

# Empowering Ethical Consumerism: Unveiling Corporate Social Responsibility

Pranali Patil

Department of Business Administration and International Business  
MIT Arts, Commerce, and Science College, Alandi (D), Pune, Maharashtra, India

**Abstract:** *In today's Globalized and Interconnected World, ethical consumerism and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are pivotal in shaping business practices. Ethical Consumerism refers to consumer's deliberate choices to support companies that align with their values, whether related to environmental sustainability, fair labour practices, or community engagement. On the other hand, CSR encompasses a company's commitment to positively impact society, the environment, and the shareholders beyond profit generation. This research paper explores the interplay between ethical consumer behavior and CSR activities undertaken by companies. It dives into the motivation behind ethical consumption, the impact of CSR practices on consumer perceptions, and the challenges faced by businesses in balancing profit motives with responsible action.*

**Keywords:** Ethical Consumerism, Value Belief norm, Cognitive Dissonance, Greenwashing, Anti-consumption

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the ultramodern world, where access to information is instant and translucency is anticipated, consumers are increasingly seen as key crucial drivers of change. Purchasing decisions are influenced not only by factors like price and quality but also by considerations such as the methods of production, the individuals involved in creating the products, and the broader impact on society and the environment.

As consumers have become more conscious about ethical purchases and products, businesses are being called upon to demonstrate responsibility toward sustainability in their policies. This is where CSR comes into the picture. CSR is a commitment that makes the company operate in ways that are not only profitable but also socially and environmentally responsible. Businesses must align with ethical consumer practices.

"Ethical consumerism refers to the practice of purchasing products and services produced to minimize social and environmental damage while avoiding those that have a negative impact<sup>[1]</sup> (Harrison, 2005)". "Ethical consumerism is the practice that consumer stakeover to avoid products that do not align with their ethical norms and choose those that focuses on social justice, environmental sustainability, and mortal rights<sup>[2]</sup>(Stihler, 1998)(Stihler, 1998)"Ethical consumerism is about people making conscious choices with their purchases to support businesses that align with their values. This might mean picking fair trade coffee to insuregrowers are treated fairly, choosing atrocity-free cosmetics because you watch about animal welfare, or opting products made from sustainable materials to reduce your environmental footprint. It's also about steering away from companies that engage in harmful or unethical practices. Ethical consumerism goes beyond just individual decisions; it represents a growing understanding of how our buying habits affect both society and the environment. It's driven by the understanding that every purchase supports the practices and values of the companies behind the products. As a result, ethical consumers aim to promote positive change by supporting socially responsible companies and avoiding those that are not.

CSR, in short, can be explained as responsibility to fulfil their duty towards society and the environment. "Corporate Social Responsibility refers to how a business seeks to align its values and behaviour with the expectations and needs of stakeholders—not just customers and investors, but also employees, suppliers, communities, regulators, special interest groups, and society as a whole<sup>[3]</sup>(Elkington, 1999)"

"Corporate Social Responsibility is the voluntary actions that a business can take, over and above compliance with minimum legal requirements, to address its competitive interests and the interests of wider society (Crane, 2016)"

The rise of ethical consumerism has led to an increased focus on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as businesses recognize the importance of aligning their practices with the values of ethically minded consumers. In this way, ethical consumerism is a powerful tool for driving corporate accountability and promoting a more sustainable and equitable global economy.

Nowadays, businesses focus more on their social responsibilities by inculcating ethical practices in their production processes, fair treatment of their employees, launching cruelty-free products, and undertaking various programs to benefit social groups.

This paper examines the powerful connection between ethical consumerism and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), showing how informed and empowered consumers are driving companies to prioritize not just profits, but also people and the planet.

