

## A STUDY ON AWARENESS, ATTITUDE AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF GEN Z

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### ABSTRACT

The United Nations established Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the year 2015 aiming to motivate developed and developing nations to share blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. The 12th Sustainable development goal is “responsible consumption and production”. The consumption decisions made everyday by individuals has to be guided by sustainable means and knowledge of sustainable options. One of the simplest ways of being an environmentally conscious individual is to make sustainable buying decisions which is influence by the awareness, the intention of making a change, product knowledge, willingness to spend on sustainable options which all form the attitude of an individual. The present study aims to study the interrelationships of all the said variables using primary data which will be analyses using chi square test. The study focuses on the upcoming generation of individuals who are getting newer purchasing power and unlike the millennials – who came of age during the Great Recession – this new generation was in line to inherit a strong economy with record-low unemployment. The perception, attitude and buying behaviour of Gen Z hence becomes very significant to determine the overall consumption of sustainable products in the years to come.

The idea of sustainability has been gaining importance and momentum in the recent years with the shifts in the perception and exposure generations after generations. The generation of the times is Gen Z which is expected to change the overall consumer attitude and behaviour to a great extent especially in the context of sustainability. The present study aims to understand the perception, attitude and buying behaviour of Gen Z with respect to sustainable options.

**Keywords:** Sustainability, Consumer behaviour, Attitude, Decision making, Gen Z

### INTRODUCTION

The World Environment Forum has recognised in one of the surveys that three out of five long-term risks for the world are environment related. The alarming statistics published in every other report on environment raises the question on sustainability adoption. The need of an hour is that every institution and individual gravitate towards sustainable options and lifestyle choices. The ideas of sustainability range from the very basics of re-use, reduce, recycle to making the environmentally conscious choice and decision while buying new products. The awareness towards sustainable concepts have increased in the recent years and has also been accompanied by increase in the number of consumers now willing to bring sustainable behavioural changes which guides their buying intention. However, narrowing of the “intention-action gap” is important not just for meeting 2030 sustainability goals of United Nations but also for the planet at large.

The consumers in today's era are much more in control of their shopping experience, and they know they can dictate the shopping. With the shifts in the demographics, as the younger generations start gaining more spending power, the overall consumer behaviour is also expected to change favourably towards sustainable options. Gen Z are the major segment of the near future consumer base who will slowly get better purchasing power and therefore studying and understanding their perception towards the need of these times is indispensable. All the individuals born between 1997 to 2012 are referred as Zoomers or more popularly Gen Z.

The dying need for a developing country like India who has to pace up its efforts in meeting the SDGs by the year 2030 is to study the future consumer generation, i.e. the Gen Z in their consumer approaches and mould them positively towards meeting of SDGs and making better sustainable benchmarks as a country.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Some studies have suggested influence of global culture and lifestyle on Indian consumers buying behaviour (Eckhardt and Mahi, 2004). Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is widely used attitude model for examining relationships between personal, social norms, and beliefs of individuals with their green buying (Kalafatis et al., 1999; Kim and Chung, 2011; Ahn et al., 2012). Kalafatis et al. (1999) applied TPB to understand the influence of social and personal norms, referent beliefs, outcome beliefs, and perceived behavioural control on intention

to buy green products. They reported relevance of social influence and norms in predicting Greek and British consumers' willingness and intention to purchase environment-friendly products. In another research, Chan and Lau (2002) applied TPB to compare environmental consciousness among American and Chinese consumers. They reported that subjective norm, group conformance, and perceived behavioural control influenced environmentally friendly behaviour of Chinese. American consumers placed importance to salient attitudinal beliefs like "saving resources" and "high prices". Green purchase intention translated into purchase behaviour more in case of American sample, while adherence to social norms was important for Chinese consumers. Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is widely used attitude model for examining relationships between personal, social norms, and beliefs of individuals with their green buying (Kalafatis et al., 1999; Kim and Chung, 2011; Ahn et al., 2012). Kalafatis et al. (1999) applied TPB to understand the influence of social and personal norms, referent beliefs, outcome beliefs, and perceived behavioural control on intention to buy green products. They reported relevance of social influence and norms in predicting Greek and British consumers' willingness and intention to purchase environment-friendly products. In another research, Chan and Lau (2002) applied TPB to compare environmental consciousness among American and Chinese consumers. They reported that subjective norm, group conformance, and perceived behavioural control influenced environmentally friendly behaviour of Chinese. American consumers' placed importance to salient attitudinal beliefs like "saving resources" and "high prices". Green purchase intention translated into purchase behaviour more in case of American sample, while adherence to social norms was important for Chinese consumers.

