

**SOCIAL MEDIA AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION: A STUDY ON UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOURAL SHIFT AMONG GEN Z****Sharayu Yendhe<sup>1</sup> and Yogita Sawant<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>SYBMS (Finance), JVM's Mehta Degree College,<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, BMS Coordinator, JVM's Mehta Degree College,**ABSTRACT**

*Social media has become an integral part of daily life for Gen Z, influencing not only communication and entertainment but also attitudes and consumption choices. In recent years, online platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and other digital media channels have played a significant role in spreading awareness about sustainability and eco-friendly practices. This study aims to understand how social media contributes to shaping sustainable consumption behaviour among Gen Z and whether this awareness leads to behavioural change.*

*The research focuses on analysing the relationship between social media growing exposure and sustainable buying decisions among young consumers aged 18–25. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire, while secondary data was sourced from government reports, academic studies, and industry publications which are related to sustainability and digital media. The study shows awareness levels, influence of social media content, and factors such as price sensitivity, trust, and environmental concern that affect buying behaviour.*

*The findings indicate that social media plays a crucial role in creating awareness about sustainable products, however, the shift from awareness to action is influenced by not only one factor. The study highlights the need for effective communication strategies that motivates practical adoption of sustainable consumption among Gen Z.*

**Keywords:** *Social Media, Sustainable Consumption, Gen Z, Behavioural Change*

**INTRODUCTION**

In today's digital age, social media has become an inseparable part of daily life, especially for Generation Z. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and other social networking sites are no longer used only for entertainment but also play an important role in spreading information, shaping opinions, and influencing consumer behaviour. One of the growing areas where social media has made a noticeable impact is sustainable consumption. As environmental issues like climate change, pollution, and waste management gain attention, young consumers are increasingly exposed to sustainability-related content through digital platforms.

Sustainable consumption refers to the practice of making responsible choices that reduce negative impacts on the environment while meeting daily needs. Gen Z, being more digitally connected and socially aware, is often seen as a generation that supports eco-friendly products and ethical brands. However, despite high levels of awareness, there is often a gap between what young consumers know and what they actually practice while making purchasing decisions. Factors such as price, convenience, brand trust, and availability continue to influence buying behaviour.

Social media plays a crucial role in bridging or widening this gap by creating awareness, promoting sustainable lifestyles, and influencing attitudes through influencers, advertisements, and educational content. This study attempts to understand how social media contributes to shaping sustainable consumption behaviour among Gen Z and whether this awareness results in real behavioural change.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

- Previous studies show that social media plays a significant role in influencing consumer behaviour by shaping opinions, preferences, and purchasing decisions, especially among young users who spend a considerable amount of time on digital platforms.
- Research on sustainable consumption indicates that Gen Z has higher awareness about environmental issues due to increased exposure to sustainability-related content through social media, online campaigns, and influencer-driven communication.

- Several studies highlight that platforms like Instagram and YouTube are effective in promoting sustainability messages, as visual content and influencer recommendations strongly impact the attitudes and perceptions of young consumers.
- Existing literature also points out a gap between awareness and actual sustainable buying behaviour, as factors such as price sensitivity, availability of products, and trust in sustainability claims often limit the conversion of awareness into action.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Objectives of the Study

- To assess the level of awareness about sustainable and eco-friendly products among Gen Z.
- To identify the social media platforms that most influence sustainable consumption decisions among Gen Z.
- To analyse the impact of social media content (influencers, advertisements, and educational posts) on purchasing behaviour.
- To examine the behavioural shift from sustainability awareness to actual sustainable buying practices among Gen Z.

### Data Collection Method

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire using Google Forms. The survey was circulated among Gen Z respondents aged between 18 and 25 years, mainly college students who actively use social media platforms. Secondary data was collected from government reports, academic journals, research articles, and credible online sources related to social media usage, sustainability, and consumer behaviour.

### Tools and Techniques Used

The primary tool used for data collection was a questionnaire consisting of multiple-choice questions. The collected data was analysed using simple statistical techniques such as percentages and graphical representation. Tables and charts were used to present the findings in a clear and easy-to-understand manner.

