

# Eco-Conscious & Conventional Consumers: Insights from an Emerging Indian Market

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**Abstract-** *Eco-conscious consumer segments have grown as a result of the increased worldwide focus on sustainability, but traditional consumers who value convenience and affordability more than environmental concerns still control a sizable share of the market. Within the framework of a developing Indian market, this conceptual paper investigates the behavioral and attitudinal differences between eco-conscious and conventional consumers. In order to create an integrated framework that captures the incentives, obstacles, and conversion levers impacting green purchasing intentions, it synthesizes the body of existing literature by drawing on well-known theories, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Consumption Values. Social norms, price sensitivity, trust and greenwashing, awareness and knowledge, and the well-established attitude-behavior gap are among the major subjects examined. The study highlights important knowledge gaps about the factors that can influence traditional consumers to adopt eco-friendly practices, especially in non-metropolitan Indian settings. For marketers and politicians looking to promote sustainable consumption, the suggested conceptual framework provides a sophisticated segmentation of consumer types and identifies key points of action. This study adds to the expanding conversation on sustainable consumer behavior and offers practical suggestions for future empirical research by linking theoretical insights with new market realities.*

**Index Terms-** *Eco-Conscious Consumerism, Conventional Consumers, Green Purchase Intention, Sustainable Consumption, Emerging Indian Markets.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Growing environmental issues including pollution, resource depletion, and climate change have in recent years brought to a previously unheard-of global focus on sustainable consumerism. Consumer decisions have a big influence on environmental sustainability, and changing consumer behavior to buy more sustainably is essential to reaching global sustainability targets, according to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2022). According to research conducted internationally, the eco-conscious consumer group has grown quickly; over 70% of consumers worldwide take sustainability into account when making purchases (Nielsen, 2019). Nevertheless, a sizable percentage of customers globally continue to act conventionally in spite of growing awareness, giving price, convenience, and brand familiarity precedence over environmental factors (Euromonitor International, 2023).

In the national context, India exhibits a distinct dichotomy. Although a growing middle class has become more environmentally conscious due to factors including urbanization, rising salaries, and internet connectivity, conventional consumers continue to be prevalent due to financial limitations and deeply rooted purchase patterns. Only 20% of Indian customers regularly buy sustainable products, despite over 55% expressing interest in them, according to a poll conducted by the Centre for Responsible Business in 2021. This highlights the ongoing attitude-behavior divide. Price sensitivity is still the biggest obstacle to green consumption in India, according to market research by Nielsen (2020). This is particularly true in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, where 65% of customers still choose conventional products because of budget issues.

Concerns about pollution and waste management are causing environmental awareness to progressively rise in Tamil Nadu, particularly in Coimbatore, a city noted for its industrial and textile hub (Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board Report, 2023). Detailed consumer research, however, shows that traditional customers, who place a higher value on product availability and cost-effectiveness, continue to dominate the market. According to a recent study by Ramesh and Priya (2024), just 15% of urban customers in Coimbatore report regularly purchasing eco-friendly products, despite 40% of them being aware of them. This is mostly due to restricted product availability and low confidence in green claims. According to Kumar et al. (2023), rural consumers in the area are typically even more price-driven and show less interest in sustainability issues. Because of this, there is a strong need to comprehend the subtle distinctions between eco-conscious and traditional consumers in developing nations like India, especially in local marketplaces like Coimbatore. There is a knowledge gap regarding consumer segmentation, incentives, and impediments at the nexus of economic development and environmental consciousness because the majority of the work currently in publication concentrates on urban and global environments. It is essential to comprehend these differences in order to create marketing campaigns and legislative initiatives that effectively encourage sustainable consumption.

Using insights from the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), this research takes a conceptual approach to investigate these differences in the context of the developing Indian market. In order to comprehend how attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and different consumption values—functional, emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic—influence green purchasing behavior, these theoretical frameworks provide strong lenses.