Today, it's crucial to highlight the importance of ethical consumerism. As our understanding of social, environmental, and economic issues evolves, ethical consumerism has become a key principle guiding how both businesses and consumers interact in the marketplace. Here are some reasons why it matters so much

- Consumers lead the way the companies by voting through their purchasing power and supporting businesses that are practicing sustainability, fair labour practices, and social justice-oriented issues.
- Encourages sustainability which helps the company improve its operations.
- Ethical consumerism helps Solidify Social justice and fair Trade. Consumers can also contribute to worker support by selecting ethically sourced and produced goods that provide fair wages and safe working conditions.
- It helps build positive brand recognition, customer loyalty, and long-term success.
- Increasing demand for ethically produced goods is fostering innovation and leading to the development of new business models.
- It helps businesses study consumer behavior as per the changes in innovation and market supply.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Ethical Consumerism, also known as ethical consumption or ethical shopping, involves making thoughtful purchasing decisions based on ethical and sustainable considerations. There are some ethical ways of consumption:

- Opting for environmentally friendly products means choosing items that help protect our planet.
- Fair trade consumption is a way of supporting products that ensure fair wages and working conditions for producers in developing countries.
- Cruelty-free products that are not tested on animals.
- Supporting local or small-scale businesses helps strengthen local economies.
- Choosing products from companies prioritizing human rights, diversity, and community well-being.
- Ethical fashion focuses on opting for organic clothing and supporting brands with transparent supply chains.
- Opting for organic farm produce and reducing waste.
- Conscious consumption involves making more thoughtful shopping decisions, often consuming less and prioritizing sustainability.
- Investing in companies that align with ethical practices and values.
- Boycotting brands with unethical practices.
- Anti-consumption Of Goods and services that are harmful.

### Theories

Some Theories and Models will help to understand consumer behavior and Psychology from an ethical consumption perspective:

- Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB): This theory mainly focuses on the behavior of the consumer which is mainly influenced by three factors: attitude (positive or negative evaluations of behavior), subjective norms (social pressures), and perceived behavioral control (one's ability to perform the behavior). It explains how consumers' intentions to make ethical purchases are shaped by their beliefs about ethical products, the influence of peers, and their perceived ability to purchase these products.

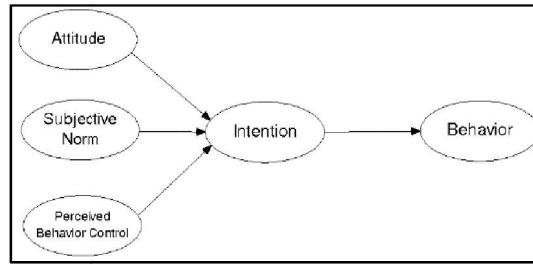


Figure 1: Theory of Planned Behaviour

- Value-Belief-Norm Theory (VBN): This theory how personal values (such as environmentalism), beliefs (about the consequences of actions), and norms (moral obligations) drive ethical behavior which leads to supporting CSR and making ethical consumption choices.

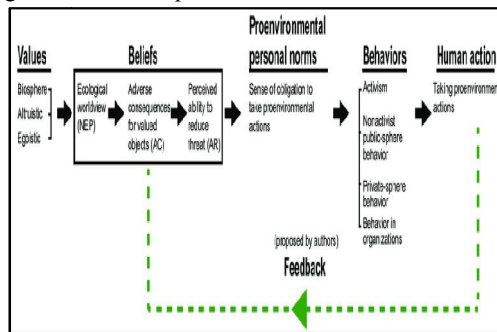


Figure 2: Value-Belief-Norm Theory

- Cognitive Dissonance Theory: This theory explores the psychological discomfort that arises when there's a conflict between belief and behaviours. In the context of ethical consumerism, consumers may experience dissonance when their purchases do not align with their ethical beliefs, resulting in changes in their behavior

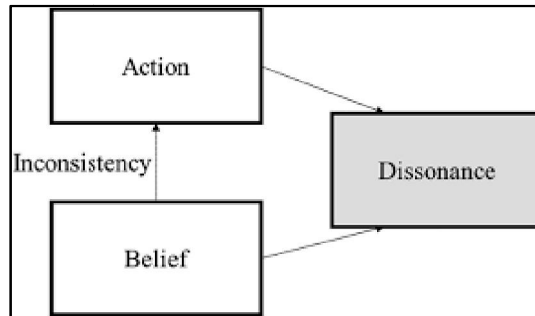


Figure 3: Cognitive Dissonance Theory

### III. EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

#### *Patagonia: A Pioneer in Ethical Consumerism*

Patagonia, an outdoor clothing and gear company, is well-known for its dedication to environmental sustainability and ethical business practices. Established in 1973 by Yvon Chouinard, Patagonia has crafted its brand around the values of ecological stewardship and social responsibility.

