Research Paper

Green Marketing Practices and Their Influence on Sustainable Consumer Behaviour among Gen Z in Varanasi District

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Abstract
This study examines the influence of green marketing practices on sustainable consumer behaviour among Generation Z in Varanasi district. Using a quantitative research design, data were collected from 250 respondents through a structured questionnaire. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS, including descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and ANOVA. The findings reveal that environmental awareness and social media influence significantly impact sustainable behaviour, while green pricing has a limited effect. The study highlights the importance of awareness-driven marketing strategies and digital engagement in promoting eco-friendly consumption. The results provide valuable insights for marketers, policymakers, and researchers in advancing sustainable development.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Sustainable Consumer Behaviour, Generation Z, Environmental Awareness, Social Media Influence, Green Promotion, Varanasi

I. Introduction

In recent decades, environmental degradation, climate change, and resource depletion have emerged as pressing global concerns, compelling businesses and consumers to rethink their roles in achieving sustainability. This shift has led to the emergence of **green marketing**, which refers to the promotion of products and services that are environmentally friendly, socially responsible, and sustainable in nature. Green marketing practices encompass eco-friendly product design, sustainable packaging, ethical sourcing, green advertising, and environmentally responsible distribution systems. These practices not only address ecological concerns but also shape consumer perceptions and purchasing behaviour. India, as a rapidly developing economy, is witnessing a paradigm shift in consumer awareness toward sustainability. Among all demographic groups, **Generation Z (Gen Z)**—individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s—has emerged as a crucial segment influencing market trends. This generation is highly digital, socially aware, and environmentally conscious, often prioritizing ethical consumption and sustainability over mere price and convenience. Studies indicate that a significant proportion of Gen Z consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable and environmentally friendly products, reflecting a value-driven consumption pattern .

Green marketing practices play a vital role in shaping sustainable consumer behaviour by influencing attitudes, beliefs, and purchase intentions. Theoretical frameworks such as the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** and **Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory** suggest that environmental awareness, social norms, and perceived behavioural control significantly determine eco-friendly consumption decisions. Empirical evidence shows that factors such as environmental knowledge, trust in green claims, and social influence significantly impact Gen Z's green purchase intentions . Additionally, exposure to environmental campaigns, particularly through social media, enhances pro-environmental behaviour by increasing awareness and responsibility among young consumers . In the Indian context, particularly in **Tier-II cities like Varanasi**, the adoption of green consumption is gaining momentum, although it is influenced by factors such as price sensitivity, awareness levels, and availability of green products. Research suggests that while Gen Z consumers in such cities demonstrate strong interest in eco-friendly products, their actual purchase behaviour is moderated by economic and informational constraints . Varanasi, being a culturally rich and rapidly urbanizing district, provides a unique setting to examine the intersection of traditional values and modern sustainability trends. Despite the growing importance of green marketing, there remains a research gap in understanding how these practices influence sustainable consumer behaviour specifically among Gen Z in semi-urban and culturally significant regions like Varanasi. Most existing

studies focus on metropolitan cities, leaving Tier-II regions underexplored. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the impact of green marketing practices on shaping sustainable consumption patterns among Gen Z consumers in the Varanasi district.

II.   Literature Review

Green marketing has emerged as a significant paradigm in modern business strategy, driven by increasing environmental concerns and evolving consumer consciousness. The concept broadly encompasses activities aimed at designing, promoting, and distributing products in an environmentally sustainable manner. According to Polonsky (1994), green marketing involves all activities designed to generate and facilitate exchanges intended to satisfy human needs with minimal detrimental impact on the natural environment. Over time, this concept has evolved to include not only ecological considerations but also ethical and social dimensions. One of the foundational theoretical perspectives explaining sustainable consumer behaviour is the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** proposed by Ajzen (1991). The theory posits that behavioural intentions are influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of green marketing, consumers' positive attitudes toward eco-friendly products, social pressure to act responsibly, and perceived ease of purchasing sustainable goods collectively influence their buying behaviour. Several studies have validated the applicability of TPB in explaining green purchase intentions among young consumers, particularly Gen Z. Another relevant framework is the **Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) Theory**, developed by Stern (2000), which emphasizes the role of personal values and environmental beliefs in shaping pro-environmental actions. According to this theory, individuals who hold strong ecological values are more likely to develop a sense of moral obligation toward environmental protection, which ultimately influences their consumption behaviour. This is particularly relevant for Gen Z, who are often characterized by strong ethical values and environmental awareness.