In addition to describing these consumer groups, this study aims to pinpoint the factors that influence the shift from traditional to environmentally friendly consumption. Issues like the attitude-behavior gap, trust deficiencies brought on by greenwashing worries, and the intricate relationship between social norms and financial restrictions in rural and non-

metropolitan Indian contexts are given special consideration.

This study attempts to offer practical insights for marketers and politicians who are working to promote sustainable consumption habits by putting forth an integrated conceptual framework. The framework identifies important intervention sites for awareness-raising, incentive schemes, and communication tactics in addition to outlining consumer segmentation based on environmental attitudes. In the end, this viewpoint identifies areas for further empirical investigation while adding to the expanding body of knowledge in academia and industry regarding sustainability marketing in emerging markets.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As environmental concerns grow around the world, sustainable consumerism has drawn more scholarly attention. Well-known theories like the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), which have been widely applied to examine green buying intentions and behaviors across a variety of markets, are essential to comprehending consumer behavior in this area.

### 2.1 Theory of Planned Behavior and Green Purchase Intention

Kalafatis et al. (1999) established TPB's robustness in explaining customer intentions to buy environmentally friendly products in the UK and Greek markets, emphasizing the significance of attitudes and perceived behavioral control. This paradigm has been expanded in later research by adding concepts like trust, willingness to pay more, and green consciousness (Patel & Vaghela, 2018). Paul, Modi, and Patel (2015) tested an extended TPB model in the Indian context and discovered that, although subjective standards had a smaller impact, attitude and perceived behavioral control were important predictors of green purchasing intention. In a similar vein, Verma and Chandra (2018) discovered that moral reflectiveness improves TPB's ability to predict young Indian consumers' intentions to visit green hotels.

## 2.2 Cognitive and Emotional Drivers of Green Purchasing

According to Jaiswal and Kant (2018), two important cognitive factors influencing Indian consumers' intentions to make green purchases are perceived consumer efficacy and environmental concern. Mishal et al. (2016) also emphasized the connection between green purchasing practices and environmental consciousness, pointing out that real-world obstacles like price, availability, and brand reputation frequently make it difficult to turn intentions into actual purchases. The well-known attitude-behavior gap, a recurring problem in sustainability research, is supported by this discovery, which shows that customers' favorable sentiments do not always translate into green purchasing practices.

## 2.3 Barriers and Market Realities in Emerging Economies

In developing countries like India, concerns about affordability and trust influence consumer opinions. Price sensitivity is a significant deterrent to green consumption, particularly in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, according to Nielsen (2020). In the FMCG industry, Reddy et al. (2023) found that consumers are highly aware of green marketing; nevertheless, they also discovered that trust deficits, especially as a result of greenwashing, erode purchase commitments. Regional studies, like those conducted in Coimbatore by Ramesh and Priya (2024), show that while rural consumers continue to be primarily price-driven and show little interest in sustainability, urban consumers' eco-conscious purchasing is further suppressed by limited product availability and skepticism about green claims.

## 2.4 Consumer Segmentation and Values

The Theory of Consumption Values provides a multidimensional view of buy incentives, including functional (price, quality), emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic values (Sheth, Newman, and Gross, 1991). According to Niedermeier et al. (2020), focused marketing can more effectively meet the varied needs of consumers. They did this by segmenting German consumers of green FMCG

based on perceived consumer efficacy and trust. For emerging economies, where growing environmental consciousness and economic limits coincide and necessitate sophisticated methods to consumer interaction, this kind of segmentation is essential.

## 2.5 Willingness to Pay and Cultural Factors

The willingness to pay (WTP) for sustainable products varies by area and demographic characteristics, according to meta-analytical research (Li & Kallas, 2021). Asian consumers have a comparatively high WTP. According to Huang et al. (2022), cultural factors also affect attitudes and actions related to the environment, meaning that culturally sensitive interventions are necessary for success in markets such as India.