The Company's mission statement, "We're in business to save our home planet," reflects their dedication to sustainability and ethical practices. Some of the initiatives taken to support environmental sustainability are:



**A. Environmental Responsibility:**

- Sustainable Materials: Patagonia has been at the forefront of utilizing sustainable materials. The company sources organic cotton, which eliminates the need for harmful pesticides and fertilizers. Additionally, they use recycled polyester made from plastic bottles, helping to reduce waste and minimize the reliance on virgin materials.
- The Worn Wear Program encourages customers to buy used Patagonia gear, repair their existing items, and recycle worn-out products. This initiative promotes a circular economy, extending the life of products and reducing waste.

**B. Social Responsibility:**

- Fair labour practices: Patagonia is committed to ensuring fair labour practices as the company is a member of the *Fair Labor Association* and conducts regular audits of its factories to ensure compliance with labour standards.
- 1% for the Planet: Patagonia has pledged 1% of its sales to environmental organizations. This commitment has resulted in millions of dollars being donated to environmental groups working on conservation and sustainability projects.

**C. Impact and Outcome**

- Customer loyalty
- Brand Reputation
- Cruelty-free products
- Ethical fashion focuses on opting for organic clothing.
- Boost in Sale
- Conscious consumption as Patagonia’s “Don’t Buy This Jacket” campaign, which encouraged consumers to think twice before making a purchase, highlighted the company’s commitment to reducing consumption and promoting sustainability.
- Reduce Carbon Footprints as the company has invested in renewable energy projects such as installing solar panels on its facilities.

Patagonia’s revenue has been consistently growing throughout the years. The company has an estimated value of about 3 billion dollars and brings in \$100 million in revenue annually (Pereira, 2023). Further, its sales have quadrupled in the past decade to around \$1 billion annually. (Semuels, 2019)

Patagonia has managed to maintain its focus on ethical sourcing and employee well-being. This can be seen through its donation of 100% of its Black Friday sales to environmental causes in 2016, to providing many employee benefits. (Semuels, 2019)

#### **D. Conclusion**

Patagonia's strong dedication to ethical consumerism and corporate social responsibility sets a great example of how businesses can make a positive impact while still being profitable. By making sustainability a priority, treating labour fairly, and advocating for the environment, Patagonia has created a brand that connects with people who care about ethical practices.

Looking at Patagonia's growing popularity highlights the rising consumer demand for companies that prioritize ethics and sustainability. (Faire, 2023)

For example, in a recent report by NielsenIQ, "it was found that 95% of consumers try to take some action to live sustainably (Faire, 2023)" Also, internet searches with words including "eco-friendly" or "reusable" have increased dramatically in the past year (Faire, 2023). These data points have a direct correlation with consumer's spending habits. It appears that in today's day and age when given the option, consumers will likely choose a more sustainable product if they have an option.

### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **Research Design**

The Research employs a mixed mixture approach, combining primary and secondary data to provide a comprehensive understanding of ethical consumerism and CSR.

#### **Research Objectives**

- To explore the relationship between CSR and Ethical consumerism.
- To explore how ethical operation and production by the company affects the ethical consumption of consumers.
- To identify key factors influencing consumers' ethical purchasing decisions.
- To assess the impact of CSR initiatives on consumer behavior.

#### **Data Collection Methods**

##### **Surveys**

- Sample size: A total of 50 participants were surveyed.
- Survey Instrument: A structured questionnaire consisting of closed-ended and open-ended questions was developed. The questionnaire was designed to capture participants' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours related to ethical consumerism and CSR.

