

Consumer Awareness towards Sustainable Craft Products: An Empirical Research on Eco-Friendly Materials

Sumathi R^{1*} and Monoo John²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Art & Design, Jain (Deemed to be University), Kochi

²Academic Dean, CMS Business School, Jain (Deemed to be University), Kochi

*Corresponding Author Email: sumathi.r@jainuniversity.ac.in

Abstract

Over the last couple of years, there has been a growing interest in sustainable business practices among different industries due to the growing environmental concerns and the rising significance of responsible consumption. Among them, the craft industry has been the topic of attention based on its ability to foster production processes that are environmentally friendly by using natural materials and eco-friendly materials. Sustainable craft items, often made out of biodegradable, recyclable or naturally sourced materials, are a contribution to lessening environmental impact and upholding ethical and responsible consumption patterns. Since consumer awareness of sustainability keeps rising, it is necessary to identify their perception and attitude towards this kind of product in order to develop and promote sustainable craft businesses. The proposed research is set to investigate the consumer awareness degree regarding sustainable craft products and their attitude to environmentally friendly materials employed to make such products. The study is directed to find out how consumers perceive the concept of sustainability in the environment of craft products, and their intentions to adopt products produced in an environmentally friendly manner. This study uses a descriptive research design, and primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire from a sample of consumers. The data obtained are processed to find the trends of awareness, consumer perception and buying habits of sustainable craft products. The study findings are likely to give information on the level of consumer awareness, purchasing decisions factors, and the possible demand of the eco-friendly craft materials in the market. Also, the study outlines the significance of marketing sustainable craft goods as a subset of the larger green business programmes. These findings can guide businesspeople, policy makers, and craft-based businesses to formulate measures that can be used to increase consumer awareness, reinforce sustainable production processes and create

additional market demands that can be met using environmentally friendly craft products. On the whole, the work can be seen as the input into the emerging discussion on the topic of sustainable consumption and the design of more sustainable business models within the craft industry.

Keywords: *Sustainable Business, Consumer Awareness, Eco-Friendly Materials, Craft Products, Green Marketing*

Introduction

Sustainable development has gained more weight due to the growing concern about environmental degradation, climate change, and the reduction of natural resources. The world population is increasingly aware of its environmental footprint, and the demand is shifting to environmentally friendly and sustainable products. The sustainable craft products are one of these unique segments that integrate ecological concern with heritage.

Sustainable craft items are generally handcrafted products that are made of environmentally friendly materials like bamboo, jute, clay, wood, and recycled materials. The products are not only less harmful to the environment but also help local craftsmen and retain the old traditions. Countries such as India have a strong tradition in the craft industry, and it offers jobs to millions of individuals.

Although the usage of sustainable craft products is gaining momentum, their use is not widespread. Quite a number of consumers are still after cheaper, mass-produced alternatives. This brings on serious questions regarding the degree of consumer awareness and the conditions under which they make purchases.

The study will examine consumer awareness of sustainable craft products and assess the influence of environmentally friendly materials on consumer behaviour. It also aims at finding out the obstacles that do not allow consumers to utilise such products and proposes the methods to overcome them.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of consumer awareness regarding sustainable craft products
- To analyse consumer perception of eco-friendly materials
- To identify the factors influencing purchasing decisions
- To examine the challenges faced by consumers in adopting sustainable products
- To suggest measures to promote sustainable consumption

Literature Review

Sustainability of consumption is a concept that has experienced a lot of research over the past few years. The researchers have also noted that consumer awareness can be valuable in marketing products that are environmentally friendly. Research has shown that people who are more environmentally aware tend to practice sustainable consumption. (Philip Kotler & Kevin Lane Keller, 2016)

Past studies note that consumers are becoming more worried about environmental concerns like pollution, climate change and waste management. This has given rise to increased interest in environmentally friendly products. Nonetheless, consumer awareness and actual purchasing behaviour have a huge gap. (Jacquelyn Ottman, 2017)

There are numerous studies that have determined major determinants in the purchase of sustainable products, which include price, quality, availability, brand image and trust in eco-labels. Eco-friendly products are seen by consumers as costly, and this discourages their use. Also, unavailability and the absence of product variety are obstructions. (Yogesh Joshi & Zillur Rahman, 2015)