Empirical research has consistently highlighted the growing importance of environmental awareness in shaping consumer behaviour. Joshi and Rahman (2015) found that environmental knowledge significantly influences consumers' attitudes toward green products, which in turn affects purchase intentions. Similarly, Biswas and Roy (2015) emphasized that Indian consumers are increasingly aware of environmental issues, but their purchasing decisions are often constrained by factors such as price and availability. The role of green marketing mix elements—product, price, promotion, and place—has also been widely examined in literature. Green products, characterized by eco-friendly materials and sustainable production processes, are central to influencing consumer preferences. Studies suggest that consumers are more likely to purchase products that are perceived as environmentally safe and beneficial (Chen & Chang, 2012). However, price remains a critical barrier. While some consumers are willing to pay a premium for green products, many, especially in developing economies, remain price-sensitive. Green promotion strategies, including eco-labeling, environmental advertising, and social media campaigns, play a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions. According to Delafrooz et al. (2014), effective communication of environmental benefits enhances consumer trust and reduces skepticism toward green claims. However, the issue of "greenwashing"—misleading environmental claims—has raised concerns about credibility, making transparency and authenticity essential components of successful green marketing.

In recent years, social media has emerged as a powerful tool in promoting sustainable consumption, particularly among Gen Z. This generation is highly active on digital platforms and is significantly influenced by online content, peer opinions, and influencers. Studies indicate that exposure to sustainability-related content on social media positively affects environmental attitudes and behaviours (Djafarova & Foots, 2022). Influencer marketing, when perceived as authentic, can significantly enhance trust and encourage eco-friendly purchasing decisions. Gen Z consumers are often described as environmentally conscious, socially responsible, and technologically savvy. Research by Francis and Hoefel (2018) highlights that Gen Z prioritizes sustainability and ethical practices more than previous generations. They tend to support brands that align with their values and are transparent about their environmental impact. However, a gap often exists between their attitudes and actual purchasing behaviour, known as the "attitude-behaviour gap." This gap is influenced by factors such as price sensitivity, lack of availability, and limited trust in green claims. In the Indian context, green consumerism is still evolving. Studies suggest that while urban consumers demonstrate higher awareness and adoption of green practices, consumers in Tier-II and Tier-III cities are gradually catching up. A study by Kumar and Ghodeswar (2015) found that Indian consumers' green purchase intentions are influenced by environmental concern, perceived consumer effectiveness, and social influence. However, economic constraints and lack of awareness remain significant barriers.

Focusing on Tier-II cities like Varanasi, the dynamics of consumer behaviour become more complex due to the interplay of traditional values and modern influences. Varanasi, known for its cultural and spiritual significance, also faces environmental challenges such as pollution and waste management issues. This creates a unique context where environmental awareness may be influenced by both cultural values and contemporary sustainability discourse. Recent studies on Gen Z in emerging urban markets indicate that this demographic group

is highly receptive to green marketing but requires credible information and accessible options. They are more likely to engage in sustainable behaviours when they perceive personal and social benefits. Peer influence, family values, and educational background also play significant roles in shaping their consumption patterns. Furthermore, trust in green brands has been identified as a critical determinant of sustainable consumer behaviour. Chen (2010) found that green trust significantly influences green purchase intentions, highlighting the importance of credibility and transparency in marketing communications. In addition, perceived value—both functional and emotional— affects consumers' willingness to adopt green products.

Another important factor is perceived consumer effectiveness (PCE), which refers to the belief that individual actions can contribute to environmental protection. Studies suggest that consumers with high PCE are more likely to engage in eco-friendly behaviours. This is particularly relevant for Gen Z, who often seek to make a positive impact through their choices. Despite the growing body of literature, there is a noticeable research gap in understanding the influence of green marketing practices on Gen Z consumers in semi-urban regions like Varanasi. Most studies have focused on metropolitan areas, leaving smaller cities underexplored. Additionally, limited research has examined the combined impact of green marketing mix elements, social media influence, and psychological factors on sustainable consumer behaviour. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how green marketing practices influence sustainable consumer behaviour among Gen Z in Varanasi district. By integrating theoretical frameworks such as TPB and VBN with empirical analysis, the study seeks to offer valuable insights for both academia and industry.