##### **Section of Questionnaire:**

- Demographics: Age and Gender.
- Consumer Attitudes: Questions on awareness and perception of CSR.
- Consumer Behaviour: Questions on Purchasing habits and willingness to pay a premium for ethical products
- CSR Impact: Questions on the perceived impact of CSR initiatives on purchasing decisions.

#### **Literature Review**

Sources: Various journals, research papers, articles, and Books on ethical consumerism and CSR were reviewed.

- Journal of Consumer Research, Volume 51, Issue 1, June 2024, Page 1, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucae020>
- (Duarte, May 2024)(May 2024) DOI:10.1007/s12208-024-00404-x Authors: Paulo Duarte
- Ethical Consumerism in Emerging Markets: Opportunities and Challenges April 2024 (Journal of Business Ethics 191(4):1-23).
- Ethical consumption: why should we understand it as a social practice within a multilevel framework? Sara Karimzadeh, Conceptualization, Funding Acquisition, Project Administration, Writing – Original Draft Preparation<sup>1</sup> and Magnus Boström, Funding Acquisition, Project Administration, Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing<sup>1</sup>.

- Bridging the Gap between Ethical Consumers and Corporate Social Responsibility: An International Comparison of Consumer-oriented CSR Rating System-Ellis Jones College of the Holy Cross, USA.

**V. ANALYSIS OF DATA**

By diving into the data collected, we aim to uncover the motivations behind ethical purchasing decisions and understand how CSR efforts influence consumer trust and loyalty. We reached out to a diverse group of participants, ensuring a wide range of perspectives and experiences. This analysis will provide valuable insights for businesses looking to align their strategies with the values and expectations of their customers, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and responsible marketplace.

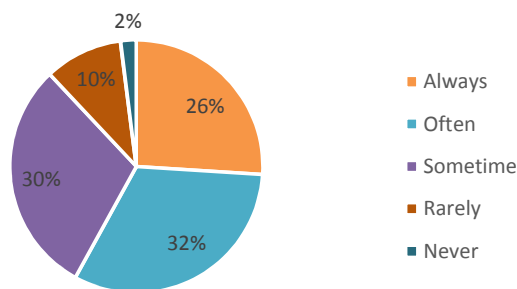
**Section 1: Demographics (50 Participants)**

Basis		Frequency	Percentage
Age	Under 18	10	20%
	18-24	32	64%
	25-34	5	10%
	35-above	6	12%
Gender	Male	23	46%
	Female	27	54%

**Insight**

**Age:** Most of your respondents are 18-24, making up 64% of the participants. This suggests that this age group is particularly engaged with ethical consumerism and CSR topics. It’s also interesting that 20% of the respondents are under 18, showing that even younger individuals are interested in these issues. The 25-34 age group and those 35 and above have fewer participants, which might mean they are either less interested or less available to participate in the survey.

Consideration of Companies' Ethical Practices while Purchasing Goods and Services



**Gender:** A fairly balanced gender distribution, with a slight majority of female participants at 54%. This balance is great because it ensures that perspectives are from both genders. The slight female majority could indicate that women are a bit more engaged or interested in ethical consumerism and CSR topics.

**Section 2: Consumer Behaviour**

<i>Q1 Consideration of Companies' Ethical Practices while Purchasing Goods and Services</i>	
Always	26%
Often	32%
Sometime	30%

Rarely	10%
Never	2%

**High Awareness and Consideration:**

- Always (26%): A significant portion of consumers consistently prioritize ethical practices when making purchasing decisions. This indicates a strong commitment to supporting companies that align with their values.
- Often (32%): An even larger group frequently considers ethics, showing that while it may not always be the top priority, it is still a major factor in their decision-making process.

**Moderate Consideration:**

- Sometimes (30%): This group represents consumers who consider ethical practices occasionally. Their decisions might be influenced by other factors such as price, convenience, or product quality, but they still value ethical considerations to some extent.