### Rationale of Study

The generation of the times and the future is Gen Z which has a current population of 47.2 crore in India however have never Gen Zs been on the receiving end of the importance that the millennials got. The study is of utmost relevance because sustainability is the need of an hour as validated by the United National in its one of the 17 sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030.

### Research Objectives

- To understand the general environmental consciousness among individuals of Gen Z.
- To study the current sustainable perception of Gen Z males and females.
- To study the influence of \_\_\_\_\_ on the buying behaviour of Gen Z.
- To study the current purchase intuition and purchase decision making of Gen Z towards sustainable options.
- To study factors affecting buying decisions of Gen Z with respect to sustainable products.

### Research Hypothesis

**H<sub>1</sub> 1-** Majority of the Gen Z individuals are Environmental Conscious.

**H<sub>0</sub> 1-** Majority of the Gen Z individuals are not Environmental Conscious.

**H<sub>1</sub> 2-** There is a significant relationship between Environmental Consciousness and Gender of individuals belonging to Gen Z.

**H<sub>0</sub> 2-** There is no significant relationship between Environmental Consciousness and Gender of individuals belonging to Gen Z.

**H<sub>1</sub> 3-** Social factors have a significant impact on the sustainable buying decisions of individuals.

**H<sub>0</sub> 3-** Social factors have no significant impact on the sustainable buying decisions of individuals.

**H<sub>1</sub> 4-** There is a significant relationship between Environmental Consciousness and Frequency of sustainable buying decisions made by Gen Z individuals.

**H<sub>0</sub> 4-** There is no significant relationship between Environmental Consciousness and Frequency of sustainable buying decisions made by Gen Z individuals.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The study is the combined constructive result of primary and secondary data sources. The primary data is collected using a well-designed, close-ended questionnaire which aims at collecting information about the Environmental consciousness of Gen Z, Socio-Economics factors influence of the sustainable perception and behaviour of Gen Z and the factors affecting buying behaviour. The questionnaire has a total of 16 questions. Primary questions in questionnaire used Likert five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire was circulated to the Gen Z individuals pursuing undergraduate courses of Navi Mumbai. The study used purposive sampling technique to collect responses of 116 Gen Z individuals. The responses were collected online with the use of google forms.

The study has been analysed using various tools of descriptive statistics including Averages, Percentages, Mean, Standard Deviation along with the inferential tool -Chi Square Test. The data's reliability was validated using Cronbach's Alpha. The data has been presented using Bar diagrams, Pie Charts and Tables. The researcher has used Excel for the analysis of data.

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

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The collection and selection of sample for the study has its methodological limitations as the researcher relied on the use of purpose sampling technique and have collected a sample of 116 Gen Z individuals which restricts the scope of successful generalisation of the results.
- The study had been restricted to the conditions and population of gen Z individuals of the semi-urban region of Navi Mumbai, India.
- The demographic profile of the samples of the study were restricted to the undergraduate students of Navi Mumbai which is one of the significant segments of Gen Z however this provides scope of future studies to be advanced to covering other demographic profiles of Gen Z individuals
- The research analysis heavily depends on the use of Descriptive Statistics, Cronbach's Alpha and Chi Square Test.

### Analysis of Data

The data collected by using the questionnaire was checked for its reliability for further statistical analysis and study using the Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach Alpha value for the Environmental Consciousness was achieved as 0.753566024 which validates the reliability of data collected for the study.