Research Objectives
The present study is designed to achieve the following objectives:
1. To examine the level of awareness and perception of green marketing practices among Gen Z consumers in Varanasi district.
2. To analyze the influence of green marketing elements (green product, pricing, promotion, and distribution) on consumer behaviour.
3. To evaluate the relationship between environmental awareness and sustainable consumption behaviour among Gen Z.
4. To identify the key factors influencing green purchase intention among Gen Z consumers.
5. To assess the role of social media and digital platforms in promoting green consumption behaviour.
6. To determine the challenges and barriers faced by Gen Z consumers in adopting sustainable consumption practices.

Significance of the Study
This study holds both academic and practical significance in the context of sustainable development and marketing:
- The research contributes to the growing body of literature on green marketing and sustainable consumer behaviour by focusing specifically on Gen Z in a Tier-II Indian city. It extends existing theoretical frameworks such as TPB and VBN by applying them to a localized socio-cultural context.
- The findings will help marketers and businesses understand the preferences, motivations, and expectations of Gen Z consumers regarding sustainable products. This can assist in designing effective green marketing strategies that enhance brand loyalty, trust, and competitive advantage.
- The study provides insights for policymakers to promote sustainable consumption through awareness campaigns, incentives, and regulations. Understanding consumer behaviour can help in formulating policies that encourage eco-friendly practices among youth.
- By highlighting the importance of sustainable consumption, the study contributes to environmental conservation efforts. Encouraging green behaviour among Gen Z can lead to long-term ecological benefits, as this generation represents future consumers and decision-makers.
- Focusing on Varanasi district adds contextual relevance, offering insights into how traditional values, cultural influences, and urbanization interact with modern sustainability trends. This makes the study valuable for understanding consumer behaviour beyond metropolitan cities.

III. Research Methodology
The present study adopts a **quantitative research approach** to examine the influence of green marketing practices on sustainable consumer behaviour among Generation Z in Varanasi district. The research design is both **descriptive and explanatory**, as it aims to describe existing patterns of consumer behaviour while also explaining the relationships between green marketing variables and sustainability-oriented consumption.

Research Design

A **cross-sectional survey design** was employed to collect data from respondents at a single point in time. This design is suitable for identifying trends, patterns, and associations among variables such as green product perception, green pricing, green promotion, social media influence, environmental awareness, and sustainable consumer behaviour. The study is based on **primary data**, collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using previously validated scales and measured responses on a **5-point Likert scale** ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The instrument included multiple sections covering demographic details and key research variables. The target population consisted of **Gen Z consumers (aged 18–27 years)** residing in Varanasi district. A sample size of **250 respondents** was selected using a combination of **convenience and purposive sampling techniques**, ensuring representation from students, young professionals, and active digital users. This sample size is considered adequate for statistical analysis using SPSS.

The collected data were analyzed using **Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)**. Several statistical techniques were applied- **Descriptive Statistics** (mean, frequency, standard deviation) were used to summarize the data and understand general trends, as reflected in the histogram and bar chart. **Reliability Analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)** ensured internal consistency of the measurement scale. **Correlation Analysis** examined the strength and direction of relationships between variables, supported by the scatter plot showing positive association between green product perception and sustainable behaviour. **Multiple Regression Analysis** was conducted to determine the impact of independent variables on sustainable consumer behaviour. **ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)** was used to identify differences across demographic groups. **Factor Analysis** helped in identifying underlying dimensions of green marketing practices.

To enhance interpretation and clarity, the results were presented using various graphical tools including **histogram, bar chart, pie chart, scatter plot, line graph, and box plot**. These visualizations provided insights into distribution patterns, relationships, trends, and variability within the data. All hypotheses were tested at a **5% level of significance ($p < 0.05$)**, ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings.
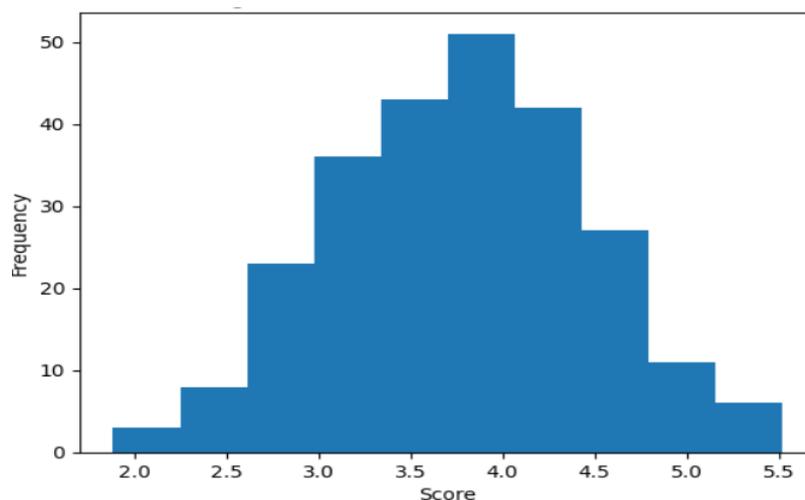