**Low Awareness and Consideration:**

- Rarely (10%): A smaller segment of consumers rarely considers ethical practices. This could be due to a lack of awareness, perceived irrelevance, or other priorities taking precedence.
- Never (2%): A tiny fraction of consumers never considers ethical practices. This might reflect a complete focus on other factors or a lack of interest in ethical issues.

**Insights:**

- **Growing Trend:** The combined 58% of consumers who always or often consider ethical practices suggest a growing trend towards ethical consumerism. Companies with strong ethical practices can leverage this trend to build brand loyalty and attract conscientious consumers.
- **Opportunity for Education:** The 30% who sometimes consider ethics represent an opportunity for companies to educate and engage. By highlighting their ethical practices, companies can potentially convert these occasional considerers into frequent ones.
- **Niche Market:** The 12% who rarely or never consider ethics might be less influenced by ethical marketing. However, understanding their motivations can also help companies tailor their strategies to appeal to this segment.

<i>Q2 Which factors influence your decision to support ethical consumerism?</i>	
Environmental impact	58%
Fair labour practices	36%
Animal welfare	36%
Community involvement	36%
Transparency and honesty	31%

1. Environmental Impact as the Top Concern (58%): Environmental impact is the leading concern for ethical consumers, with 58% of respondents highlighting it as a priority. This shows how much people care about sustainability and reducing their ecological footprint. Companies should focus on eco-friendly practices like using renewable energy and reducing waste to appeal to the largest group of ethical consumers.

2. Fair Labor, Animal Welfare, and Community Involvement (36%): Three factors—fair labour practices, animal welfare, and community involvement—are all equally important to around a third of respondents. This indicates that consumers care about both human and animal rights, as well as how businesses contribute to society. Companies that want to connect with ethical consumers should address labour conditions, offer cruelty-free products, and invest in community development. A holistic approach covering these areas will resonate well.

3. Transparency and Honesty (31%): While transparency may rank a bit lower, 31% of consumers still prioritize clear and honest communication regarding a company's practices. Shoppers want to understand exactly what they are

supporting. By being open about sourcing, ethical standards, and sustainability initiatives, companies can build trust and differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

4. Broad Ethical Concerns: With several issues sharing similar importance, it's clear that ethical consumerism isn't one-dimensional. Consumers are balancing concerns about the environment, labour, animal rights, and community impact in their purchasing decisions. Brands should avoid focusing on just one ethical issue. A comprehensive approach that covers various ethical aspects is more likely to gain broad consumer support.

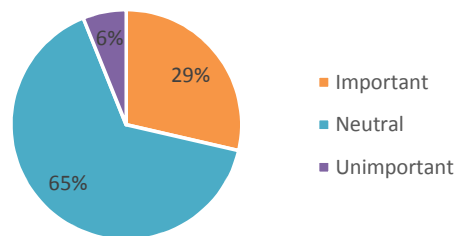
Ethical consumers are looking for more than just green products—they want companies that care about people, animals, and communities. By focusing on sustainability, transparency, and all-around ethical practices, businesses can build trust and loyalty with this growing segment of consumers.

<i>Q3. How often do you research a company's CSR efforts before making a purchase?</i>	
Never	32%
Occasionally	23%
Always	45%

**Insights**

High Engagement with CSR: A significant portion of respondents (45%) always research a company's CSR efforts before making a purchase. This indicates a strong consumer interest in ethical practices and suggests that CSR initiatives can significantly influence purchasing decisions.

Importance of CSR while choosing a brand or product



Moderate Awareness: 23% of respondents occasionally look into CSR efforts. This group represents consumers who are somewhat aware of CSR but may not consistently prioritize it in their purchasing decisions. There is potential to convert these occasional researchers into regular ones through increased awareness and education

Opportunity for Growth: 32% of respondents never research CSR efforts. This highlights an opportunity for companies to better communicate their CSR initiatives and educate consumers on the importance of ethical practices. By doing so, businesses can potentially engage this segment and encourage more ethical consumer behavior.