### Scope of the Study

The study is limited to Gen Z respondents aged 18–25 years. It focuses on understanding how social media influences awareness and sustainable consumption behaviour among young consumers. The research is confined to a limited sample size and does not include other age groups or long-term behavioural changes.

### Significance of the Study

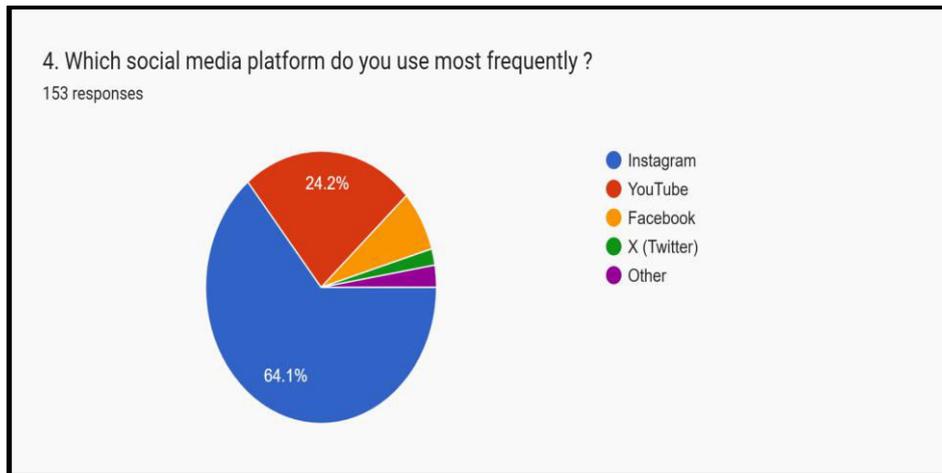
This study is significant as it helps understand the impact of social media on promoting sustainable consumption among Gen Z. The findings can be useful for marketers, educators, and policymakers to design effective communication strategies that encourage eco-friendly behaviour. It also contributes to academic understanding by highlighting the gap between sustainability awareness and actual consumer behaviour among young individuals.

### Limitations of the Study

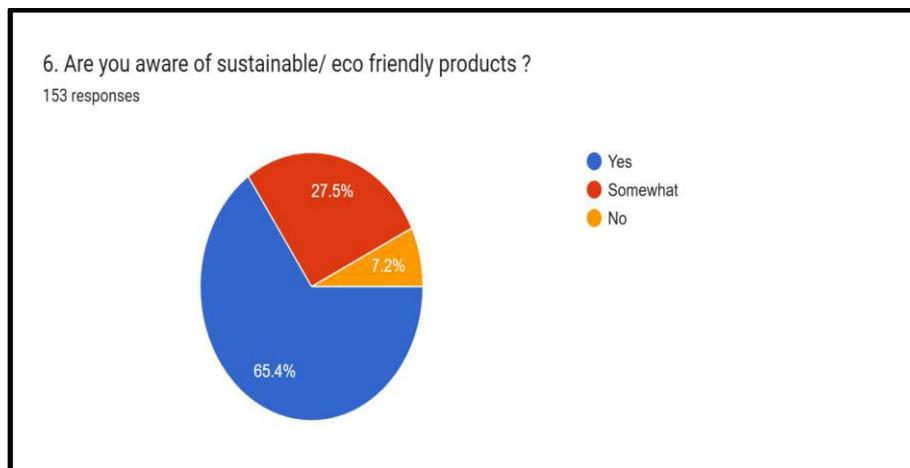
- The study is based on a limited sample size of Gen Z respondents, which may not fully represent the views of all young consumers across different regions.
- Data was collected using a questionnaire, so the responses depend on the honesty and understanding of the respondents.
- The research focuses only on social media influence and does not consider other factors such as family influence or traditional media in detail.
- The study captures responses at a single point in time and does not reflect changes in behaviour over a longer period.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