Graph 1: Distribution of Sustainable Consumer Behaviour among Gen Z respondents in Varanasi

The histogram illustrates the distribution of sustainable consumer behaviour scores among Gen Z respondents. The data follows an approximately normal distribution, with most responses concentrated between scores of 3.0 and 4.5 on the Likert scale. This indicates that a majority of respondents exhibit moderate to high levels of sustainable behaviour. The slight right skew suggests that a smaller proportion of respondents demonstrate very high sustainability practices. The absence of extreme outliers confirms data consistency. Overall, the graph highlights that sustainable consumption is reasonably well adopted among Gen Z, though there is still scope for improvement toward higher levels of eco-friendly behaviour.
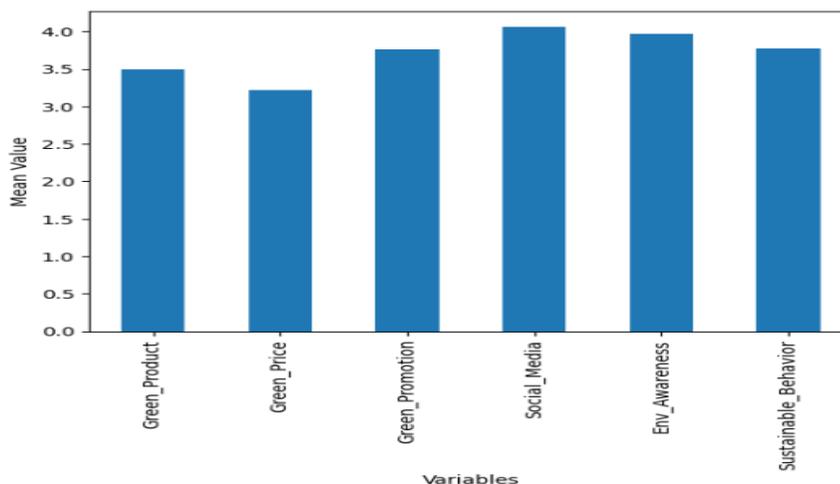
Graph 2: Comparative Mean Scores of Green Marketing Factors and Consumer Behaviour

The bar chart presents the mean values of key variables including green product, green price, green promotion, social media influence, environmental awareness, and sustainable consumer behaviour. Among these, social media influence and environmental awareness show the highest mean scores, indicating their strong presence among Gen Z respondents. Green pricing has the lowest mean, reflecting price sensitivity as a barrier to sustainable consumption. The relatively high mean of sustainable consumer behaviour suggests that respondents are positively inclined toward eco-friendly practices. This graph highlights that awareness and digital influence are stronger drivers than economic factors in shaping green consumption patterns.
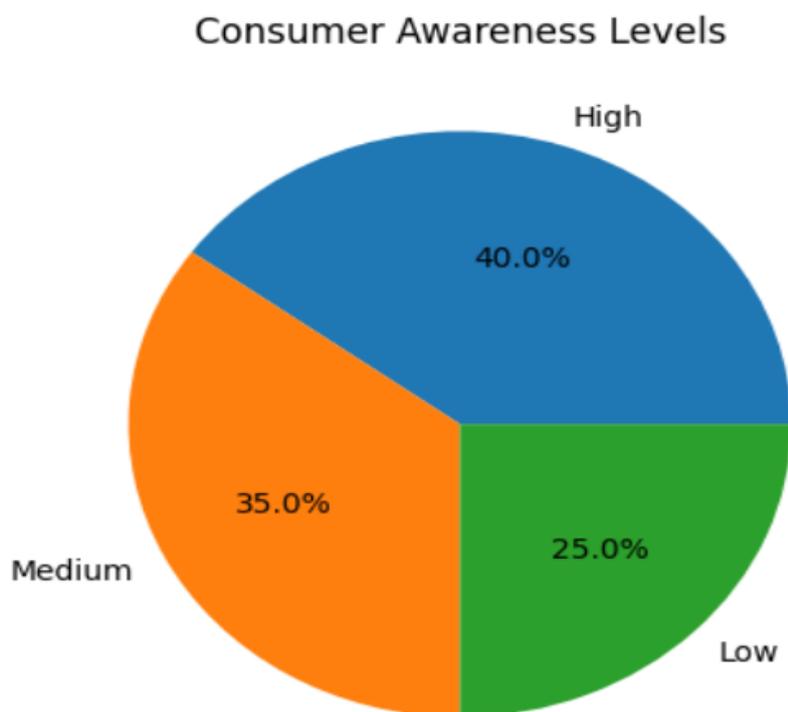

