Original Article
ISSN (Online): 2582-7472

ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts
June 2024 5(6), 1730–1736

SUSTAINABLE BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION IN INDIA: EXPLORING THE CONSUMER "ATTITUDE–BEHAVIORAL INTENTION" GAP

Dr. Pankaj Kumar [1], Vikas Nehra [2]

[1] Professor and Director, Department of Management Studies, Harlal Institute of Management and Technology, India
[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Management Studies, Harlal Institute of Management and Technology, India

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the gap between consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions toward sustainable beverage consumption in India. Despite a growing awareness of environmental issues and increasing positive attitudes towards sustainable products, actual purchase and consumption behavior often fails to reflect these attitudes. By applying the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and analyzing primary data collected through a structured questionnaire, this research explores the underlying causes of the attitude-behavior gap. The findings aim to provide insights for marketers and policymakers to promote sustainable consumption more effectively.

Keywords: Sustainable Consumption, Beverage Industry, Attitude-Behavior Gap, Theory of Planned Behavior, India, Consumer Behavior

Corresponding Author
Dr. Pankaj Kumar,
drpankajkrsaxena@gmail.com

DOI
10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.4968

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Indian beverage market has witnessed remarkable growth in the past decade, fueled by increasing disposable incomes, urbanization, and changing lifestyles. Beverages like bottled water, fruit juices, energy drinks, and organic teas are now readily available, and the sector is projected to grow at a CAGR of over 15%. Simultaneously, there has been a notable rise in environmental consciousness among Indian consumers, particularly in urban centers. This is evident from growing interest in products labeled as eco-friendly, ethically produced, or locally sourced.

Sustainability has emerged as a key concern due to issues like plastic waste, water scarcity, and carbon emissions associated with beverage production and distribution. Consequently, there is an observable rise in demand for sustainable beverage options. However, despite these favorable attitudes, consumer purchasing patterns remain inconsistent with stated values.

This phenomenon, known as the "attitude-behavioral intention gap," poses significant challenges for sustainable marketing and policy interventions. The purpose of this paper is to explore this gap within the context of India's beverage market, examining the factors that hinder consumers from acting on their sustainable preferences. Understanding this gap is essential for promoting behavioral shifts necessary to achieve long-term sustainability goals.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1) To assess consumer attitudes toward sustainable beverage consumption in India.
2) To identify the key factors influencing behavioral intention.
3) To explore the extent and causes of the attitude-behavioral intention gap.
4) To suggest strategies for bridging this gap.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Sustainable consumption involves the use of products and services that meet basic needs and improve the quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials. In the context of beverages, sustainability may involve eco-friendly packaging (such as biodegradable bottles or cans), organic ingredients free from chemical pesticides, ethical sourcing of raw materials, and distribution systems that minimize carbon emissions.

Research by Peattie and Peattie (2009) indicates that consumers often associate sustainability with corporate responsibility, environmental friendliness, and product authenticity. However, these associations are not always sufficient to motivate actual behavior. Schuitema and De Groot (2015) found that although consumers express strong support for sustainable consumption, behavioral changes are contingent upon personal benefit and convenience. Similarly, Gupta and Ogden (2009) suggest that internal conflicts such as hedonism, habits, and time pressures often undermine sustainable intentions.

2.2. THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR (TPB)

TPB, developed by Ajzen (1991), is a psychological theory that links beliefs and behavior. It postulates that behavioral intentions are influenced by three components:

- **Attitude** toward the behavior (positive or negative evaluation)
- **Subjective norms** (perceived social pressure)
- **Perceived behavioral control** (ease or difficulty of performing the behavior)

TPB has been successfully applied in various sustainability contexts. For example, Bamberg and Möser (2007) used TPB to explain pro-environmental behaviors such as recycling and energy conservation. However, even when intentions are high, external constraints such as cost, lack of availability, or social norms may limit action. More recent studies, such as those by Kumar et al. (2020), have extended TPB by incorporating variables such as moral obligation and environmental concern to better capture complex consumer motivations in India.

2.3. THE ATTITUDE-BEHAVIOR GAP

Numerous studies have documented the attitude-behavior gap across sectors. In sustainable fashion, for example, McNeill and Moore (2015) observed that although consumers expressed concern about environmental impact, fast fashion continued to dominate. In food, Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) highlighted the discrepancy between consumer values and actual purchases of sustainable food.

