

A STUDY ON AWARENESS ABOUT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AMONGST CONSUMERS

Dr. Priyanka Mohan

Assistant Professor, SIES(Nerul) College of Arts, Science & Commerce

ABSTRACT

*Since time immemorial the human race has evolved, nature has nurtured mankind. But with the increasing pace of industrialization and globalization it has been observed that Humans have changed ecosystems more quickly and widely than ever before. The degradation of ecosystem services would probably get worse over the 21st century. This resulted in a substantial and largely irreversible biodiversity loss; climate change increased the risk of nonlinear changes. **Planet Earth is one but the world is not.** We all depend on one biosphere for sustaining our lives. Some consume the Earth's resources at a rate that would leave little for future generations. Fears goes around apocalypse may occur or if not, then Earth won't be a safer and sounder*

home for us and for those who are to come. Sustainable Development has become the buzzword. Environmentalist, Ecologists, Industrialist, World leaders have been strategizing to save climate and nature from human wrath and reckless consumption of resources.

Sustainable development is the idea on which a healthy planet rests. It emphasizes that the human race can meet their present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The "official" definition of sustainable development was developed for the first time in the Brundtland Report in 1987.

Specifically, sustainable development is a way of organizing a planet in such a way so that it can exist in the long term. Preservation of the environment and natural resources or social and economic equity for existing and future generations Popularly known as ELF-Environment, Local people, Future -Around these, the term Sustainability revolves.

EMERGENCE OF THE IDEA OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The industrial revolution is the source of the rise of the idea of sustainable development. Originally, Western countries realized that their economic and industrial activities had a significant impact on the environment and the social balance. On the one hand, the Industrial Revolution contributed to the nation's progress and on the other hand, it was eating away the resources leading to degradation. Several ecological and social crises took place in the world and further created a push to the desire of having a more sustainable model.

Here are some examples of the economic and social crises that shook the world in the twentieth century:

- 1907: the American banking crisis
- 1923: the crisis of American hyperinflation
- 1929: the financial crisis of the 1930s begins
- 1968: the worldwide protests against bureaucratic elites
- 1973 and 1979: oil shocks
- 1982: the debt shock of developing countries

And some examples of ecological crises:

- 1954: Rongelap nuclear fallout

- 1956: Mercury crisis of Minamata
- 1957: Torrey Canyon oil spill
- 1976: Seveso disaster
- 1984: Bhopal disaster
- 1986: Chernobyl nuclear disaster
- 1989: Exxon Valdez oil spill
- 1999: Erika disaster

Global warming, pollution, depletion of ozone layer, the loss of biodiversity, some species getting extinct were another major issues, the world was battling with

Famous ecologist and philosopher Garret Hardin stated that if individuals act independently, rationally and focused on pursuing their individual interests, they'd end up going against the common interests of their communities and exhaust the planet's natural finite resources

He further suggested that mankind needed to radically change its way of using common resources to avoid a disaster in the future – this would be the way to keep on a sustainable development track.

Another research was carried out by the Club of Rome, that aimed to predict the consequences of what could happen on a planet with finite resources.

The interaction and interdependence between five different variables – world population growth, industrialization, pollution generation, food production, and nonrenewable resource depletion – were analyzed these variables will increase substantially and resource expansion was linear.

It concluded that an economic and social collapse would happen by the end of the 21st century.

The first historical conference was organized in 1972 in Stockholm popularly known as the UN Conference on the environment – the **first** big world leaders discussed the human impact on the environment and how it affects economic development.

The objective of this gathering was to find a common outlook and common principles to inspire and guide the world's population to preserve the “human environment”.

Bitter truth is almost half a century later, grave issues still persist and world leaders are still looking for the solution.

PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY: THE THREE PILLARS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability is made up of three pillars: *the economy, society, and the environment*. These principles can also informally be interpreted as profit, people and planet.

John Elkington, author of *Cannibals with forks* was one of the first people to integrate these 3 principles. He argued companies should start considering this *triple bottom line* so that they could thrive in the long run (more info about the triple bottom line in our article: sustainable development).

Also known as the **grandfather of sustainability**, Elkington's most recent book *Greens Swans: Regenerative Capitalism* addresses precisely the need to re-design businesses, economy, opportunities.

