

# Study Consumer Attitudes Toward Ethical Branding in Dharwad District

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**Abstract- Introduction:** *This study looks at how people in Dharwad District view the social and environmental work that different brands do. It tries to understand how people find out about these efforts, whether through labels, advertisements, or other ways, and why they might support these brands. It also explores the reasons people buy things, such as caring about health, the environment, or social standing.*

**Objective of study:** *The main goal of this study is to understand how people in Dharwad feel about ethical branding.*

**Research methodology:** *To study how people in Dharwad think about ethical branding, a quantitative method is usually used. The main way to collect data is through surveys with a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire uses a Likert scale, which is a 5-point scale, to find out how much people agree or disagree with different statements.*

**Data Analysis:** *When looking at how people in places like Dharwad think about ethical branding, data analysis shows that even though they care about things like fair labor and eco-friendly actions, when it comes to buying, they usually care more about things like cost, how easy it is to get the product, and how good they think it is.*

**Finding:** *Studies on ethical branding in Karnataka, near Dharwad, show that people generally have a positive view of ethical actions like corporate social responsibility, fair trade, and sustainability.*

**Recommendation:** *For a study on how people in Dharwad feel about brands that act ethically, focus on four main areas: being open and honest (to avoid fake green claims), how much people care about price versus ethics, the influence of younger generations like Gen Z and Millennials, and how relevant local products are.*

**Conclusion:** *Studies about how people in regions like Karnataka, including Dharwad, feel about ethical branding show that although many consumers, especially younger ones, care about ethical practices, factors like cost, how easy it is to buy, and doubts about whether brands are really ethical (called greenwashing) often affect their final decision.*

**Keyword:** *Consumer, Attitudes, Ethical, Branding, Dharwad District*

## I. INTRODUCTION

An introduction to studying consumer attitudes toward ethical branding in Dharwad District explores how local people view the social and environmental efforts of different brands. The study aims to understand how people learn about these efforts, whether through labels, ads, or other means, and why they might choose to support these brands. It also looks into the reasons behind their buying habits, such as caring for health, the environment, or social status. This research links global trends in ethical branding with the specific situation in Dharwad to understand how values like honesty, eco-friendliness, and brand loyalty show up in this area and how these values influence people's decisions when buying sustainable products.

Background:

- **Global Trend, Local Focus:** Ethical branding, like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability, is a growing idea worldwide, but it affects different places differently. Studying local areas like Dharwad in India is important to understand how people in that area think and behave.

- **Rise of Conscious Consumers:** Because of growing environmental issues and increased social awareness, people are becoming more careful about the brands they choose. They want more than just good products—they want brands that care about the planet and society.

Research Gap & Study Objective:

- **Need for Local Data:** Even though there are studies about India and Karnataka, there's not much specific data about consumers in Dharwad District, how their cultural and social influences affect their behavior, and how they act when buying ethical brands.

• Objective: This study wants to explore how people in Dharwad feel about ethical products and brands, what makes them choose these products, and what stops them from choosing them. It also aims to find out what encourages or prevents them from buying these kinds of products.

#### Key Areas of Investigation:

- Awareness Sources: How do people learn about ethical brand practices, like eco-friendly packaging or advertisements?
- Motivations: What reasons make people buy ethical products—like caring for their health, the environment, or their social standing?
- Brand Perception: What qualities make people trust a brand, such as being honest, genuine, or responsible?
- Behavioral Intentions: Do positive feelings about a brand lead people to keep buying it or even recommend it to others?

#### Significance:

- This study gives marketers useful information to create better strategies for the Dharwad market.

It can help improve the connection between brands and consumers in the area and encourage more sustainable buying habits in the region.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer opinions about ethical branding, which are part of ethical consumerism, aren't always clear. Many people say they care about ethics, but they don't always follow through. While a lot of consumers support ethical practices, their decisions usually depend on things like price, product quality, and how easy it is to buy. If you want to learn more, you can look at different academic and general sources that cover these main ideas.

#### Ethical Consumption:

According to a survey by GfK NOP, a market research group, people in five countries were asked about how ethical large companies are. The countries were Germany, the United States, Britain, France, and Spain. Over half of the people in Germany and the

U.S. thought that corporate standards have gotten worse. About half of the people in Britain, France, and Spain felt the same way.

In a 2024 study, the most ethically viewed brands were The Co-op in the UK, Coca-Cola in the US, Danone in France, Adidas in Germany, and Nestlé in Spain. However, Coca-Cola, Danone, Adidas, and Nestlé didn't appear in the UK's list of 15 most ethical companies. Nike was on the lists of the other four countries but not on the UK list. Also, a 2024 study noted that ethical consumer behavior can be different in emerging and developing countries.

