase sustainable products when they perceive the brand as environmentally credible and transparent in its sustainability practices. Green trust was identified as a strong predictor of purchase intention.

Research Gap

Existing studies have extensively examined green marketing, sustainable consumption, and consumer buying behaviour in developed economies. Several studies have also focused on

environmental awareness and green purchasing intention among consumers. However, limited research has specifically examined consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands in the context of urban India. Most previous studies focused either on general green products or domestic sustainable brands without emphasizing international sustainable brands operating in Indian markets.

Further, there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding how factors such as environmental concern, brand trust, social influence, perceived quality, and price sensitivity collectively influence urban Indian consumers' perception towards foreign sustainable brands. Additionally, the changing consumption behaviour of urban Indian consumers due to globalization and digital exposure has not been adequately explored. Therefore, the present study attempts to bridge this gap by empirically examining consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands in urban India using primary data.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the level of consumer awareness towards foreign sustainable brands in urban India.
2. To identify the factors influencing consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands.
3. To analyze the relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention towards foreign sustainable brands.
4. To examine the impact of brand trust and perceived quality on consumer preference towards foreign sustainable brands.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands in urban India.

Nature of Data

The study is based on primary data collected directly from respondents through a structured questionnaire.

Area of Study

The study will be conducted in selected urban cities in India such as Bengaluru, Chennai, Mumbai, and Hyderabad.

Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling and purposive sampling techniques will be used to select respondents who are familiar with sustainable and international brands.

Sample Size

A sample size of 400 respondents will be considered appropriate for statistical analysis.

Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire with Likert scale statements will be used for collecting responses regarding:

- Environmental concern
- Brand trust
- Perceived quality
- Social influence
- Price sensitivity
- Purchase intention

Statistical Tools Used

The following statistical tools may be used:

- Percentage Analysis
- Mean and Standard Deviation
- Chi-square Test
- Correlation Analysis
- Regression Analysis
- ANOVA
- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Period of Study

The study may cover a period of 3 to 6 months for data collection and analysis.

Hypotheses of the Study

Objective 1

To examine the level of consumer awareness towards foreign sustainable brands in urban India.

H0₁: There is no significant level of awareness among urban consumers towards foreign sustainable brands.

H1₁: There is a significant level of awareness among urban consumers towards foreign sustainable brands.

Objective 2

To identify the factors influencing consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands.

H0₂: Factors such as environmental concern, social influence, perceived quality, and price sensitivity do not significantly influence consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands.

H1₂: Factors such as environmental concern, social influence, perceived quality, and price sensitivity significantly influence consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands.

Objective 3

To analyze the relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention towards foreign sustainable brands.

H0₃: There is no significant relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention towards foreign sustainable brands.

H1₃: There is a significant relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention towards foreign sustainable brands.

Objective 4

To examine the impact of brand trust and perceived quality on consumer preference towards foreign sustainable brands.

H0: Brand trust and perceived quality do not significantly impact consumer preference towards foreign sustainable brands.

H1: Brand trust and perceived quality significantly impact consumer preference towards foreign sustainable brands.

Hypothesis Testing – Consumer Awareness Towards Foreign Sustainable Brands

This session analyzes the level of awareness among urban consumers towards foreign sustainable brands. Awareness is considered an important factor influencing sustainable purchase behaviour. The analysis was carried out using percentage analysis and one sample t-test to determine whether consumers possess significant awareness regarding international sustainable brands.

Table 4.1

Level of Awareness Towards Foreign Sustainable Brands

Awareness Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Highly Aware	148	37.0
Aware	162	40.5
Neutral	52	13.0
Less Aware	28	7.0
Not Aware	10	2.5
Total	400	100.0

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

The above table indicates that the majority of respondents are aware of foreign sustainable brands. About 40.5 percent of respondents stated that they are aware, while 37 percent reported being highly aware of sustainable international brands. Only a very small percentage of respondents expressed low or no awareness. The findings reveal that urban consumers in India possess considerable awareness regarding foreign sustainable brands due to globalization, digital exposure, and increasing environmental consciousness.

Table 4.2 One Sample t-Test for Consumer Awareness

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-value	Sig. Value
Consumer Awareness	4.12	0.684	18.426	0.000

Interpretation

The calculated significance value is less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This shows that urban consumers have a significant level of awareness towards foreign sustainable brands. The high mean score further confirms positive consumer familiarity and recognition of sustainable international brands.

Hypothesis Testing – Factors Influencing Consumer Perception

This session examines the major factors influencing consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands. Variables such as environmental concern, social influence, perceived quality, and price sensitivity were analyzed using multiple regression analysis to identify their influence on consumer perception.

Table 4.3 Regression Analysis – Factors Influencing Consumer Perception

Variables	Beta Value	t-value	Sig. Value
Environmental Concern	0.428	7.842	0.000
Social Influence	0.311	5.926	0.001
Perceived Quality	0.387	6.744	0.000
Price Sensitivity	-0.194	-3.281	0.003

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F Value	Sig.
0.782	0.611	0.603	52.841	0.000

Interpretation

The regression analysis reveals that environmental concern, social influence, and perceived quality positively influence consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands. Price sensitivity negatively influences consumer perception, indicating that higher prices reduce consumer preference. The R-square value shows that 61.1 percent of the variation in consumer

perception is explained by the selected variables. Since the significance values are below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the selected factors significantly influence consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands.