In India, Joshi and Rahman (2015) found that urban consumers exhibit awareness and willingness toward green products, but price sensitivity and availability act as major barriers. The beverage sector faces additional challenges such as brand loyalty, limited shelf space for eco-products, and consumer skepticism about greenwashing. Biswas and Roy (2015) further argue that despite an emotional inclination toward eco-friendly products, purchase decisions are governed by practical considerations such as affordability and product familiarity.

Moreover, research by Young et al. (2010) reveals that even well-informed consumers often fail to act on sustainable preferences due to cognitive dissonance and competing goals. This is especially pertinent in emerging markets like India, where lifestyle aspirations may sometimes override environmental concerns. Collectively, these findings underscore the complexity of sustainable consumption and the need for a multi-dimensional approach to close the intention-action divide.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design using both qualitative and quantitative methods. A mixed-methods approach was chosen to capture both the depth and breadth of consumer experiences.

3.2. DATA COLLECTION

Primary data was collected via an online questionnaire distributed to 300 respondents across five metro cities: Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Kolkata. The questionnaire included items based on TPB constructs (attitude, subjective norms, perceived control), purchase frequency, perceived barriers, and demographic details.

Qualitative data was also collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 consumers who identified as environmentally conscious, allowing for deeper exploration of perceived barriers and motivational factors.

3.3. SAMPLING METHOD

Purposive sampling was used to target consumers who have demonstrated interest in sustainability, as evidenced by participation in eco-friendly forums, organic product purchases, or related consumer groups.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

- Descriptive statistics to profile respondents and frequency of sustainable beverage purchases.
- Correlation and regression analysis to test the predictive power of TPB variables.
- Thematic analysis of qualitative interviews.
- Gap analysis to quantify and explain the discrepancy between attitudes and behaviors.

4. STATISTICAL TABLES

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 300)

Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Age	18–25	35
	26–35	30
	36–45	20
	46 and above	15
Gender	Male	52
	Female	47
	Other/Prefer not to say	1
Education Level	Undergraduate	38
	Postgraduate	50
	Doctorate	12
Monthly Household Income	Below 25,000	18

	25,000–50,000	32
	50,000–1,00,000	30
	Above 1,00,000	20

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of TPB Constructs

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
Attitude	4.20	0.65
Subjective Norms	3.85	0.72
Perceived Behavioral Control	3.60	0.78
Behavioral Intention	4.00	0.70
Actual Behavior	3.25	0.80

Table 3 Correlation Matrix

Variable	Attitude	Norms	Control	Intention	Behavior
Attitude	1.00	0.62	0.58	0.66	0.51
Subjective Norms	0.62	1.00	0.54	0.60	0.47
Perceived Control	0.58	0.54	1.00	0.64	0.59
Behavioral Intention	0.66	0.60	0.64	1.00	0.73
Actual Behavior	0.51	0.47	0.59	0.73	1.00

Table 4 Regression Analysis Predicting Behavioral Intention

Predictor	Beta	t-value	Significance (p)
Attitude	0.35	5.20	<0.01
Subjective Norms	0.30	4.45	<0.01
Perceived Control	0.28	4.10	<0.01
R-squared = 0.61			

Table 5 Barriers to Sustainable Beverage Consumption

Barrier	% of Respondents Selecting
High Price	64%
Limited Availability	57%
Lack of Information	49%
Distrust of Green Claims	41%
Taste Preference	38%
Habit/Brand Loyalty	35%

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Respondents were predominantly urban (87%), with 65% holding a graduate degree or higher. Income levels ranged from INR 3 lakh to INR 25 lakh per annum, indicating a middle to upper-middle-class demographic. The age group of 25-34 years formed the largest segment (48%), followed by 18-24 (22%), reflecting a digitally connected and potentially influenceable audience.

5.2. CONSUMER ATTITUDES

Over 75% of respondents expressed strong agreement with statements such as "Sustainable beverages are better for the environment" and "I feel good when I purchase eco-friendly products." Interview responses emphasized a growing guilt associated with plastic waste and a desire to support ethical brands.