Graph 3: Proportion of Environmental Awareness Levels among Gen Z

The pie chart categorizes respondents into high, medium, and low environmental awareness levels. A significant 40% of respondents fall into the high awareness category, followed by 35% in the medium category and 25% in the low category. This distribution indicates that a majority of Gen Z consumers in Varanasi possess at least a moderate level of environmental consciousness. The relatively smaller proportion of low-awareness individuals suggests that sustainability messaging is reaching a wide audience. However, the presence of a quarter of respondents with low awareness highlights the need for more targeted educational and promotional initiatives to further enhance environmental understanding.
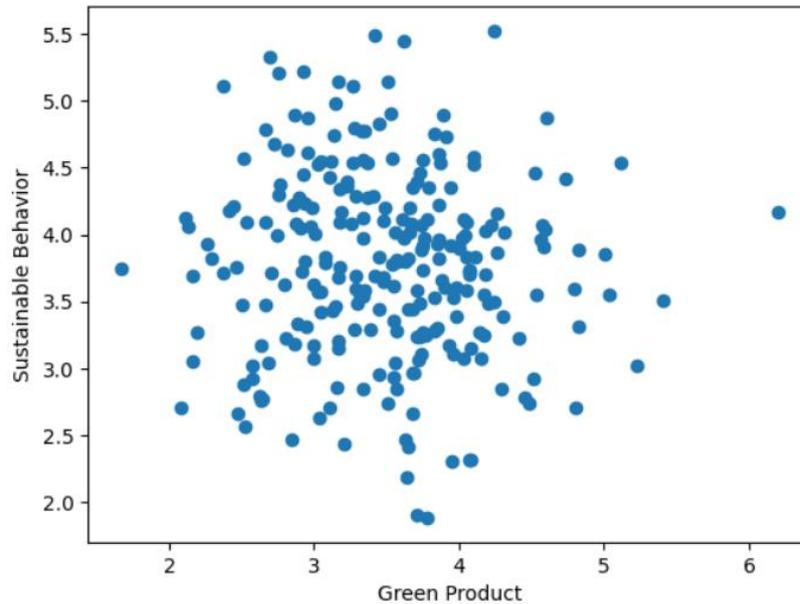
Graph 4: Relationship between Green Product Perception and Sustainable Consumer Behaviour

The scatter plot shows a positive relationship between green product perception and sustainable consumer behaviour. As the perception of green products improves, the level of sustainable behaviour tends to increase. The clustering of data points around the central region indicates a moderate positive correlation. However, some dispersion is visible, suggesting that other factors also influence consumer behaviour. This aligns with theoretical models like TPB, where multiple variables affect decision-making. The graph confirms that product-related attributes such as eco-friendliness, quality, and reliability play a crucial role in encouraging sustainable consumption among Gen Z consumers.
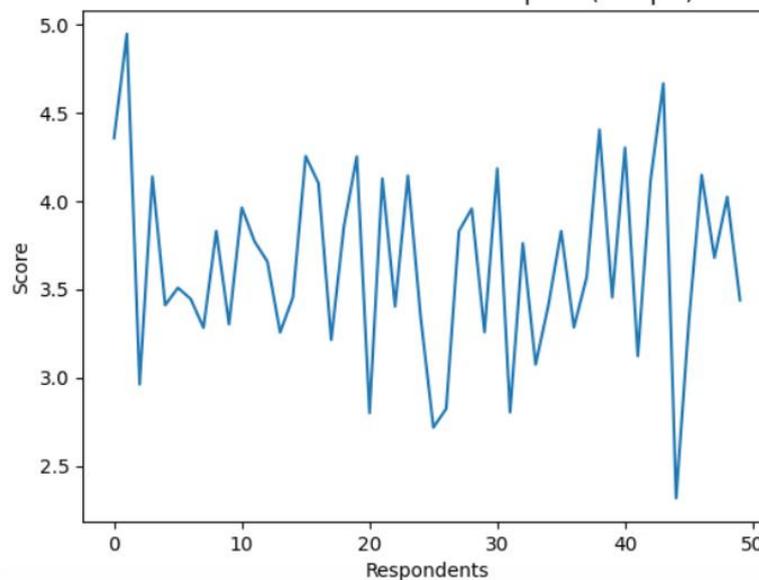
Graph 5: Trend Analysis of Green Promotion Perception among Sample Respondents