The understanding of Environmental Consciousness is detailed with a few Likert scale questions being asked to Gen Z individuals which are tabulated as follows.

	I care about the environment	I am familiar with the term "sustainability"	Feeling of being "a better person" with sustainability	Total Average
Strongly Disagree	4.31%	1.72%	2.59%	2.87%
Disagree	1.72%	3.45%	2.59%	2.59%
Neutral	6.90%	8.62%	12.93%	9.48%
Agree	31.90%	36.21%	33.62%	33.91%
Strongly Agree	55.17%	50.00%	48.28%	51.15%

Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
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Majority of 85.06% (51.15+33.91) of the respondents are considered to be highly Environmentally Conscious, followed by 9.48 % of the respondents being fairly neutral in their opinion and only 5.46% (2.87+2.59) not being Environmentally Conscious. The respondents show the mean values for the Likert scale ranging between 4.2 and 4.3 which is highly skewed towards the favourable aspect of being Environmentally Conscious so we accept the alternate hypothesis formed for the study. The standard deviation of 0.99, 0.89 and 0.95 has been observed in the perception of 116 respondents.

**(Table 2) General Environmental Consciousness**

	<b>I care about the environment</b>	<b>I am familiar with the term "sustainability"</b>	<b>Feeling of being "a better person" with sustainability</b>
N	116	116	116
Mean	4.318966	4.293103	4.224138
Standard Deviation	0.992135	0.894595	0.95176

The study further aimed to analyse the impact of gender on being Environmentally conscious with its second hypothesis. The set of questions which aimed at understanding the perspective towards general environment and the self-declaration of Gen Z being environmentally conscious consumers are tabulated as follows.

**(Table 3) Observed Frequencies of Environmental Consciousness on the basis of gender**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Female</b>	2	7	32	29	12	82
<b>Male</b>	0	1	10	16	7	34
<b>Total</b>	2	8	42	45	19	116

**(Table 4) Expected Frequencies of Environmental Consciousness on the basis of gender**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Female</b>	1.413793	5.6551724	29.6897	31.8103	13.431	82
<b>Male</b>	0.586207	2.3448276	12.3103	13.1897	5.56897	34
<b>Total</b>	2	8	42	45	19	116

The above details were used to run the Chi Square Test which showed the P value of 0.419564. Since the P value for the Chi Square Test of 0.419564 > 0.05, Null Hypothesis is accepted. This statistically proves there is no significant difference between the gender on being environmentally conscious individuals. Environmental Consciousness is rather gender-indifferent among Gen Z individuals.

The study progressed to understand the impact of social norms on the purchase intention and buying decision of Gen Z. Chi Square test was used for the analysis of the said variables.

**(Table 5) Observed Frequencies of social norms and sustainable purchase intention**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	0	5	25	17	13	60
<b>Neutral</b>	1	3	11	10	6	31
<b>Agree</b>	1	0	7	9	8	25
<b>Total</b>	2	8	43	36	27	116

**(Table 6) Observed Frequencies of social norms and sustainable buying decision**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Yes</b>	0	0	3	3	4	10