The data reveals that nearly half of the respondents are highly engaged with CSR efforts, reflecting the growing importance of ethical consumerism. Companies should leverage this insight to enhance their CSR communication strategies and educate consumers, thereby fostering a more ethically conscious marketplace.

**Section 3: Consumer Preferences and CSR**

<i>Q4 How important is CSR to you when choosing a brand or product?</i>	
Important	28.6%
Neutral	65.3%
Unimportant	6.1%

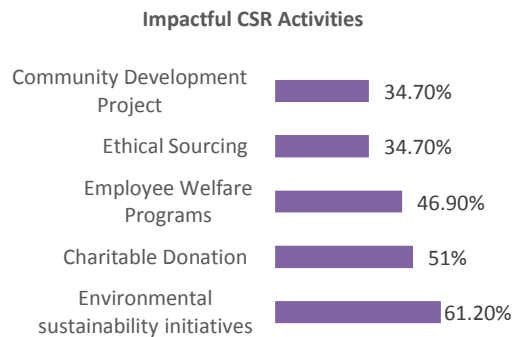


**Insights**

1. Moderate Importance: About 28.6% of respondents consider CSR important when choosing a brand or product. This group actively seeks out companies that align with their ethical values and are likely to support brands with strong CSR initiatives. This can help in the decision-making process for the company to contribute more towards societal benefit.
2. Neutral Stance: The majority of respondents (65.3%) are neutral about CSR. This indicates that while CSR might not be a primary deciding factor for them, it doesn't go unnoticed. Companies have an opportunity to educate and engage this group, potentially shifting their stance towards valuing CSR more highly as it can be through educational campaigns, collaboration with NGOs, etc
3. Low Disinterest: Only 6.1% of respondents find CSR unimportant. This small percentage suggests that most consumers are at least somewhat aware of CSR, even if it doesn't heavily influence their purchasing decisions. Companies have an opportunity to engage this group by clearly communicating the direct benefits of CSR and integrating ethical practices into their core values. By doing so, businesses can gradually shift consumer priorities and foster a more ethically conscious marketplace.

The data reveals that while a significant portion of consumers (28.6%) prioritize CSR, the majority remain neutral. This highlights an opportunity for businesses to better communicate their CSR efforts and educate consumers on the benefits of supporting socially responsible brands. By doing so, companies can potentially convert neutral consumers into advocates for ethical practices.

<b>Q5 Which CSR activities do you find most impactful?</b>	
Environmental sustainability initiatives	61.2%
Charitable donations	51%
Employee welfare programs	46.9%
Ethical sourcing	34.7%
Community development projects	34.7%



**Insights**

1. Environmental Sustainability Takes the Lead: The majority of respondents (61.2%) find environmental sustainability initiatives to be the most impactful. This highlights the growing consumer concern for environmental issues and the importance of eco-friendly practices. Companies focusing on reducing their carbon footprint, using sustainable materials, and promoting recycling are likely to gain favour from this group.
2. Charitable Donations Matter: Over half of the respondents (51%) value charitable donations. This indicates that consumers appreciate companies that give back to society through financial support for various causes.

Businesses can enhance their reputation by being transparent about their charitable contributions and the impact of their donations.

3. Employee Welfare Programs: With 46.9% of respondents highlighting employee welfare programs, it's clear that how companies treat their employees is a significant factor. Initiatives that promote fair wages, work-life balance, and mental health support are crucial in building a positive brand image.
4. Ethical Sourcing and Community Development: Both ethical sourcing and community development projects are valued by 34.7% of respondents. Ethical sourcing ensures that products are made under fair labour conditions and without exploiting workers, while community development projects show a company's commitment to improving the local communities where they operate

The data reveals that consumers place a high value on environmental sustainability, charitable donations, and employee welfare programs. Companies that prioritize these areas in their CSR strategies are likely to build stronger relationships with their customers and enhance their brand reputation. By understanding and addressing these consumer preferences, businesses can create a positive impact and foster loyalty among ethically conscious consumers.