Studies also indicate that younger consumers and consumers with higher levels of education tend to be more geared towards sustainable consumption. Digital platforms and social media are very important in raising awareness and shaping consumer behaviour. (Rajesh Nittala, 2014)

The craft industry is experiencing a challenge of a lack of marketing, visibility, and machine-made products, contrary to the increasing interest in sustainability. Hence, consumer awareness and behaviour should be understood when marketing sustainable craft products. (UNESCO, 2021)

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The current research takes a descriptive and analytical research design to explore consumer awareness of sustainable craft products produced using environmentally friendly materials. The descriptive method is applied to comprehend the nature, awareness, and preferences of consumers, whereas the analytical method can be used to reveal the connection between variables, i.e., awareness, purchase behaviour, and influencing factors.

4.2 Nature of the Study

It is an empirical study because it is grounded in primary data gathered by listening to the respondents. It is rooted in the real world and is concerned with drawing conclusions based on the actual consumer response as opposed to theoretical assumptions.

4.3 Sources of Data

4.3.1 Primary Data

The study used a structured questionnaire as a source of primary data. The questionnaire was a closed-ended and multiple-choice questionnaire, which was meant to give the relevant information concerning the respondents. It identified several dimensions, including the demographic characteristics of the respondents, their awareness of the sustainable craft products, their taste in the choice of materials that are environmentally friendly and what drives their buying behaviour. Besides, the questionnaire also sought to establish the obstacles experienced by consumers when using sustainable products.

4.3.2 Secondary Data

The study was supported by secondary data that was collected using diverse sources that were reliable. These sources were academic journals and research articles, books and published reports, government and institutional publications. In addition, online databases and websites were also used to collect the relevant information, which contributed to the development of the theoretical framework and the literature review of the study.

4.4 Sampling Design

The study sampling design consists of a description of the technique employed to determine who will be selected to collect data. The target population in this research is the

general consumers, who are the potential purchasers of the products of sustainable crafts, such as students, working professionals, and other people. A population of 50 respondents was chosen as a sample of the study group out of this population. The sample size was judged to be adequate in examining consumer awareness and behaviour within the time and resource limitations.

The research used a convenience sampling method in which the respondents were sampled using accessibility and eagerness to partake in the survey. It was selected because it is a simple approach, cheap and easy to collect data. It is, however, recognised that convenience sampling might not be all-inclusive in terms of the whole population and could have a certain level of bias. In spite of such a shortcoming, the sampling design offers valuable information about consumer awareness and preferences towards sustainable craft products.

4.5 Data Collection Instrument

The first tool that was employed to collect data in this study was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was well formulated as it was clear, simple and relevant to the objectives of the research. It was composed of closed-ended questions as well as multiple-choice questions, and thus made it possible to be understood and answered appropriately by the respondents. The questions were formulated in a logical order, beginning with the general information and slowly shifting to certain areas of consumer awareness and behaviour. The survey was divided into various parts, which were the demographic information, knowledge of sustainable craft products, interest in environmentally friendly materials, reasons for buying those products, and obstacles in purchasing such items. This made the structure aid in gathering extensive information necessary for the research. A structured questionnaire was used to guarantee homogeneity in the responses and make the analysis and interpretation of the retrieved data easy.

4.6 Tools for Data Analysis

The data obtained was subjected to a systematic analysis through the application of different statistical tools and techniques. The percentage analysis was done to identify the percentage of responses in each category, which assisted in finding patterns and trends in

consumer behaviour. The information was tabulated to show it in a clear and arranged way. Moreover, the interpretation of the findings was done by graphical representation through bar charts and pie charts. Moreover, the statistical tests, such as the chi-square test, were used where needed to check the relationship between variables, including consumer awareness and purchasing behaviour. These analytical tools allowed the interpretation of the data correctly and defend sensible conclusions.

4.7 Hypothesis of the Study

The hypotheses used in the study are the following:

- The null hypothesis (H_0) is that consumer awareness is not significantly related to the purchase of sustainable craft products.
- The second hypothesis (H_1) is that consumer awareness and purchase of sustainable craft products have a strong relationship.

4.8 Variables of the Study

It is a study that involves independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are the consumer awareness, environmental concern and demographic variables like age, education and income. The dependent variables will be consumer buying behaviour and preference of environmental friendly products. These variables can be used in examining the correlation between awareness and real consumer behaviour.

