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Student awareness and purchasing behaviour towards Eco-friendly products

Dr. Gangotri S.Nirbhavane.

Abstract

This study explores students' knowledge, buying habits, motives, price perceptions and expectations of institutions about eco-friendly products. A total of 111 surveys were received and analyzed based on a structured questionnaire.

The sample consisted mainly of young people between 18 and 20 years of age (65; 58.6%) and 94 respondents (84.7%) knew about the presence of eco-friendly products. There was some evidence of purchasing behaviour, with 23 (20.7%) reporting always purchasing such products, 14 (12.6%) often purchasing and 56 (50.5%) sometimes purchasing. The most common purchasing motive was for environmental concerns (58 respondents), with health benefits coming next (36). The two most common purchase influences were environmental impact and product quality, with a significant minority being price. There was less clarity about willingness to pay a premium: 43 of them responded "yes," 41 were unsure, and 27 were "no.

The results indicate that there is a difference between environmental awareness and regular buying practices. They also suggest the role of educational institutions in making choices for sustainability more visible, affordable, convenient and socially supported. The paper reflects on these findings in the light of the Theory of Planned Behavior, the literature on the knowledge–behaviour gap and Sustainable Development Goal 12.

Short language abstract: This paper examines how students' consumption habits change when buying eco-friendly products and how they become more environmentally conscious. Language abstract (short): This paper explores the change in students' consumption habits while purchasing eco-friendly products, and how their consumption becomes more environmentally conscious.

Keywords: *Student Awareness, Purchasing Behaviour, Eco-Friendly Products, Environmental Awareness, Green Consumer Behaviour, Sustainable Consumption, Green Marketing, Consumer Preferences, Environmental Sustainability, Purchase Intention.*

Introduction:

Cropping pattern is the percentage of land put under cultivation for different crops during a certain agricultural year. Changes in crop composition are a reflection of the influence of irrigation, soil conditions, climatic variability, technology, market demand, government policies, and farmers' economic decisions. It is therefore an essential indication of agricultural transformation.

In different irrigated areas of Maharashtra, a steady change has taken place in the agricultural land use pattern from traditional food crops to commercial and high-value horticulture crops. Nashik District is one of the important agricultural regions of Maharashtra, notably famous for grapes, onions, vegetables, and other horticulture commodities.

Nashik District has an important agricultural tehsil called Niphad Tehsil. The expansion of irrigation and access to agricultural markets has motivated farmers to change their conventional planting patterns. Important constituents of the agricultural economy have included crops including grapes, onions, vegetables, sugarcane, and oilseeds.

The older agricultural pattern of Niphad consisted of grains, pulses, and other traditional crops. But the relative importance of different crop categories has altered with growing commercialization. Grapes have become an important horticultural and export-driven commodity, while onions are an important market-oriented vegetable crop. These changes impact farm income, employment, irrigation demand, production costs, and agricultural sustainability.

Therefore, the present study is an attempt to explore the temporal fluctuations in the cropping pattern of Niphad Tehsil and to estimate the extent of crop diversity throughout selected reference periods.

Introduction:

Sustainable consumption has emerged as an integral part of the environmental policy agenda since the consumption decisions of households and individuals affect demand for materials, energy, production systems, packaging and waste management.

The United Nations documents on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12 focus on changing consumption and production patterns, and delineate the different parts that consumers, businesses, governments and education institutions play in this transition (United Nations, 2026). The OECD also lists consumer behavior as an important component of sustainability policy and emphasizes the importance of knowing what hinders consumers from making healthy choices, including their affordability, accessibility, information quality, and choice environment (OECD, 2026).

Eco-friendly products can encompass products that have a design that reduces resources use, waste, pollution, or any other environmental impact throughout the product life cycle. These can include things that students use, such as reusable water bottles, eco-friendly stationery and organic food products. Buying decisions for young consumers may also be influenced by factors such as environmental concerns, but also by product quality, price, convenience, availability, social influences and perceived **personal benefits. Awareness should not be considered as proof of** continuous green purchasing.