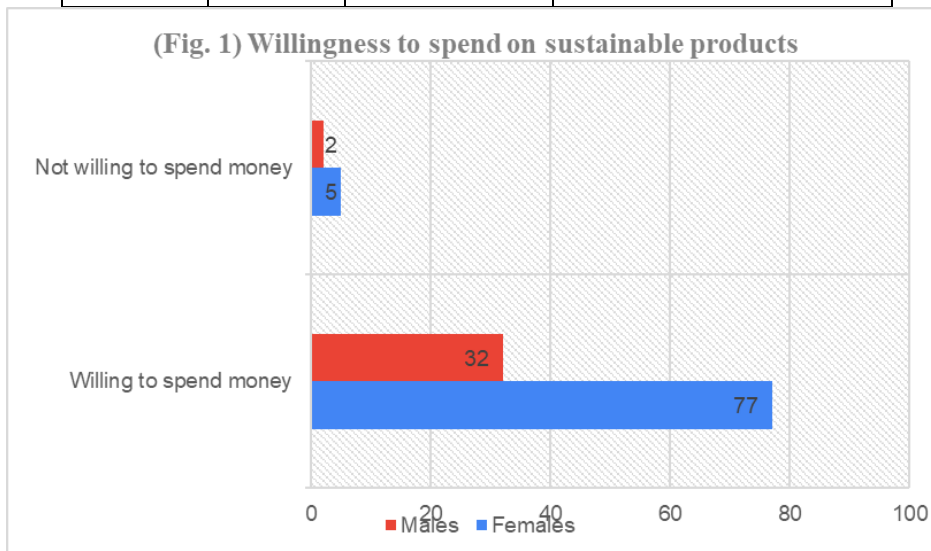
No	33	28	28	10	7	106
Total	33	28	31	13	11	116

The chi square test for the impact of social norms on purchase intention showed a p value of 0.557942 which accepts the null hypothesis. However, there is a significant relationship between the influence of social factors and sustainable buying decisions made (second hand clothes). The alternate hypothesis is accepted here since the p value for the performed Chi square test is 0.000501 < 0.05.

The next hypothesis of the study aimed to study the relationship between environmentally consciousness and frequency of sustainable buying decisions made by gen Z individuals. The Chi Square test was applied on the averaged scale values and the frequency of purchase which ranged from Always (80% to 100% of the times), Mostly (50% to 79% of the times) and Often (20% to 49% of the times).

**(Table 7) Gender-wise willingness to spend on sustainable options**

	Willing	Not willing	Total
Females	77	5	82
Males	32	2	34
Total	109	7	116

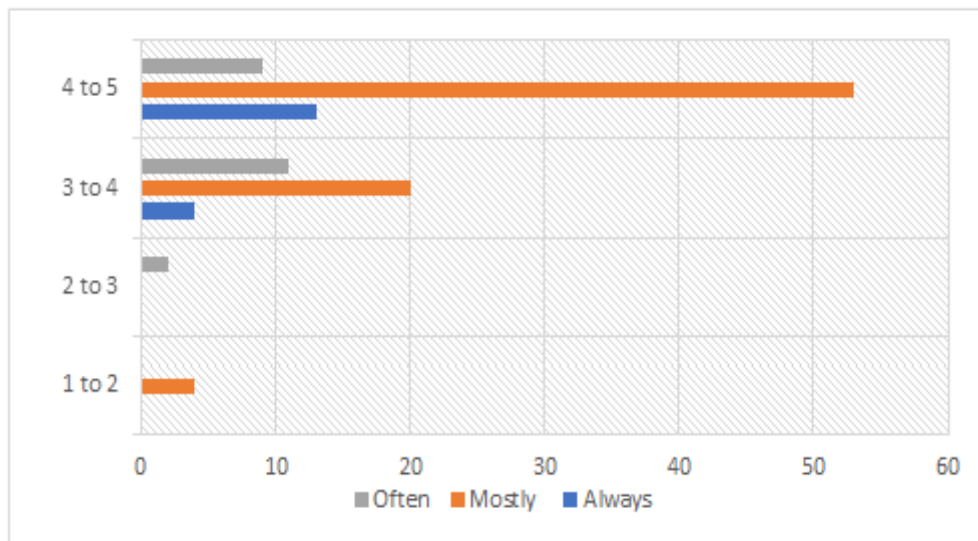


A total of 92.06% of the respondents are willing and open to spending money on sustainable buying options. Out of the total Male participants, 94.11765 % (32 out of 34) and out of the total women participants, 93.90244% (77 out of 82) are willing to spend money on sustainable options. The chi square value for the willing to spend on the basis of gender has the P value of 0.86 being more than 0.05 proves that gender has no significance with individual’s willingness to spend money on sustainable options.