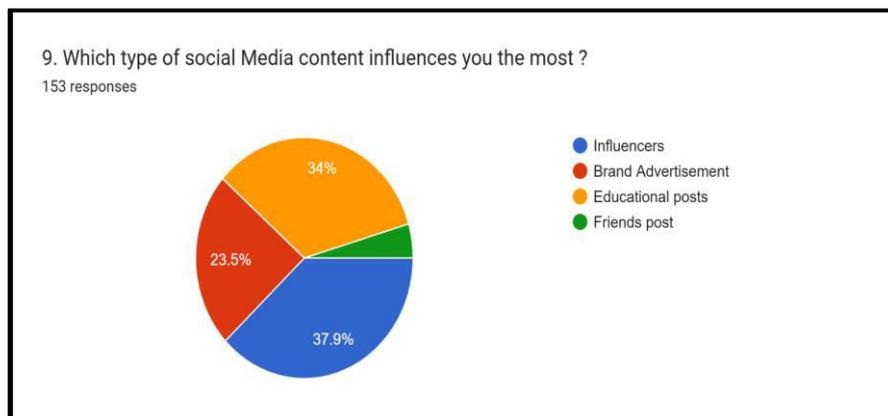
The primary data for the study was collected from 150+ Gen Z respondents (18–25 years) using a structured Google Form questionnaire. The data was analysed using simple percentage analysis and presented in chart form for clarity. Only key variables directly linked to the research objectives were analysed using pie charts to maintain clarity and relevance. Secondary data from published reports and research studies has been used to support the findings.



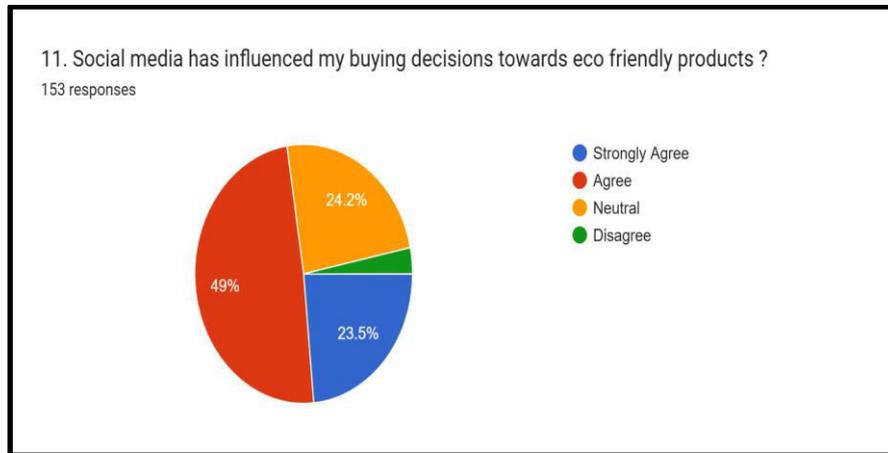
**Interpretation:** The pie chart reveals that one social media platform is used more than others by Gen Z. This highlights the platform that has the highest potential to influence sustainable consumption decisions.



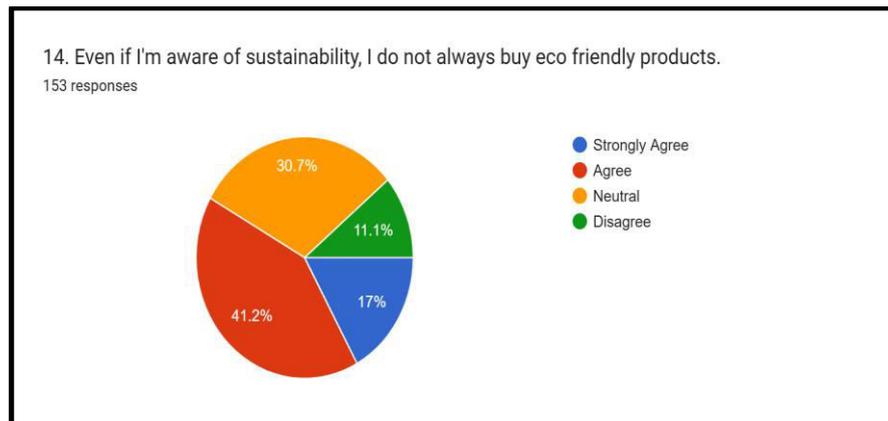
**Interpretation:** The chart suggests that most Gen Z respondents are aware of sustainable products. However, a small group has limited or no awareness. This indicates that while awareness is good, further education is still needed.