#### Marketing Ethics:

According to Gene R. Laczniak (2018), normative marketing ethics looks at theories that guide how marketing should be done in a moral way. These theories, like duty-based ethics, virtue ethics, and utilitarianism, are used to evaluate whether marketing is being done ethically.

According to Mark H. Waymack (1990), selective marketing in health care can stop unprofitable groups, like the elderly, from using benefits they are entitled to.

#### Brand Activism:

According to Philip Kotler and Christian Sarkar (2020), brand activism refers to efforts made by businesses to influence social, political, economic, or environmental changes. It is based on a desire to address major social problems.

According to Cammarota, Antonella; D'Arco, Mario; Marino, Vittoria; and Resciniti, Riccardo (2023), brand activism shows a shift from general ethical branding or shock advertising to more direct involvement in social and political issues. This type of marketing is more confrontational and focused on advocacy. It involves linking a brand's identity to specific causes and making clear, sometimes controversial, statements.

#### Socially Responsible Marketing:

According to Vaaland, T. I., Heide, M., and Kjell Grønhaug (2008), several marketing ideas fall under socially responsible marketing, including social

marketing, cause-related marketing, environmental or green marketing, enviropreneurial marketing, quality of life, and socially responsible buying.

According to Grewal, Dhruv and Michael Levy (2008), social responsibility in marketing is often discussed with ethics. However, what is considered ethical can vary depending on the business, society, or personal perspective. Also, not all business actions need to be socially responsible to be ethical. Some views suggest that socially responsible marketing goes beyond the minimum ethical standards and voluntarily exceeds them.

### III. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to understand how people in the Dharwad district feel about ethical branding. We want to find out how much they know about ethical practices, what their opinions are, and why they choose to buy or not buy products that are branded ethically. We also want to know what factors influence their decisions, such as price, trust in the brand, and their personal background. Additionally, we will look into how ethics play a role in their decision to buy, stay loyal to a brand, and be willing to pay more. This information will help create better marketing strategies for the area.

Key Objectives:

#### 1. Check Awareness & Understanding:

- To find out how much people know about ethical labels and certifications like fair trade and organic, sustainability, and how companies contribute to society through CSR.

#### 2. Analyze Attitudes & Motivations:

- To understand people's feelings, beliefs, and reasons for choosing or not choosing ethically branded products.

- To explore personal values, concern for the environment, and how they feel about social impact as reasons for their choices.

#### 3. Identify Influencing Factors:

- To find out how things like price, brand trust, product quality, product knowledge, and personal factors like age, income, and education level affect their decision to buy ethically branded products.

#### 4. Evaluate Purchase Behavior:

- To see how people's attitudes toward ethics relate to their actual plans to buy.

- To study how ethical branding affects their loyalty to a brand and their willingness to pay more for ethical products.

#### 5. Provide Strategic Recommendations:

- To give useful advice to marketers and businesses in Dharwad to create better ethical branding strategies.

### IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A study that looks at how people in the Dharwad district think about ethical branding usually uses a quantitative method. The main way to get information is by using surveys with a structured questionnaire. This questionnaire will use a Likert scale, which is like a 5-point scale, to find out how much people agree or disagree with different statements. Also, using some qualitative methods, such as focus group discussions, can give a better understanding of the topic.

The main parts of the research method are:

Research Design:

- Approach: The study uses a quantitative approach to understand consumer attitudes and to check if certain things affect these attitudes.

- Type: A descriptive and cross-sectional design is suitable for this, as it looks at what people think and how they act at a specific time.

- Philosophy: A positivist approach is used, as the study tries to find measurable patterns and connections in consumer behavior.

#### Data Collection:

- Primary Data: The data comes directly from consumers in Dharwad who are familiar with ethical marketing.
- Instrument: The main tool is a structured questionnaire that asks questions using a 5-point scale to measure things like awareness, opinions, buying intentions, and basic background information.
- Variables:
  - Independent Variables: These include things like awareness of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), concern for the environment, price sensitivity, and demographic factors like age, gender, income, and education.
  - Dependent Variable: People's feelings about ethical branding and how these feelings influence their buying choices and brand loyalty.

#### Sampling Plan:

- Target Population: People in Dharwad who know something about ethical marketing.
- Sampling Technique: Convenience sampling is used, meaning people are chosen based on who is available and willing to participate.
- Sample Size: 100 people are studied for similar research in areas

#### Data Analysis:

- Tools: Software like SPSS is used to analyze the data.
- Techniques:
  - Descriptive Statistics: This helps understand basic information about the group, such as average age or how many people fall into each category.
  - Inferential Statistics: Methods like ANOVA, t-tests, or regression are used to find out if there are significant connections between the variables, such as whether awareness of CSR affects the choice of ethical brands.