## 2.6 Marketing and Policy Implications

Chen et al. (2023) stressed that by regulating elements and mediating customer values, green marketing has a favorable impact on eco-conscious behavior. Retailers and legislators may use these findings to create incentives and campaigns that lower barriers and foster trust, which will help turn traditional consumers into environmentally concerned ones. This synthesis demonstrates that although attitudes, awareness, and perceived control are consistently identified by both international and Indian research as the primary drivers of eco-conscious consumption, there are still major gaps in the treatment of availability, affordability, and trust barriers, particularly in non-metropolitan and rural contexts. By emphasizing these gaps and combining the TPB and TCV frameworks, your research advances our knowledge of consumer segmentation and conversion levers in developing Indian markets such as Coimbatore.

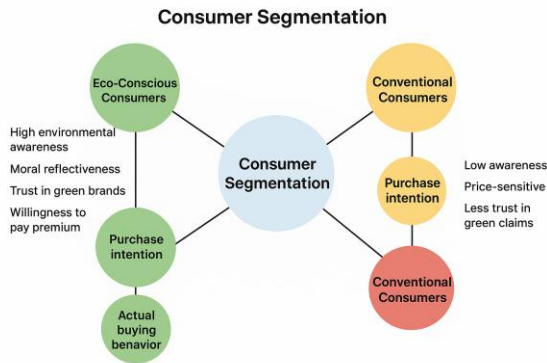


Figure 1. Consumer Segmentation of Eco-Conscious and Conventional Consumers

Figure 1 including environmental awareness, trust in green businesses, cost sensitivity, and purchase intention. This diagram depicts two primary customer segments: eco-conscious and conventional, as well as a middle-sized group of conventional consumers who are only slightly interested.

Source: Based on the results of a literature review (Author's compilation, 2025).

### III. RESEARCH GAP

The worldwide conversation on sustainable consumption has accelerated, but most of the research that has been done so far has focused on industrialized, urban, or Western markets, leaving emerging economies especially India's regional markets understudied. The usefulness of the Theory of Planned Behavior and its expansions in forecasting green purchase intentions has been confirmed by studies like Kalafatis et al. (1999) and Patel & Vaghela (2018), although primarily in developed or urban settings.

Empirical studies conducted in India have demonstrated the significance of environmental attitudes and consciousness in promoting green purchases (Jaiswal & Kant, 2018; Mishal et al., 2016). However, the real adoption of eco-friendly products is still hampered by important obstacles like price sensitivity, limited product availability, and trust issues—particularly greenwashing—especially outside of large urban areas (Nielsen, 2020; Ramesh & Priya, 2024). In the regional context of India, these

findings reveal a persisting attitude-behavior gap that is difficult for current models to adequately explain or close.

Additionally, there is no study on the behavioral segmentation of Indian consumers, particularly between eco-conscious and non-eco-conscious groups, whereas segmentation studies in developed markets (Niedermeier et al., 2020) establish consumer clusters based on values and trust. Not enough attention has been paid to how social norms, affordability, and trust shape these markets and how focused marketing tactics might affect consumers' shift from traditional to environmentally friendly purchase. Furthermore, India's cultural and regional diversity implies that the barriers and motives of consumers are not uniform. The complexity of rising market consumers in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities, where increased environmental consciousness coexists with economic restraints, is rarely captured by studies. In industrial centers like Coimbatore, where environmental issues are severe but consumer acceptance of sustainable products is low, this disparity is particularly relevant. In order to better understand and impact green consumer behavior in developing Indian markets, this study attempts to close these important gaps by offering a sophisticated behavioral segmentation and an integrated conceptual framework that takes affordability, awareness, trust, and social influence into account.

### IV. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To compare brand preferences and purchasing motivations between environmentally conscious and non-eco-conscious consumers.
2. To evaluate the ways in which trust, cost, and awareness affect their purchasing choices.
3. To investigate the way focused marketing might help non-eco-conscious people become eco-conscious shoppers.
4. To provide a conceptual framework that will help legislators and marketers encourage sustainable consumption.

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), two well-known behavioral theories, are integrated in this study to provide a thorough understanding of the behavioral intentions, obstacles, and motivations of both eco-conscious and non-eco-conscious consumers in a developing Indian market.