This relation will be explored using a student survey in the present study. It targets five general areas of focus, including: what students know about products that are environmental friendly; how often students buy environmental friendly products; reasons for buying environmental friendly products; factors that influence purchasing decisions and the willingness to pay more for environmental friendly products. It also looks at attitudes towards environmental sustainability and attitudes towards the role of education institutions. The study is descriptive in nature, and the results are viewed as patterns in this sample, but not necessarily as causal relationships.

Review of Literature: Sustainable consumption is more than just buying a product with the 'green' label. It is about the choosing of goods, and services, and their use, re-use, and ultimate disposal. According to the United Nations, sustainable consumption and production is any effort to use resources and energy in ways that maximize their value, minimise the environmental damage (and social and economic damage) they cause, and enhance the quality of life for everyone (United Nations, 2026). This view extends beyond consumer and producer choices to look at the broader system of producers, retailers, public policy, infrastructure, information, and social norms.

Consumer preference for the environment may not always be able to influence consumer decisions. A consumer might be willing to purchase a sustainable product but instead buys a traditional product because it is not readily available, or is less desirable, or costs more, or is more inconvenient. According to OECD (2026) the economic and policy context influences the sustainable choice, and behavioural science can be used to plan interventions to make sustainable choices easier. These observations apply to the students the student may purchase different products than other consumers and may have different buying power.

Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is a theory developed by Ajzen (1991) that suggests attitudes toward behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control are the factors that influence behavioral intentions. Concern for environmental damage, subjective norms from peers and/or family members, teachers, or institutional culture, and perceived control in terms of whether students can afford, access, and easily use sustainable products, may lead to a favorable attitude toward eco-friendly purchasing. The theory is helpful in understanding how to explain why sometimes having a high awareness doesn't always lead to frequent purchases. While awareness can lead to positive attitudes, actual behaviour can be limited by other factors that influence control, such as price or availability, and habits. (Ajzen, 1991)

Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) pointed out that there is a problem in explaining pro- environmental behaviour only on the basis of environmental knowledge or awareness. They review the difference between knowing and doing what is good for the environment. This is particularly important with regard to the present data set as the awareness is very high, with 'sometimes' being the most common purchase frequency. The survey therefore serves as an indicator of an attitude–action or awaren**ess–behaviour gap in the sample, but a cause cannot be drawn from the description alone.**

Role of education-educational institutions might play a role in shaping sustainable consumption through informing, norm formation, supportive facilities and minimizing practical barriers. Awareness-raising and education are part of the efforts to involve consumers in sustainable consumption, as identified by the United Nations (2026). Campuses can be the environment in which students are exposed to the normalcy of reuse, the reduction of single-use items, the newness of recycling and refill stations, and sustainability in the curricular and co-curricular realm. These may be more effective when paired with convenient choices and education, not just information.

The aim of the study is to:

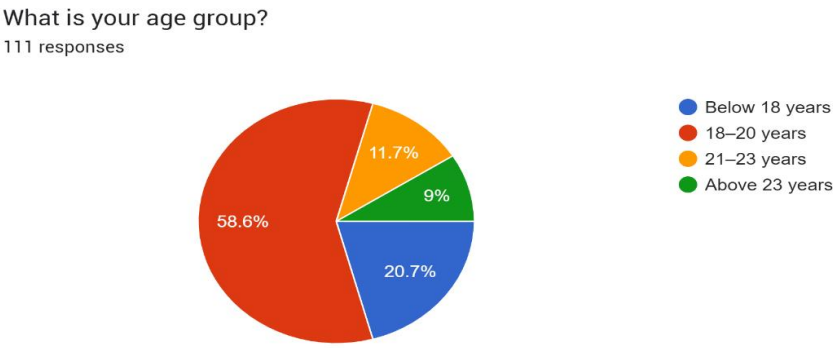
1. To know the awareness level of students about ecofriendly products.
2. To report how often students buy items which are environmentally friendly.
3. To recognize the primary drivers for buying 'green products'.
4. To look at how these factors – environmental impact, quality, price, availability and brand reputation – all affect one another relative to each other.
5. To evaluate the students' willingness to pay premium price for the eco-friendly products.
6. To analyse students' perspectives on the part of educational institutions in eco-friendly consumption.

