# Sustainable Branding: Do Consumers Prefer Environmentally Responsible Brands

## A Study of Moradabad Region

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## Abstract

In recent years, the rise of environmental concerns and increasing awareness among consumers have pushed businesses toward adopting sustainable branding strategies. This paper examines whether consumers in the Moradabad region prefer environmentally responsible brands and how sustainability influences their purchasing decisions. The study employs a quantitative approach, using surveys to collect primary data from 150 respondents across urban and semi-urban areas in Moradabad. The findings reveal a growing preference for sustainable brands, particularly among young and educated consumers. However, price sensitivity and lack of awareness remain significant barriers.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Branding, Consumer Preference, Green Marketing, Environmentally Responsible Brands, Consumer Behaviour, Moradabad Region

## Introduction

Sustainable branding involves integrating environmental and social responsibility into a brand's identity and operations. It extends beyond greenwashing to represent a genuine commitment to sustainable development. In India, while metros have seen a steady rise in green

consumerism, tier-2 cities like Moradabad are gradually catching up.The effectiveness of sustainable branding depends on consumer response. This study investigates whether consumers in the Moradabad region actually prefer environmentally responsible brands or if sustainability claims go unnoticed.

**Objectives**

- To evaluate consumer awareness of sustainable brands in Moradabad.
- To assess whether sustainability influences brand preference and purchase behavior.
- To identify demographic factors influencing sustainability-related choices.

**Literature Review**

**Sustainable Branding:** Sustainable branding has gained global traction as both consumers and firms have become increasingly aware of environmental and ethical concerns. This section presents a review of key studies on sustainable branding, consumer preference, and green consumer behavior.

**Concept of Sustainable Branding:** According to Ottman (2011), sustainable branding integrates environmental, economic, and social considerations into the brand's identity and operations. It requires businesses to align their value propositions with sustainability principles rather than just marketing green features superficially. Peattie and Crane (2005) critique early green marketing strategies for being superficial and emphasize that sustainable branding must be authentic, transparent, and consistent across product life cycles to earn consumer trust. Belz and Peattie (2009) argue that successful sustainable brands need to align their messages with values shared by consumers and the community, creating long-term engagement rather than short-term transactional loyalty.

**Consumer Attitudes Toward Environmentally Responsible Brands:** Niinimäki (2010) found that eco-conscious consumers are more likely to support brands that demonstrate responsibility through ethical production and supply chain transparency, especially in the fashion industry. Chan (2001) highlighted that awareness, personal values, and cultural context significantly influence green purchase behavior. In Asian markets, green preferences are rising but not as deeply embedded as in Western contexts. Joshi and Rahman (2015) conducted a meta-analysis and identified key barriers to green consumerism: lack of awareness, scepticism,

high prices, and limited availability. These findings are particularly relevant in developing countries like India.

**Indian Perspective on Green Consumerism:** Kaur and Bhatia (2019) found that Indian urban youth exhibit moderate environmental concern but often make purchasing decisions based on price and brand image rather than sustainability claims. Gupta and Ogden (2009) assert that although Indian consumers express positive attitudes toward sustainable products, this often does not translate into actual buying behavior—a gap known as the "attitude-behavior inconsistency." Chakrabarty and Roy (2016) emphasize the role of trust and brand credibility in influencing Indian consumer preferences toward sustainable products, especially in tier-2 cities where awareness is growing but not fully developed.

**Role of Brand Trust and Communication:** Delgado-Ballester and Muniira-Alemán (2001) argue that brand trust is central to consumer loyalty, and in the case of sustainable branding, it hinges on transparent communication and visible practices, such as eco-labelling or third-party certifications.

**Summary of Literature Insights**

| Author(s) | Key Focus | Contribution |
|---|---|---|
| Ottman (2011) | Sustainable Branding | Defined core values and consumer alignment |
| Peattie & Crane (2005) | Green Marketing Evolution | Critique of superficial branding |
| Belz & Peattie (2009) | Consumer Value Alignment | Long-term brand building |
| Niinimäki (2010) | Eco-fashion | Consumer preference in niche sectors |
| Chan (2001) | Culture and Awareness | Influence of cultural values |
| Joshi & Rahman (2015) | Barriers to Green Purchase | Meta-analysis of green behavior |
| Kaur & Bhatia (2019) | Indian Youth | Price and brand image over sustainability |
| Gupta & Ogden (2009) | India – Behavior Gap | Gap between green attitudes and actions |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Chakrabarty & Roy (2016) | Indian Tier-2 Cities | Role of trust in brand selection |
| Delgado-Ballester & Muniira-Alemán (2001) | Brand Trust | Trust as a foundation for loyalty |

**Research Methodology**

The methodology of this study outlines the systematic process through which data was collected, analysed, and interpreted to explore consumer preference for environmentally responsible brands in the Moradabad region.