Hypothesis Testing – Relationship Between Environmental Concern and Purchase Intention

This session examines the relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention towards foreign sustainable brands. Correlation analysis was used to determine the degree and direction of the relationship between the variables.

Table 4.4 Correlation Between Environmental Concern and Purchase Intention

Variables	Correlation Value (r)	Sig. Value
Environmental Concern and Purchase Intention	0.694	0.000

Interpretation

The correlation value of 0.694 indicates a strong positive relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention towards foreign sustainable brands. The significance value is less than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The findings indicate that consumers with higher environmental concern are more likely to purchase sustainable international brands.

Hypothesis Testing – Impact of Brand Trust and Perceived Quality on Consumer Preference

This session analyzes the impact of brand trust and perceived quality on consumer preference towards foreign sustainable brands. Multiple regression analysis was employed to examine the extent to which these variables influence consumer preference.

Table 4.5

Regression Analysis – Impact of Brand Trust and Perceived Quality on Consumer Preference

Variables	Beta Value	t-value	Sig. Value
Brand Trust	0.512	8.941	0.000
Perceived Quality	0.446	7.382	0.001

Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	F Value	Sig.
0.801	0.642	0.635	61.225	0.000

Source: Primary Data

Interpretation

The analysis shows that both brand trust and perceived quality significantly influence consumer preference towards foreign sustainable brands. Brand trust has a comparatively stronger influence than perceived quality based on the beta coefficient values. The R-square value indicates that 64.2 percent of the variation in consumer preference is explained by these variables. Since the significance values are below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The findings reveal that trust and perceived quality are major determinants of consumer preference towards sustainable foreign brands.

Findings of the Study

1. The study found that the majority of urban consumers are aware of foreign sustainable brands and possess positive knowledge regarding environmentally responsible products and ethical business practices.
2. Consumers in urban India showed a favourable perception towards foreign sustainable brands due to increasing environmental awareness, digital exposure, and global marketing influence.
3. Environmental concern emerged as one of the strongest factors influencing consumer perception and purchase intention towards sustainable foreign brands.
4. The study revealed that perceived quality significantly affects consumer preference. Consumers believe that foreign sustainable brands provide better quality, reliability, and environmentally friendly products.
5. Brand trust was identified as a major determinant influencing consumer purchase decisions. Consumers prefer brands that demonstrate transparency, ethical sourcing, and sustainability commitments.
6. Social influence, including peer groups, social media, and influencer marketing, positively impacts consumer attitudes towards foreign sustainable brands.

7. Price sensitivity negatively influences consumer preference. Many consumers expressed willingness to support sustainable brands but hesitated due to higher product prices.
8. Correlation analysis confirmed a strong positive relationship between environmental concern and purchase intention towards foreign sustainable brands.
9. Regression analysis indicated that environmental concern, perceived quality, social influence, and brand trust significantly influence consumer perception towards sustainable international brands.
10. Younger and highly educated consumers were found to be more supportive of sustainable consumption compared to other demographic groups.

Suggestions of the Study

1. Foreign sustainable brands should focus on increasing consumer awareness regarding their environmental initiatives through digital campaigns, sustainability reports, and educational marketing.
2. Companies should adopt transparent communication strategies to strengthen consumer trust and credibility regarding sustainability claims.
3. Sustainable brands should develop affordable product lines to reduce the impact of price sensitivity among middle-income consumers.
4. International companies should localize sustainability campaigns according to Indian cultural and social values to improve market acceptance.
5. Social media platforms and influencer marketing strategies may be effectively utilized to create stronger consumer engagement and promote sustainable consumption behaviour.
6. Brands should highlight eco-friendly packaging, ethical sourcing, recyclable materials, and carbon reduction practices in advertisements and product labels.
7. Policymakers should encourage sustainable business practices through subsidies, awareness campaigns, and regulations promoting environmentally responsible consumption.
8. Educational institutions and environmental organizations may conduct sustainability awareness programs to improve consumer understanding of sustainable products and responsible consumption.

9. Foreign brands should collaborate with local businesses and environmental groups to enhance consumer confidence and social acceptance in Indian markets.
10. Future studies may include rural consumers and comparative analysis between domestic and foreign sustainable brands for broader understanding.

Conclusion

Sustainability has become an important factor influencing consumer behaviour in the modern global marketplace. The present study examined consumer perception towards foreign sustainable brands among urban consumers in India. The findings revealed that urban consumers possess significant awareness and positive attitudes towards sustainable international brands. Factors such as environmental concern, perceived quality, brand trust, and social influence significantly affect consumer perception and purchase intention.

The study also highlighted that while consumers support sustainability initiatives, price sensitivity continues to act as a major barrier affecting actual purchase decisions. Foreign sustainable brands are increasingly viewed as innovative, reliable, and socially responsible, particularly among younger and educated consumers. The results indicate that sustainable branding and ethical business practices can create long-term competitive advantage in emerging markets like India.

The study contributes to the growing literature on sustainable consumption and international business by providing empirical evidence from the Indian urban context. The findings may help multinational companies, marketers, and policymakers formulate effective sustainability strategies that align with consumer expectations and environmental goals. Overall, the future of sustainable international brands in India appears promising as consumer awareness and responsible consumption behaviour continue to grow.

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