4.9 Reliability and Validity

The questionnaire was formulated in a thorough manner in order to be reliable and valid. The questions were also straightforward, straight forward and to the point, addressing the objectives of the research, hence assisting in getting consistent answers. The information obtained is regarded as valid because it represents the true views of the respondents. Validity was achieved by addressing all the pertinent aspects of consumer awareness and behaviour as far as products made using sustainable craft are concerned.

4.10 Limitations of the Study

The research has some shortcomings. The number of respondents used is quite limited, as only 50 participants took part; thus, it may not be the most true reflection of the whole population. Convenience sampling can also cause bias in the outcome. The study is also time and resource-bound as it is only restricted to a given geographical location. Thus, one should be cautious with the findings.

4.11 Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were observed in the course of the study. The respondents had to participate voluntarily and received information on the aim of the research. The research was conducted with confidentiality, as well as anonymity of the responses. No misuse of personal information, and the use of data was either academic or not.

5. Analysing and Interpreting Data.

In this chapter, the data obtained is analysed and interpreted in a manner that results in the awareness and perception of the respondents about sustainable craft products with respect to eco-friendly materials used by them.

5.1 Level of Awareness

The results show that the level of awareness of sustainable craft products is comparatively good, 40 percent of the respondents indicated that they are very aware and 36 percent are moderately aware and 24 percent are not much aware which serves to point out that more effective awareness campaigns are necessary. Regarding material choice, bamboo and jute turn out to be the most popular environmentally friendly materials, and the tendency to apply natural and bio-degradable goods takes its toll. Environmental concern is the most influential in terms of the purchase decision-making process, and it is followed by price and the quality of a product indicating that consumers do not disregard sustainability, but affordability is also important. Nevertheless, in spite of this positive attitude, a high price of sustainable craft products is the most prominent deterrent of buying, compared to the other concerns such as availability and restricting consumption.

6. Findings

- Most consumers are moderately or highly aware of sustainable craft products.
- Materials like bamboo and jute that are environmentally friendly are much demanded.
- A major factor that determines purchase decisions is environmental concern.
- Sensitivity to prices is a key obstacle.
- Awareness is also conspicuous in actual purchase behaviour.
- Product quality and design, as well as sustainability, have an effect on consumers.

7. Suggestions

- Create awareness through campaigns and social media.
- Subsidies can help to make environmentally friendly products affordable.
- Enhance product availability both in the online and local markets.
- Make sure that there is proper eco-labelling to establish the building of consumer trust.
- Promote local artisans with the help of marketing and government programs.
- Encourage sustainable consumption by educating.

8. Conclusion

The research concludes that domestic awareness of sustainable craft products is slowly on the rise, which is a good change in choosing products that are environmentally friendly. Nevertheless, with this increased awareness, there are numerous issues in the use of these products, including high cost, poor supply, and distrust, which prevent large-scale use of these products.

The key that will fill the gap between the level of awareness and the actual purchasing behaviour is the combined effort by businesses, government and society. Sustainable craft products not only result in environmental conservation but also support local artisans and cultural heritage. Thus, such products need to be encouraged in order to gain long-term sustainability.

9. Limitations of the Study

The current research is also limited to some weaknesses that will be taken into account when interpreting the findings. To begin with, the sample size is somewhat limited and only 50 respondents are involved, which might not represent the whole population. Secondly, the research relies on a convenience sampling technique, and this can be biased since the sample used is not chosen randomly but due to availability. Also, the research is restricted to one geographical location, and this limits the extrapolation of the results to the wider population. The scope of the research was also influenced by time and limited resources. Moreover, the responses that are obtained are based on individual opinion, which can be different in every individual and may not necessarily be a true action.

10. Scope for Future Research

The research offers a number of prospective studies in the area of sustainable consumption and environmentally friendly items. A larger sample size can be used in future research to get more precise and generalised findings. Comparative studies can also be done on urban and rural consumers by researchers to unravel the awareness and purchase behaviour differences. Moreover, future studies can be conducted on how digital marketing and social media can be used to market sustainable craft products. One more significant direction that should be examined in the future is the consumer willingness to pay on eco-friendly products and ways to eliminate the differences between awareness and actual buying. It would be also appropriate to expand the research to other areas and demographic groups to get a more insight into the consumer preferences and trends.

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