<i><b>Q6 What actions do you believe companies should take to improve their CSR efforts?</b></i>	
Increase Transparency	49%
Engage in more community projects	59.2%
Improve environmental practices	49%
Ensure fair labour practices	34.7%

1. Community Engagement is Key: The highest percentage of respondents (59.2%) believe that companies should engage in more community projects. This indicates a strong desire for businesses to contribute positively to the communities they operate in. Consumers value companies that invest in local development, support education, healthcare, and other community initiatives. By doing so, businesses can build stronger relationships with their local communities and enhance their social impact.
2. Transparency Matters: Nearly half of the respondents (49%) emphasize the importance of increasing transparency. This suggests that consumers want to know more about a company's CSR activities and the impact of those efforts. Transparency builds trust and accountability, allowing consumers to make informed decisions. Companies can achieve this by regularly publishing detailed CSR reports, being open about their practices, and communicating their progress and challenges honestly.
3. Environmental Practices: Another 49% of respondents highlight the need for improved environmental practices. This reflects growing consumer concern for environmental sustainability. Companies are expected to adopt eco-friendly practices, reduce their carbon footprint, and promote sustainable resource use. By prioritizing environmental initiatives, businesses can appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and contribute to global sustainability goals.
4. Fair Labour Practices: Ensuring fair labour practices is important to 34.7% of respondents. This indicates that a significant portion of consumers are concerned about the treatment of workers. Companies should focus on providing fair wages, safe working conditions, and respecting workers' rights. Ethical labour practices not only improve employee satisfaction but also enhance a company's reputation and consumer trust.

The data reveals that consumers have clear expectations for companies to improve their CSR efforts. Engaging in community projects, increasing transparency, improving environmental practices, and ensuring fair labour practices are all crucial areas where businesses can make a positive impact. By addressing these priorities, companies can build stronger relationships with their customers, enhance their brand reputation, and contribute to a more sustainable and ethical marketplace.

<i><b>Q7 How do you usually learn about a company's CSR activities?</b></i>	
Company website	44%
Social media	68%

News articles	56%
Word of mouth	22%
Advertising	38%

Understanding the channels through which consumers learn about a company’s CSR activities can help businesses effectively communicate their efforts. Here’s a breakdown of the survey response

1. **Dominance of Social-Media:** The majority of respondents (68%) learn about CSR activities through social media. This highlights the power of platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn in disseminating information. Social media allows companies to reach a broad audience quickly and engage with consumers directly. It’s a dynamic space where businesses can share updates, success stories, and behind-the-scenes looks at their CSR initiatives.
2. **Significance of News Articles:** News articles are a key source of information for 56% of respondents. This indicates that traditional media still plays a crucial role in shaping public perception. Coverage by reputable news outlets can lend credibility to a company’s CSR efforts and reach audiences who may not be active on social media.
3. **Company Websites as a Reliable Source:** 44% of respondents rely on company websites to learn about CSR activities. This suggests that a well-maintained and informative website is essential. Companies should ensure their CSR pages are easily accessible, regularly updated, and provide detailed information about their initiatives and impact.
4. **Role of Advertising:** Advertising informs 38% of respondents about CSR activities. This includes both traditional advertising (TV, print) and digital advertising (online banners, sponsored content). Effective advertising campaigns can highlight a company’s commitment to CSR and attract the attention of ethically conscious consumers.
5. **Word of Mouth:** Although only 22% of respondents learn about CSR through word of mouth, it remains a valuable channel. Personal recommendations and discussions can significantly influence consumer perceptions. Companies can encourage word-of-mouth promotion by engaging with their community and creating memorable CSR initiatives that people want to talk about.