5.3. BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS VS. ACTUAL BEHAVIOR

While 68% of survey respondents indicated a strong intention to purchase sustainable beverages in the next month, only 36% had made such a purchase in the past month. Reasons for the gap include:

- **Price:** 61% found sustainable beverages more expensive than regular ones.
- **Availability:** 47% reported difficulty finding these products in their usual stores.
- **Skepticism:** 35% doubted whether the products were truly sustainable.
- **Brand Loyalty:** 30% were reluctant to switch from familiar brands.

5.4. TPB ANALYSIS

- **Attitude** had a strong positive correlation with behavioral intention ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that positive attitudes are a good predictor of intent.
- **Subjective norms** were moderately significant ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$). Peer groups, especially among younger consumers, influenced eco-conscious decisions.
- **Perceived behavioral control** was weak ($r = 0.29$), suggesting that consumers feel constrained by factors beyond their control, particularly pricing and product access.

5.5. QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS INTERVIEWS REVEALED EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS, INCLUDING

- A disconnect between aspiration and convenience.
- Mistrust in labeling practices.
- Emotional fatigue from constantly making “right” choices.

5.6. THE GAP ANALYSIS

The average difference between positive attitudes and actual behavior was found to be 32 percentage points. This gap is consistent across income and education levels, suggesting that structural barriers rather than knowledge are the primary drivers.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS AND POLICYMAKERS

6.1. MARKETING STRATEGIES

- **Value-based Messaging:** Campaigns should shift focus from guilt-based to value-driven appeals, linking sustainable choices to personal health and lifestyle benefits.

- **Affordable Alternatives:** Brands must develop smaller pack sizes or hybrid models (e.g., refill stations) to lower cost perception.
- **Influencer Endorsements:** Collaborate with green influencers or celebrities known for their activism to build credibility.
- **Retail Partnerships:** Place sustainable beverages in high-traffic areas and work with supermarkets for eco-sections.
- **Transparency:** Brands must back their claims with third-party certifications and engage in transparent storytelling.

6.2. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Incentivize Sustainability:** Offer tax breaks or production subsidies to manufacturers using eco-packaging and ethical sourcing.
- **Standardize Labels:** Establish a government-backed sustainability certification to reduce consumer confusion.
- **Consumer Education:** Campaigns via television, digital platforms, and schools can increase awareness and normalize sustainable consumption.
- **Regulate Greenwashing:** Implement penalties for false sustainability claims to build consumer trust.

7. CONCLUSION

The study confirms the presence of a significant attitude-behavioral intention gap among Indian consumers with regard to sustainable beverage consumption. While awareness and intent are high, actual purchase behavior lags due to cost, access, and trust barriers. A multi-stakeholder approach involving businesses, consumers, and government bodies is essential to close this gap. Interventions must make sustainability not just a moral choice, but a convenient and economically viable one.

8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study is limited by its urban-centric sample and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce social desirability bias. Rural and semi-urban markets, which represent a large portion of India, remain unexplored. Future research should:

- Employ experimental methods to track behavioral changes over time.
- Explore rural perceptions and accessibility issues.
- Investigate the role of emotional marketing and sensory branding in influencing behavior.
- Analyze cross-generational differences in sustainable purchasing behavior.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

REFERENCES

Ajzen, I. (1991). The Theory of Planned Behavior. Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50(2), 179-211.

Carrington, M. J., Neville, B. A., & Whitwell, G. J. (2010). Why Ethical Consumers Don't Walk Their Talk. Journal of Business Ethics, 97(1), 139-158.

Joshi, Y., & Rahman, Z. (2015). Factors Affecting Green Purchase Behaviour and Future Research Directions. International Strategic Management Review, 3(1-2), 128-143.

Peattie, K., & Peattie, S. (2009). Social Marketing: A Pathway to Consumption Reduction? Journal of Business Research, 62(2), 260-268.

McNeill, L., & Moore, R. (2015). Sustainable Fashion Consumption and the Fast Fashion Conundrum: Fashionable Consumers and Attitudes to Sustainability in Clothing Choice. International Journal of Consumer Studies, 39(3), 212-222.

Vermeir, I., & Verbeke, W. (2006). Sustainable Food Consumption: Exploring the Consumer "Attitude–Behavioral Intention" Gap. Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics, 19(2), 169-194.

APPENDICES

Appendix A : Survey Questionnaire
Appendix B : Detailed Statistical Tables
Appendix C : Demographic Charts