A strong basis for analyzing how consumer attitudes, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control affect the desire to buy environmentally friendly items is provided by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Subjective norms capture the social pressures influencing behavior, attitudes show how positively people view sustainable consumption, and perceived behavioral control shows how consumers believe they can make green purchases in spite of limitations like availability or cost.

The Theory of Consumption Values (TCV), which complements TPB, improves the research by proposing five important value aspects that influence consumer choice:

- Functional value, such as cost, quality, and ease of use
- Emotional value (reactions or sentiments)
- Social value (status or social approval)
- Conditional value (contextual elements like availability or discounts)
- Epistemic value (curiosity or the demand for novelty)
- Together, these frameworks allow for a sophisticated segmentation of consumers based on their environmental views and consumption ideals, demonstrating why some consumers actively select sustainable items while others remain traditional shoppers who prioritize cost and convenience.

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and consumption values are integrated in the conceptual framework (Figure 1) to explain the distinctions between eco-conscious and conventional consumers in emerging countries. It postulates that affordability, awareness, and trust serve as important moderators that affect how strongly consumption values and TPB

constructs—attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control—influence intentions to make green purchases. The attitude-behavior gap widens for conventional consumers because of obstacles like price sensitivity, limited product availability, and distrust brought on by greenwashing. On the other hand, eco-consciousness, moral reflection, and faith in green marketing strategies have a greater impact on eco-conscious consumers. The framework also suggests that specific marketing interventions, such as affordability tactics, open communication, and accessibility improvements, can improve perceived behavioral control, match sustainable preferences with consumption values, and turn conventional consumers into environmentally conscious adopters. Overall, the theoretical foundations for behavioral segmentation and the development of strategic interventions targeted at promoting sustainable consumption patterns in settings like India's rural-urban markets are provided by this integrated model.

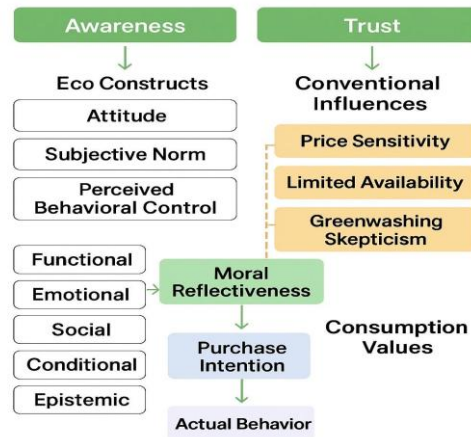


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework: Eco-Conscious vs Conventional Consumers

Source: Author's own compilation based on the Theory of Planned Behavior and Theory of Consumption Values

VI. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY APPROACH

A quantitative research design will be used to empirically validate the conceptual framework and hypotheses put out in this study, with a particular focus on the urban and rural consumers of

Coimbatore, a significant rising market in Tamil Nadu, India.

6.1 Research Design: To identify the behavioral differences between eco-conscious and non-eco-conscious segments, a cross-sectional survey of consumers in Coimbatore's urban and rural areas will be carried out.

6.2 Sampling: With equal representation from Coimbatore's metropolitan areas (300 respondents) and rural blocks (300 respondents), a total sample size of 600 respondents will be the goal. Using stratified sampling will guarantee that both traditional and environmentally conscious consumers are fairly represented. In order to create a Green Consumer Index, screening questions will categorize respondents according to their shopping habits and environmental opinions.

6.3 Data Collection Tool: A systematic questionnaire will be created using validated measures from the Theory of Consumption Values (functional, emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic values) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control). In the context of Coimbatore, other items will gauge awareness, trust, affordability, and intentions to make green purchases.

6.4 Data Analysis: To examine differences between customer groups, statistical procedures including ANOVA and t-tests will be used. In order to forecast environmentally conscious purchasing behavior, logistic regression and structural equation modeling (SEM) will be used to examine the connections between important structures. Analyses of moderation and mediation will examine how awareness, affordability, and trust affect behavior.