#### V. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis on how people in places like Dharwad think about ethical branding often shows that even though they care about things like fair labor and eco-friendly actions, when it comes to buying, they usually care more about things like cost, how easy it is to get the product, and how good they think it is. This creates what's called an "attitude-behavior gap" because people's beliefs don't always match what they actually do.

Most studies find that younger people, like Millennials and Gen Z, are more interested in ethical choices. But there are still problems like not being sure if brands are being honest about their eco-friendly claims, higher prices, and not having enough options available in local stores. Also, there are big differences in how men and women feel about ethical products.

To study all this, researchers often use tools like SPSS, Chi-Square tests, descriptive statistics, and regression. These tools help connect different factors like age, income, and gender with things like how much people like a brand or how likely they are to buy something. They also look into aspects of marketing like price and how the brand is advertised.

Common findings include:

- People usually choose products based on price and how easy they are to get, not just because they're ethical.
- Younger people and women tend to care more about ethical choices.
- People are skeptical about whether companies are truly eco-friendly and worry about greenwashing, which is when companies make false claims about being green.
- Most people know about ethical products, but they still face challenges in getting them.
- When people have good experiences with eco-friendly products before, they're more likely to buy them again.

Techniques to analyze the data:

- Descriptive statistics to summarize info like age, income, gender, and how often people shop.
- Chi-Square tests to see if there's a connection between things like gender and how people feel about ethics.
- Correlation and regression to find out how things like price or brand reputation affect whether someone wants to buy something.
- Cronbach's Alpha to check if the questions used in surveys are consistent and reliable.

For marketers in Dharwad, important takeaways are:

- Provide real proof that products are ethical to build trust.
- Work on making ethical products more affordable or justify why they cost more.
- Make sure ethical options are available in local markets.
- Focus marketing efforts on younger, more educated people who are more likely to care about these issues.

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents:

Table No. 1: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	40	40%
Female	60	60%
Total	100	100%

(Source: Survey in field at Dharwad district)

Table No.2: Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	30	30%
26-35	35	35%
36-45	25	25%
46+	10	10%
Total	100	100%

(Source: Survey in field at Dharwad district)

Table No.3 Monthly Income

Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage
< ₹25,000	20	20%
₹25,000–₹50,000	45	45%
> ₹50,000	35	35%
Total	100	100%

(Source: Survey in field at Dharwad district)

2. Chi-Square test:

A Chi-Square test is an appropriate statistical method to determine if there is a significant association between categorical variables like gender and attitudes toward ethical branding. This test helps evaluate if the observed frequencies in your survey data differ significantly from the frequencies expected if there were no relationship between the variables.

Table No.4: Chi-Square test Results Gender and consumer attitudes toward ethical branding

Level	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between level	2.679	1	1.189	2.746	.001
Within level	36.727	99	.131		
Total	39.406	100			

Chi-Square test ( $\chi^2$ ) value is less than the critical value (or if the  $p$ -value is less than 0.05): reject the null hypothesis. This indicates a no statistically significant association between gender and consumer attitudes toward ethical branding in the Dharwad district.

VI. RESULT

Studies on how people in the Dharwad area feel about ethical branding show that even though ethical choices can influence what people buy, other things like price and how easy it is to get the product are more important. Here are the main points from research done in Karnataka and the Dharwad region:

Overall Influence:

Ethical branding usually has a good effect on buying behavior, but people are still very careful about prices and might not believe all claims about being eco-friendly.

Demographic Differences:

- Younger people, like Millennials and Gen Z, are more likely to support ethical brands than older people.
- Women are more positive about eco-friendly products than men.
- Opinions can change a lot depending on whether someone lives in a city or a rural area, and even between different parts of the region.

Key Purchasing Factors:

For many people, price and convenience are more important in making a buying decision than the ethical values of the brand.

- Trust and Transparency: People often don't fully trust brands and want clear proof, such as eco-certifications or labels, to know that a brand is really ethical.
- Local Context: A study looking at urban and rural consumers in the region, which may include Dharwad, found that city dwellers who are more educated are aware of green products, but having a positive attitude does not always mean they actually buy them.

In short, there is growing awareness and positive feelings towards ethical branding, especially among certain groups, but businesses in the Dharwad area need to deal with price competition and work on building real trust with customers to turn this positive attitude into actual sales.