<b><i>Q8 In your opinion, what is the most significant barrier to ethical consumerism?</i></b>	
Lack of Information	40.8%
Higher Costs	20.4%
Limited availability of ethical product	26.5%
Lack of Interest	12.2%



1. **Lack of Information:** The most significant barrier, cited by 40.8% of respondents, is the lack of information. This suggests that many consumers feel they do not have enough knowledge about which products are ethical and why. Companies can address this by providing clear, accessible information about their ethical practices and the benefits of their products. Educational campaigns, transparent labelling, and detailed product descriptions can help bridge this information gap.
2. **Limited Availability of Ethical Products:** With 26.5% of respondents highlighting limited availability, it's clear that access to ethical products is a concern. Consumers may find it challenging to locate ethical options in their local stores or online. Businesses can respond by expanding their distribution networks, ensuring that ethical products are more widely available, and partnering with retailers to increase shelf space for these items.
3. **Higher Costs:** Higher costs are a barrier for 20.4% of respondents. Ethical products often come with a premium price due to sustainable sourcing, fair labour practices, and higher quality standards. To address this, companies can explore ways to reduce costs without compromising on ethics, such as optimizing supply chains or offering discounts and promotions. Additionally, educating consumers on the long-term benefits and value of ethical products can help justify the higher price.
4. **Lack of Interest:** A smaller portion of respondents (12.2%) indicated a lack of interest in ethical consumerism. This group may prioritize other factors, such as convenience or brand loyalty, over ethical considerations. To engage these consumers, companies can highlight the personal and societal benefits of ethical consumption, making it more relevant to their everyday lives. Storytelling and emotional appeals can also be effective in sparking interest and changing attitudes.

## VI. CONCLUSION

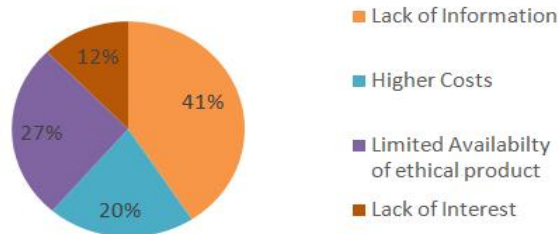
In today's interconnected world, ethical consumerism and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are more than just buzzwords; they are essential components of a sustainable business strategy. This research has highlighted the growing importance of ethical consumerism, where consumers make purchasing decisions based on their values and companies' ethical practices. It has also underscored the critical role of CSR in shaping consumer perceptions and fostering brand loyalty.

The findings from this study reveal that consumers are increasingly aware of and influenced by CSR initiatives. They value transparency, environmental sustainability, community engagement, and fair labour practices. However, barriers such as lack of information, higher costs, and limited availability of ethical products still hinder the widespread adoption of ethical consumerism.

### Suggestions for Businesses

- **Enhance Transparency:** Companies should prioritize transparency in their CSR efforts. Regularly publishing detailed reports and updates on CSR activities can build trust and credibility with consumers. Clear communication about the impact of these initiatives can help bridge the information gap and empower consumers to make informed choices.
- **Expand Availability of Ethical Products:** To address the issue of limited availability, businesses should work on expanding their distribution networks and ensuring that ethical products are accessible to a broader audience. Partnering with retailers and leveraging online platforms can help make these products more readily available.
- **Educate and Engage Consumers:** Educational campaigns can play a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of ethical consumerism. Companies can use social media, websites, and advertising to inform consumers about their CSR initiatives and the benefits of supporting ethical products. Engaging consumers through participatory CSR programs can also enhance their sense of involvement and commitment.
- **Address Cost Concerns:** While ethical products often come with a higher price tag, companies can explore ways to reduce costs without compromising quality. Offering discounts, loyalty programs, and promotions can make ethical products more affordable and attractive to a wider audience.

**Barrier to Ethical Consumerism**



- **Focus on Community Engagement:** Community projects are highly valued by consumers. Businesses should invest in initiatives that support local communities, such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development. These efforts not only benefit the community but also enhance the company’s reputation and consumer trust.

Empowering ethical consumerism through robust CSR practices is not just a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage for businesses. By aligning their operations with their consumers' values, companies can build stronger relationships, foster loyalty, and contribute to a more sustainable and ethical marketplace. As consumers continue to demand greater accountability and transparency, businesses that prioritize CSR will be well-positioned to thrive in the evolving landscape.

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