6.5 Ethical Considerations: In compliance with ethical research guidelines, the study will guarantee respondents' confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent. This specific methodology will provide rigorous insights into customer segmentation, purchasing motivations, and conversion levers in the Coimbatore market, supporting targeted marketing and policy initiatives.

## VII. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS

This study makes a number of significant contributions to the subject of sustainable consumer behavior, especially in Coimbatore and other growing Indian markets:

7.1 Theoretical advancement :By merging the Theory of Planned Behavior with the Theory of Consumption Values, the study develops a complete conceptual framework that encompasses the complex motivations, impediments, and behavioral intents of both eco-conscious and conventional customers. This contributes to current theoretical models by taking into account emerging market-specific contextual elements.

7.2 Behavioral Segmentation: To differentiate eco-conscious from non-eco-conscious groups, the study offers a sophisticated segmentation of customers based on environmental attitudes and consumption values. By highlighting particular motivators and obstacles for each section, this segmentation enhances comprehension of consumer diversity.

7.3 Practical Marketing Insights: The study provides marketers with practical advice on how to create focused strategies that can successfully turn traditional consumers into environmentally conscious buyers by identifying important aspects like awareness, affordability, and trust as crucial levers for behavior change.

7.4 Policy Implications: The study identifies areas in which policymakers might step in, especially in regional emerging markets, to promote sustainable consumption and close the attitude-behavior gap through awareness campaigns, incentive schemes, and regulatory actions.

7.5 Regional Relevance: By concentrating on Coimbatore, a major industrial city with particular environmental issues, the study closes a substantial vacuum in localized consumer behavior research and offers insights that can be applied to other emerging market contexts.

## VIII. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Building on the conceptual framework developed in this study, future empirical research is needed to deepen understanding of eco-conscious versus conventional consumer behavior in emerging markets. Key avenues for future investigation include:

**8.1 Empirical Validation in Coimbatore District:**To test the suggested framework and hypotheses, conduct both qualitative and quantitative research among Coimbatore district's urban and rural consumers. Localized insights into the elements impacting sustainable purchasing behavior will result from this.

**8.2 Behavioral Segmentation and Profiling:** Investigate in-depth customer segmentation utilizing sophisticated statistical methods like structural equation modeling and cluster analysis to distinguish between eco-conscious and non-eco-conscious consumer profiles, as well as their particular drivers and obstacles.

**8.3 Marketing Intervention Studies:** Create and evaluate specialized marketing techniques, such as awareness campaigns, pricing incentives, and trust-building measures, to determine their efficacy in converting conventional consumers into eco-conscious buyers.

**8.4 Cross-Regional Comparative Studies:** To understand regional variances and adjust interventions appropriately, compare consumer behavior and green purchase intentions across various emerging markets or districts within India.

**8.5 Inclusion of Additional Variables:** Examine how cultural, sociological, and technological elements like the influence of digital media and the perception of greenwashing affect sustainable consumption practices in the setting of Coimbatore.

**8.6 Longitudinal Studies:** Using longitudinal research designs to monitor how customer views and actions change over time, especially as market options and environmental awareness change. Future studies that

focus on these areas can offer useful information to companies and decision-makers who want to encourage environmentally friendly consumption in developing Indian markets.

## CONCLUSION

With an emphasis on the Coimbatore district, this study offers a thorough conceptual framework for comprehending the behavioral distinctions between eco-conscious and traditional consumers in emerging markets. The framework highlights important elements that influence sustainable buying intentions and behaviors, including awareness, affordability, trust, and social influence, by combining the Theory of Planned Behavior and the Theory of Consumption Values.

In addition to highlighting the ongoing attitude-behavior divide, the report addresses important obstacles that traditional consumers face when embracing environmentally friendly items. Additionally, it highlights how focused marketing tactics can encourage sustainable consumption and behavioral change.

In the context of developing Indian markets, this perspective paper fills a significant research gap and offers insightful information to researchers, politicians, and marketers who want to promote the shift to more environmentally friendly consumer behavior. Future empirical research led by this approach will further deepen understanding and promote effective interventions to establish a more sustainable marketplace.

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