**(Table 8) Environmental Consciousness and Frequency of Buying**

Averaged scale values	Frequency of buying			
	Always	Mostly	Often	Total
1 to 2	0	4	0	4
2 to 3	0	0	2	2
3 to 4	4	20	11	35
4 to 5	13	53	9	75
Total	17	77	22	116

**(Fig 2) Environmental Consciousness and Frequency of Buying**

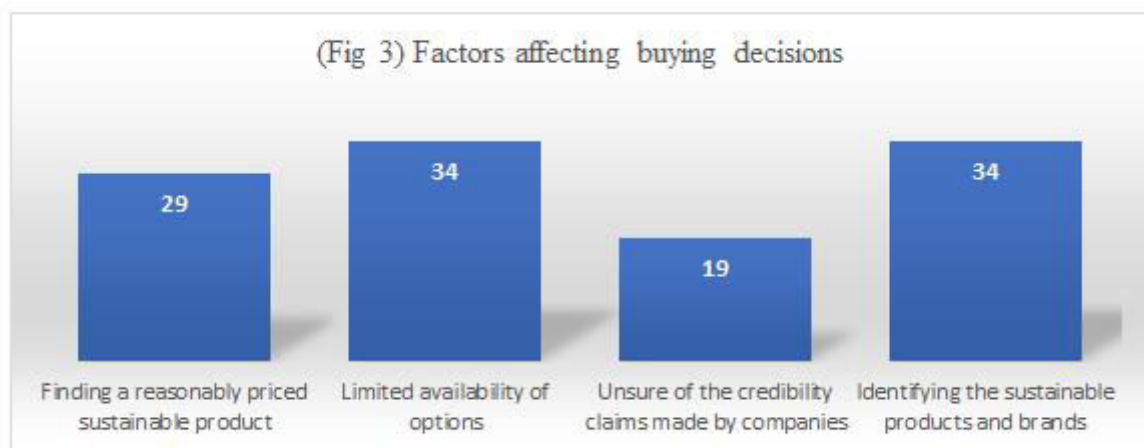


The P value for Chi Test is 0.010744 which is less than 0.05. The chi square test accepts the alternate hypothesis which proves a significant relationship between environmental consciousness of individuals and the frequency of sustainable decisions made by the individuals.

The gap between the conscious generation and their buying decision are a list of factors which pose as a barrier and thereby demotivate the conscious generation from not having a satisfactory experience in decision making while buying the sustainable options. The factors which affect the buying decisions include a wide range of limitations which are tabulated in the following table 9 and fig.3.

**(Table 9) Factors affecting buying decisions**

Factors	Frequency
Finding a reasonably priced sustainable product	29
Limited availability of options	34
Unsure of the credibility claims made by companies	19
Identifying the sustainable products and brands	34



**CONCLUSION**

The Gen Z are the first generation to be digital natives as a world without the internet, mobility and apps, and social networks is not something they have ever experienced. The study understands that majority of 85.06 % Gen Z (respondents) are environmentally conscious individuals. There is a usually misconception

about women being more environmentally conscious than men, however the current study significantly proved that environmental consciousness is gender-indifferent. The social norms play a very significant role in guiding consumer behaviour and in case of the sustainable buying options, there was no significant relationship between social norms and purchase attitude however there was a significant relationship between social norms and buying decisions made by Gen Z. The research also reveals that Gen Zers have a favourable attitude to responsible retailers that conduct themselves according to sustainable principles not only in marketing, but also in producing green products. 92.06% forming a vast majority of Gen Zers are willing to spend money on products which are either environment friendly or are associated to a sustainable cause. The willingness to spend is marginally higher in men than women. The Environmental consciousness directly and significantly impact the buying behaviour of Gen Z however consumers often have negative associations with sustainable product options, viewing them as being of lower quality, less aesthetically pleasing, and more expensive. Future research could make a comparative analysis of the sustainable behaviour and attitude of other consumer generations when buying different categories of products. The studies in the future could also be done in regions with different demographics.

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