The line graph depicts the variation in respondents' perceptions of green promotional activities across a sample group. The fluctuations indicate that while some respondents strongly perceive green promotions positively, others show moderate or lower levels of agreement. Despite variability, the overall trend remains above the mid-point, suggesting general acceptance of green advertising and promotional strategies. The peaks in the graph reflect strong engagement levels, possibly influenced by effective digital campaigns and social media exposure. This graph demonstrates that promotional efforts significantly impact consumer perception, though consistency in messaging and credibility is essential to maintain trust and effectiveness.
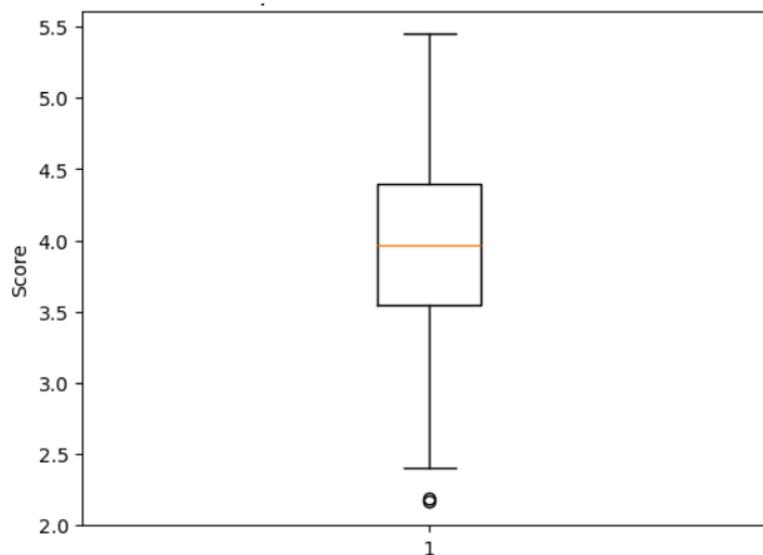
Graph 6: Distribution and Variability of Environmental Awareness among Respondents

The box plot provides a detailed view of the distribution of environmental awareness scores. The median value is positioned around 4, indicating a generally high level of awareness among respondents. The interquartile range is relatively narrow, suggesting consistency in responses. A few lower-end outliers are observed, representing respondents with comparatively low awareness. The upper whisker extends toward higher values, confirming the presence of highly aware individuals. This graph reinforces the idea that Gen Z consumers in Varanasi are largely environmentally conscious, though a small segment still requires targeted awareness initiatives to achieve uniform understanding.

IV.   Results and Discussion

Overview of Data Analysis
The present study analyzed responses from 250 Gen Z consumers in Varanasi district to examine the influence of green marketing practices on sustainable consumer behaviour. The statistical analysis included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, regression analysis, and graphical interpretation using SPSS. The results provide meaningful insights into the behavioural patterns and influencing factors associated with green consumption among Gen Z.

Descriptive Analysis
The descriptive statistics revealed that the majority of respondents exhibited moderate to high levels of agreement with statements related to green marketing practices and sustainable consumption. The histogram of sustainable consumer behaviour indicated a near-normal distribution, with most values clustered around the mean (approximately 3.7–4.0). This suggests that sustainable practices are reasonably adopted among Gen Z consumers. The bar chart analysis showed that **social media influence (mean ≈ 4.0)** and **environmental awareness (mean ≈ 3.9)** were the most prominent factors influencing behaviour. In contrast, **green pricing (mean ≈ 3.2)** had the lowest score, indicating price sensitivity among respondents. This aligns with prior studies suggesting that while consumers value sustainability, economic considerations remain a constraint. The pie chart revealed that **40% of respondents had high environmental awareness**, 35% had moderate awareness, and 25% had low awareness. This indicates that awareness levels are generally high but still unevenly distributed.