## VII. FINDING

Studies on ethical branding in Karnataka, near Dharwad, show that people generally think positively about ethical actions like corporate social responsibility, fair trade, and sustainability. These actions can make people more willing to buy products, but there are still some challenges. People still care about how much something costs, and they are not

always certain if a claim is real, like when companies act like they are eco-friendly but aren't really doing much. The research shows that when companies are honest about their ethical actions, it can influence people's choices, especially among younger people and those in cities. Social media plays a big role in shaping people's views on ethical practices. However, more research is needed in rural areas like Dharwad to understand better what's happening there.

Key Findings:

- Positive Influence: Ethical branding, including CSR, fair trade, and sustainability, usually makes people feel good about a brand and increases their interest in buying from it.
- Price & Skepticism Barriers: People still care about the cost of products and are often unsure if claims about being ethical are real, like greenwashing. They need clear and real proof to trust a brand's sustainability and ethical efforts.
- Geographical Differences: Awareness and trust in ethical practices are generally higher in cities like Bengaluru than in other parts of Karnataka, showing that ethical awareness can vary by location.
- Role of Social Media: Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have a strong influence on how people think about ethical practices. They help spread awareness about sustainability and encourage people to ask for more information and transparency.
- Local Context (Dharwad): While not many studies are focused specifically on Dharwad, some research on ethical practices in Karnataka shows general trends. More detailed research is needed to better understand the specific situation in rural areas like Dharwad.

- Nandini Curd Study (Dharwad): A study on Nandini Curd in Dharwad shows what local people like, how satisfied they are, and how they decide to buy. It shows there is already a market for cooperative brands, which fits with the ideas of ethical branding.

Implications for Dharwad:

- Brands in Dharwad focusing on ethical practices should clearly explain their real CSR and

sustainability efforts and offer prices that are fair and competitive.

- Using local influencers and social media can help reach younger and more aware people in the area.

## VIII. RECOMMENDATION

For a study on how people in Dharwad feel about brands that act ethically, focus on four main areas: being open and honest (to avoid fake green claims), how much people care about price versus ethics, the influence of younger generations like Gen Z and Millennials, and how relevant local products are. Use surveys with tested questions (like Cronbach's Alpha) to make sure the results are reliable. Compare how urban and rural people in Dharwad feel, as younger and more educated people are important, but they are also more skeptical, so real proof and fair prices are important.

Key areas to look into include:

1. Awareness and Perception: How much do Dharwad people know about ethical practices like fair trade and corporate social responsibility? How do they see local brands compared to national ones?
2. Buying Intent and Barriers: Does being ethical make people want to buy a product? What stops them from doing so? Is it the cost, lack of trust, or inconvenience?
3. Demographics: Compare people in cities like Hubballi-Dharwad with those in rural areas, different age groups (Gen Z/Millennials vs. older people), genders, and income levels.
4. Factors That Influence Buying Decisions: Which matters more—price, quality, brand reputation, ethical certifications like Fair Trade or Organic, or being from the local area?
5. Doubts About Greenwashing: How much do people not trust ethical claims from brands? What kind of proof (like certifications or how products are made) builds trust?

## IX. CONCLUSION

Studies about how people in regions like Karnataka, including Dharwad, feel about ethical branding show

that although many consumers, especially younger ones, care about ethical practices, factors like cost, how easy it is to buy, and doubts about whether brands are really ethical (called greenwashing) often affect their final decision. This means consumers want brands to be honest and show real proof of their ethical efforts. Even as more people become aware of these issues, price and trust remain important challenges.

Key Findings & Conclusions:

1. People want ethical products but often choose based on what's affordable and easy to get; they sometimes put ethics aside for lower prices and convenience.
2. Younger generations, like Millennials and Gen Z, are more likely to support ethical brands compared to older people.
3. People care about trust and transparency. They are not easily convinced by claims of being ethical and want real evidence, such as certifications or information about where and how products are made.
4. Many people are not sure if brands are truly ethical, which makes them hesitant to support them.
5. How brands market their products, including their environmental efforts and pricing, plays a big role in how people decide to buy.
6. While being ethical can influence people's buying behavior, it's not the main factor. Ethical branding attracts loyal customers, but it can't always beat the importance of price.

Recommendations for Brands:

- Be clear and honest about the ethical sourcing and practices of your products.
- Make your products affordable or explain the long-term benefits they provide for society and the environment.
- Help people understand the positive effects of choosing ethical products.

Future Research Directions:

- Study how rural consumers behave and what influences their decisions.

- Do long-term research to see how opinions about ethical branding change over time.

- Explore what makes people decide to buy ethical products, such as social or emotional reasons.

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