**Interpretation:** The chart indicates that influencers and educational content have a greater impact on purchase decisions. This suggests that Gen Z prefers informative and relatable content over direct advertising.



**Interpretation:** The chart shows that social media plays an important role in encouraging eco-friendly buying behaviour. However, not all respondents are equally influenced, showing mixed impact levels.



**Interpretation:** The chart highlights that awareness of sustainability does not always result in actual eco-friendly purchases. This shows a gap between knowledge and real buying behaviour among Gen Z.

**Secondary Data**

Secondary data was collected from published reports of national and international organisations to understand trends related to social media usage and sustainable consumption behaviour among Gen Z. The data is presented in numerical form to support and validate the findings of the primary survey.

**Table 1:** Secondary Data on Sustainability Awareness among Gen Z

Indicator	Percentage (%)
Gen Z aware of environmental issues	70
Youth exposed to sustainability content via social media	68
Indian youth aware of sustainable practices	65
Gen Z preferring sustainable brands	60

**Sources:** UNEP Reports, UNDP Youth Studies, NITI Aayog SDG Reports, Deloitte Gen Z Survey

**Interpretation**

The secondary data shows that a significant percentage of Gen Z is aware of sustainability-related issues, mainly due to exposure through digital and social media platforms. This supports the primary data findings where a majority of respondents reported awareness of sustainable and eco-friendly products.

**Table 2:** Secondary Data on Social Media Influence and Behavioural Gap

Indicator	Percentage (%)
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Gen Z influenced by social media while making purchase decisions	62
Influence of social media influencers on Gen Z purchases	58
Gen Z engagement on Instagram & YouTube	75
Gen Z willing to pay more for sustainable products	40

**Sources:** OECD Consumer Behaviour Studies, Harvard Business Review, Statista Digital Media Reports, World Economic Forum

### Interpretation

The data indicates that while social media strongly influences Gen Z's purchasing decisions, willingness to pay a premium for sustainable products remains relatively low. This highlights the gap between sustainability awareness and actual buying behaviour. The findings align with the primary data, where only a moderate number of respondents converted awareness into action.

### KEY FINDINGS

A majority of Gen Z respondents are aware of sustainable and eco-friendly products, and social media plays an important role in creating this awareness.

Platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are the most influential in spreading sustainability-related information among young consumers.

Influencer-based content has a stronger impact on purchasing decisions compared to traditional advertisements or general posts.

Despite high awareness levels, only a moderate number of respondents have actually purchased sustainable products, indicating a gap between awareness and action.

Price sensitivity and trust in sustainability claims continue to influence the final buying decisions of Gen Z consumers.

### CONCLUSION

The study concludes that social media has become a powerful medium in shaping the awareness and attitudes of Gen Z towards sustainable consumption. Young consumers are regularly exposed to sustainability-related content through digital platforms, which helps them understand the importance of eco-friendly products and responsible consumption. However, the findings also reveal that awareness alone does not always lead to actual sustainable buying behaviour. While Gen Z shows positive attitudes towards sustainability, practical challenges such as higher prices, limited availability, and lack of trust in brands prevent consistent adoption. Therefore, social media can be seen as an effective tool for education and influence, but additional efforts are required to convert awareness into real behavioural change. Overall, the study highlights the need for stronger communication strategies that focus not only on awareness but also on encouraging practical and affordable sustainable choices.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Brands should use social media more effectively to communicate the real benefits and authenticity of sustainable products.
- Influencers should promote sustainable products responsibly and provide transparent information to build trust among young consumers.
- Companies can focus on making sustainable products more affordable to reduce price-related barriers.
- Educational institutions and policymakers can use social media platforms to promote sustainability awareness through relatable and youth-friendly content.

### FURTHER SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The study can be extended to include other age groups to compare sustainable consumption behaviour across generations.
- Future research may focus on specific product categories such as fashion, food, or personal care products.
- A larger sample size and wider geographic coverage can provide more comprehensive insights.

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- Qualitative methods such as interviews or focus group discussions can be used to gain deeper understanding of consumer motivations.

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