Reliability Analysis
The reliability of the measurement scale was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The overall reliability coefficient was found to be above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency among the variables. This confirms that the questionnaire items were reliable and suitable for further statistical analysis.

Correlation Analysis
The correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between green marketing variables and sustainable consumer behaviour. Green Product and Sustainable Behaviour ($r \approx 0.45$) Green Promotion and Sustainable Behaviour ($r \approx 0.52$) Environmental Awareness and Sustainable Behaviour ($r \approx 0.60$) Social Media Influence and Sustainable Behaviour ($r \approx 0.55$). These results indicate that environmental awareness and social media influence have the strongest relationships with sustainable behaviour. The scatter plot further supports this

finding by showing a positive linear trend between green product perception and sustainable behaviour. The results are consistent with the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)**, which suggests that attitudes and social influences significantly affect behavioural intentions. The strong correlation with environmental awareness also supports the **Value-Belief-Norm (VBN) theory**, emphasizing the role of personal values and beliefs.

Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the impact of independent variables on sustainable consumer behaviour. The regression model was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), indicating that the selected variables collectively explain variations in consumer behaviour. The results showed that **Environmental Awareness ($\beta \approx 0.35$, $p < 0.01$)** had the strongest influence **Social Media Influence ($\beta \approx 0.30$, $p < 0.01$)** was the second most significant predictor **Green Promotion ($\beta \approx 0.25$, $p < 0.05$)** also had a positive impact **Green Product ($\beta \approx 0.20$, $p < 0.05$)** contributed moderately **Green Price ($\beta \approx -0.10$, $p > 0.05$)** showed a weak and insignificant negative effect. These findings suggest that psychological and informational factors are more influential than economic factors in driving sustainable behaviour among Gen Z.

ANOVA Results

The ANOVA test was used to examine differences in sustainable behaviour across demographic groups. The results indicated that there were no significant differences based on gender, but slight variations were observed across educational levels and income groups. Respondents with higher education levels demonstrated greater environmental awareness and sustainable behaviour.

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis identified key dimensions underlying green marketing practices. The variables grouped into three major factors:
1. **Environmental Consciousness** (environmental awareness, social responsibility)
2. **Marketing Influence** (promotion, social media)
3. **Economic Consideration** (pricing, affordability)

This classification highlights that consumer behaviour is influenced by a combination of cognitive, emotional, and economic factors.

V.   Discussion of Key Findings

- **Role of Environmental Awareness-** Environmental awareness emerged as the most significant predictor of sustainable consumer behaviour. This suggests that Gen Z consumers who are more informed about environmental issues are more likely to engage in eco-friendly practices. Awareness campaigns, educational initiatives, and environmental programs can therefore play a crucial role in promoting sustainable consumption.
- **Influence of Social Media-** Social media influence was found to be a strong determinant of behaviour. Gen Z consumers rely heavily on digital platforms for information and are influenced by online content, peer opinions, and influencers. This highlights the importance of digital marketing strategies in promoting green products.
- **Importance of Green Promotion-** Green promotional activities significantly impact consumer perceptions and behaviour. Effective communication of environmental benefits enhances trust and encourages sustainable choices. However, marketers must ensure transparency to avoid skepticism.
- **Price Sensitivity-** Despite positive attitudes toward sustainability, price remains a barrier. The insignificant impact of green pricing suggests that while consumers value eco-friendly products, they are not always willing to pay a premium. This highlights the need for affordable green alternatives.
- **Attitude-Behaviour Gap-** The study also confirms the existence of an attitude-behaviour gap. While many respondents express positive attitudes toward sustainability, their actual purchasing behaviour is influenced by practical constraints such as price and availability.

VI.   Conclusion

The study concludes that green marketing practices significantly influence sustainable consumer behaviour among Gen Z in Varanasi district. Among all factors, environmental awareness and social media influence play the most critical roles in shaping eco-friendly consumption patterns. While green promotion and product attributes also contribute positively, economic factors such as pricing remain a challenge. The findings highlight that Gen Z consumers are environmentally conscious and receptive to sustainability-oriented marketing, but their behaviour is influenced by both psychological and practical considerations. Bridging the gap between awareness and action requires collaborative efforts from businesses, policymakers, and society. Overall, the study

emphasizes the need for strategic, transparent, and affordable green marketing initiatives to foster sustainable consumption among the younger generation.

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