In his recent work, he has emphasized upon the company's reputation and profits are at stake when they focus on short term profits; then and there consumers and citizens are unsatisfied with the long-term damage ; both in terms of unequal distribution of wealth and on the environment. This fact compels companies to undertake various Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

The rationale for study is that citizens contribute to transformation at grassroot level. Heads of the Government may be engaged in policy making, but if it is only on paper and not in practice, efforts of the policymakers goes in vain. At the young age of 15 to mid age of 40, usually an individual who is a citizen as well as consumer develops habit and lifestyle which goes on till the end of life. Hence questionnaire is prepared to seek awareness level amongst consumers pertaining to Sustainable Development. Income of an individual may have a role in framing his outlook towards environment and natural resource consumption. The study aims at identifying the awareness level or the human conscience towards environment and the role of income in developing in inculcating the attitude of sustainable development

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Based on the background information imparted, following are the objectives for the study:

- To find the awareness level amongst the consumers regarding environment
- To study the association between Income Level of individuals and the conscious buying behavior.
- To study the awareness level of consumers as per the age group.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H₀ 1: There is a significant relationship between age and environmental conscience.

H₁ 1: There is no significant relationship between age and environmental conscience.

H₀ 2: There is a significant association between Income Level of individuals and the conscious buying behavior.

H₁ 2: There is no significant association between Income Level of individuals and the Nature of products purchased by them using retail websites.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The total population for the study is collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data is primarily collected through a well-structured and well-designed questionnaire which aims at collecting primary information about the awareness level amongst consumers, their environmental conscience and buying behavior considering environmental conscience.

The questionnaire has a total of 10 questions. The questionnaire was close ended and used the five-point scale ranging from 1 (Highly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Highly Agree). The questionnaire was circulated to the people at large. The study used purposive sampling technique. The responses were collected online with the use of google forms.

The secondary data for this study is collected from various free and open sources including researches, Articles and Reports.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The sample size of the present study is limited in its nature, which puts a limitation on the generalization of results of the study.
- Sample is selected using purposive sampling technique which poses a limitation of this study.

Age	Column Labels			
Row Labels	You purchase cautiously (thinking environmental concern)	You purchase recklessly(without thinking about environmental concern)	You purchase sometimes thinking about environmental and sometimes Not thinking about environment	Grand Total
15-18	6		19	25
19-22	7	1	10	18
35-38	1			1
38 and above	1	1	2	4
Grand Total	15	2	30	48

Table 1: Impact on buying behaviour according to age.

There is NO relationship between the environmental conscience and age of respondents.

Row Labels	15001 to 20000	20001 to 30000	40001 to 50000	5001 to 15000	Above 50,000	Less than 5,000	Grand Total
You purchase cautiously (thinking environmental concern)		1	1	1	2	10	15
You purchase recklessly(without thinking about environmental concern)			1		1	1	3
You purchase sometimes thinking about environmental and sometimes Not thinking about environment	1	5		1	1	22	30
Grand Total	1	6	2	2	4	33	48

Table 2: Impact on buying behavior according to income level of respondents.

There is NO relationship between the environmental conscience and income level of respondents.

CONCLUSION

Humankind should get to a point where at least the minimum HDI is achieved and live below the maximum ecological footprint per capita. An ecological footprint represents the maximum limit of consumption per person according to Earth's ecological capacity. Living below it wouldn't compromise the future generations, as the planet would be able to regenerate itself

Agencies and authorities all around the world, with global communities coming together and brainstorming the methods of managing the issue of Climate Change. India also pledged that it would achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2070.

To accomplish this Indian Government legislature has implemented many policies to adopt a more sustainable way of business and promote a Circular Economy, one of them being Environment, Social, and Governance (ESG) Reporting, where companies are encouraged to look for alternative methods to the traditional finance-centric model.

India, home to one-sixth of all humanity, holds the key to the success of the 2030 Agenda. India in its second VNR has made a paradigm shift to a "whole-of-society" approach with Government of India engaging sub-national and local governments, civil society organizations, local communities, people in vulnerable situations and the private sector.

India's commitment to the SDGs is reflected in its convergence with the national development agenda as reflected in the motto of Sabka Saath Sabka Vikaas (Collective Efforts for Inclusive Growth). Based on the evidence from the SDG India Index, which measures progress at the subnational level, the country has developed a robust SDG localization model centered on adoption, implementation and monitoring at the State and district levels.

The following narrative further encapsulates India's progress across the SDGs.

Corporates and consumers must work hand in hand to bring sustainable development. If consumers act as a check on the products offered by the companies, then may also be more cautious on use, process, ingredients and disposal of products or services. Swachh Bharat Mission is a perfect example that micro level reform leads to macro level progress. Each and every citizen or individual contributed his bit towards the environment leading to clean city and finally achieving the goal of 'Clean India'.

Same simulation can be developed for the 'Sustainable Development'

If all practice and preach, the destination of Sustainable Development can easily be reached.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10668-021-02059-8#citeas>
- <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/india>
- <https://www.undp.org/blog/critical-connection-between-human-rights-and-our-natural-world>
- <https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/governance/india-to-fully-achieve-sustainable-development-goals-by-2030-sanyukta-samaddar-adviser-sdg-niti-aayog/90162009>
- <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>