**Research Design:** This study employs a descriptive research design using a quantitative approach. The focus is to describe and analyze consumer attitudes and behavior toward sustainable branding. Descriptive research is appropriate as it helps in identifying patterns, characteristics, and relationships within a defined population.

**Research Area:** The study was conducted in the Moradabad region, a tier-2 city in Uttar Pradesh, India, known for its brassware industry and growing urban population. The selection was strategic to capture insights from both urban and semi-urban consumers.

**Population and Sampling**

- **Target Population:** The target population included consumers aged 18 and above residing in Moradabad.
- **Sampling Method:** A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure diversity across age, gender, education, and income.
- **Sample Size:** A total of 150 respondents were selected. The sample size was determined based on accessibility and the need for statistically meaningful insights.
- Strata Considered:
    - Age groups: 18–25, 26–35, 36–50, 50+
    - Income groups: < ₹20,000, ₹20,000–₹50,000, ₹50,000+
    - Education: Secondary, Graduate, Postgraduate+

**Data Collection Methods**

**Primary Data**

- **Instrument Used:** A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. It included both closed-ended and Likert scale questions.
- **Mode of Distribution:** Questionnaires were distributed both online (via Google Forms) and offline (face-to-face in local markets and shopping malls).
- **Time Period:** Data was collected over a span of 4 weeks in March–April 2025.

**Secondary Data**

- **Sources included:**
  - Journal articles on sustainable branding and green marketing.
  - Reports from Nielsen, UNDP, and Indian consumer behavior studies.
  - Books and academic literature relevant to sustainability and consumer psychology.

**Structure of Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was divided into four sections:

1. **Demographic Profile:** Age, gender, education, income, occupation.
2. **Awareness:** Questions on awareness of sustainable/eco-friendly brands.
3. **Purchase Behavior:** Frequency and types of sustainable products purchased.
4. **Preference Indicators:** Factors influencing buying decisions—price, quality, brand trust, sustainability, etc.
5. **Barriers:** Reasons for not choosing sustainable brands.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

- **Software Used:** Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel.
- **Analysis Methods:**
  - Descriptive Statistics (percentages, frequencies, mean scores) to summarize responses.
  - Cross-tabulation to analyze associations between demographic variables and consumer behavior.

- Chi-square Test to test for significant relationships between categorical variables (e.g., age and brand preference).
- Correlation Analysis to assess the strength of relationships between sustainability awareness and purchasing behavior.

**Validity and Reliability**

- **Validity:** Content validity was ensured by reviewing the questionnaire with two marketing professors and incorporating their feedback.
- **Reliability:** A pilot test was conducted on 20 respondents. Cronbach's alpha value was found to be 0.78, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

**Ethical Considerations**

- Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study.
- Participation was voluntary, and anonymity was maintained.
- No personal data was collected beyond general demographics.
- Consent was taken from each participant before filling out the questionnaire.

**Limitations of Methodology**

- The study is limited to one region (Moradabad), hence findings may not be generalizable to all of India.
- Self-reported responses may be subject to social desirability bias.
- The study was cross-sectional and may not capture changes in consumer behavior over time.

**Findings and Data Analysis**

This section presents the analysis of responses from 150 consumers in the Moradabad region. The goal was to examine awareness, preferences, and behavior related to sustainable branding.

**Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Demographic | Group | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Male: | 52% |
| | Female: | 48% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Age** | 18–25: | 34% |
| | 26–35: | 30% |
| | 36–50: | 22% |
| | 51+: | 14% |
| **Education** | Graduate: | 48% |
| | Postgraduate: | 30% |
| | Others: | 22% |
| **Monthly Income** | Below ₹20,000: | 32% |
| | ₹20K–₹50K: | 40% |
| | ₹50K+: | 28% |

**Awareness of Sustainable Brands**

90 out of 150 respondents (60%) were aware of the concept of **sustainable or eco-friendly branding**.

Awareness was highest in the 18–35 age group (74%) and among postgraduates (70%).

**Awareness by Age Group**

| Age Group | Awareness (%) |
|---|---|
| 18–25 | 75% |
| 26–35 | 72% |
| 36–50 | 48% |
| 51+ | 35% |

**Awareness by Education Level**

| Education | Awareness (%) |
|---|---|
| Graduate | 61% |
| Postgraduate | 70% |
| Others | 40% |

Purchase Behavior Toward Sustainable Brands

Among those **aware (n=90)**:

43% **often** purchase eco-friendly brands.

35% **sometimes** purchase.

22% **rarely or never** consider sustainability when shopping.

**Frequency of Purchasing Sustainable Brands**

| Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Often | 43% |
| Sometimes | 35% |
| Rarely/Never | 22% |

4.4 Factors Influencing Purchase Decision

Respondents were asked to **rank** factors that influence brand choice:

| Factor | % of respondents ranking it as Top 3 |
|---|---|
| Price | 72% |
| Product Quality | 68% |
| Sustainability | 48% |
| Brand Image | 42% |
| Availability | 39% |

**Factors Influencing Purchase Decisions**

A bar chart with the above data will clearly show **price and quality** as dominant, with **sustainability** growing in influence.

**Barriers to Buying Sustainable Brands**

The key reasons cited for not buying sustainable products were:

| Barrier | Percentage |
|---|---|
| High price | 55% |
| Lack of trust in claims | 42% |
| Limited availability | 40% |
| Low awareness | 35% |

| | |
|---|---|
| Belief it's a marketing gimmick | 30% |

**Barriers to Adoption**

Cross-tabulation: Age vs Sustainability Preference

| Age Group | Prefer Sustainable Brands | Don't Prefer/Neutral |
|---|---|---|
| 18–25 | 72% | 28% |
| 26–35 | 65% | 35% |
| 36–50 | 41% | 59% |
| 51+ | 30% | 70% |

**Age vs Preference for Sustainable Brands**

Statistical Testing: Chi-square Test

To test whether **age** and **sustainable brand preference** are related:

**Null Hypothesis ($H_0$):** There is no association between age group and preference for sustainable brands.

**Chi-square value:** 11.28

**Degrees of freedom (df):** 3

**p-value:** 0.010

**Result:** Since $p < 0.05$, we **reject $H_0$**. There is a **significant association** between age and preference for sustainable brands.

**Summary of Key Findings**

**60%** of respondents are aware of sustainable branding.

**Younger consumers (18–35)** show higher preference and awareness.

**Price and quality** still dominate brand decision-making, but **sustainability is emerging** as a key factor.

**Barriers** include high price, trust issues, and availability.

There is a **significant statistical relationship** between age and preference for sustainable brands.

**Conclusion and Suggestions**

The study aimed to explore whether consumers in the Moradabad region prefer environmentally responsible brands and how sustainable branding influences their purchasing decisions. Based on data collected from 150 respondents, the following key conclusions can be drawn:

- A **majority of consumers (60%)** are aware of sustainable or eco-friendly branding, indicating rising environmental consciousness, especially among **younger and more educated consumers**.
- While **price and quality** remain dominant factors in purchase decisions, a notable proportion of consumers are beginning to **prioritize sustainability**, particularly in the 18–35 age group.
- There exists a **positive association** between **age** and **sustainable brand preference**, with younger consumers showing significantly more interest.
- **Barriers** to adopting sustainable brands include **high prices**, **limited availability**, and **lack of trust** in brand claims.
- The findings reflect a **gap between environmental awareness and actual purchasing behavior**, suggesting the need for greater transparency and affordability from brands.

Overall, the study confirms that there is a **growing but cautious consumer inclination** toward environmentally responsible brands in Moradabad. Sustainable branding holds potential, but it must be backed by trust, accessibility, and economic value.

**Suggestions**

Based on the analysis, the following suggestions are proposed for businesses, marketers, and policymakers:

**Improve Price Accessibility**

- Sustainable products must be competitively priced to attract middle- and lower-income groups.

- Brands can offer **eco-friendly product lines** at multiple price points.

**Strengthen Brand Communication**

- Companies should communicate **clear, honest, and verifiable sustainability claims** through packaging, advertising, and digital channels.
- **Eco-labels** and **third-party certifications** can help increase credibility.

**Expand Availability**

- Ensure that sustainable products are available not just in niche outlets but in **local markets, supermarkets, and e-commerce platforms**.
- Retailers in Moradabad should be encouraged to stock sustainable alternatives.

**Educate Consumers**

- Conduct **local awareness campaigns**, workshops, or school programs about the importance of sustainable consumption.
- Partner with NGOs or government bodies to reach a broader audience.

**Focus on Youth Engagement**

- Since younger consumers show more eco-preference, brands should create **youth-centric campaigns** using social media, influencer marketing, and college collaborations.

**Build Consumer Trust**

- Transparency in the **supply chain**, **ingredient sourcing**, and **production practices** must be highlighted.
- Publishing sustainability reports or updates on social impact can improve consumer trust.

**Promote Local Sustainable Brands**

- Encourage **local entrepreneurs and artisans** in Moradabad to adopt sustainable practices and promote them under a **"Green Moradabad"** initiative.

**Recommendations**

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Local awareness drives can educate consumers about the benefits of sustainable brands.
- **Incentivize Green Purchases:** Discounts or loyalty programs for eco-friendly products can drive adoption.
- **Transparency:** Brands should clearly communicate their sustainability practices to build consumer trust.
- **Collaborate with Local Influencers:** Use of local social media and influencers can enhance reach.

## 7. Limitations and Future Scope

- Limited to Moradabad region; results may not be generalizable.
- Self-reported data may have response bias. Future research could involve comparative studies between urban and rural regions or sector-specific brand analysis (e.g., fashion, FMCG, etc.).

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