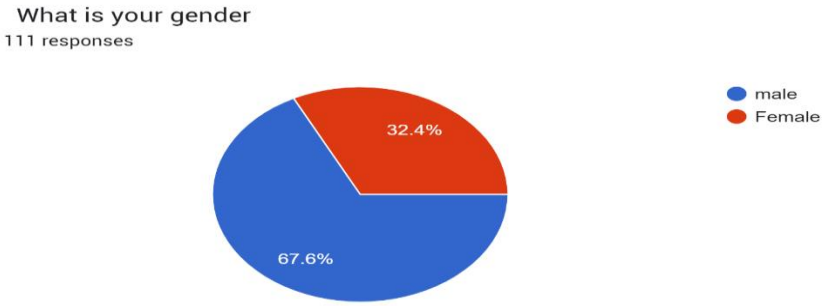
Data collection methods:

The study used a quantitative descriptive survey research. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, with a total of 111 responses. The questionnaire contained demographic data and questions related to awareness, purchasing frequency, types of products purchased, the reasons for purchasing them, their perceived importance for environmental sustainability, willingness to pay a premium, decision-making factors, and institutional promotion.

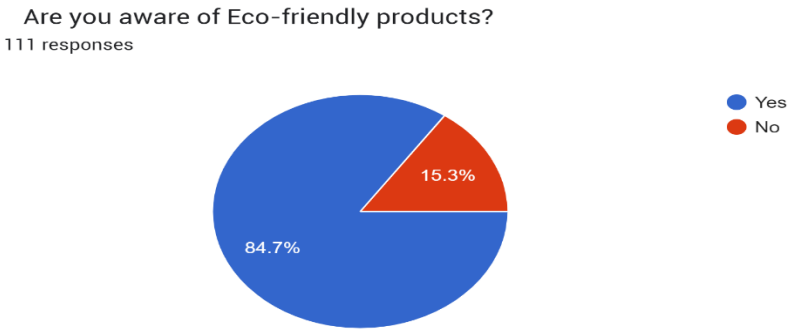
Frequency counts and percentages were used for the analysis. In questions with a five-point response scale, the distribution over response values was looked at, but not considered as a validated continuous psychological measure. If more than one product was mentioned in any product-use response, the product use mentions were tallied by product and not mutually exclusive. Sample is a student survey and appears to be a convenience sample, the findings should not be generalized to all students or consumers. The study also is based on self-reported behaviour and does not independently confirm actual purchases. These restrictions should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

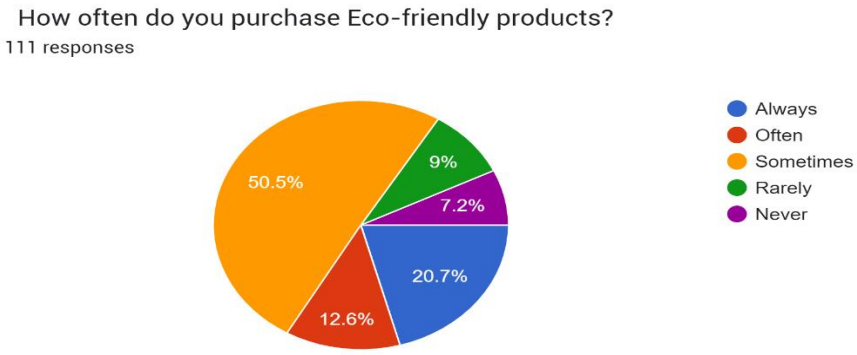
Results:





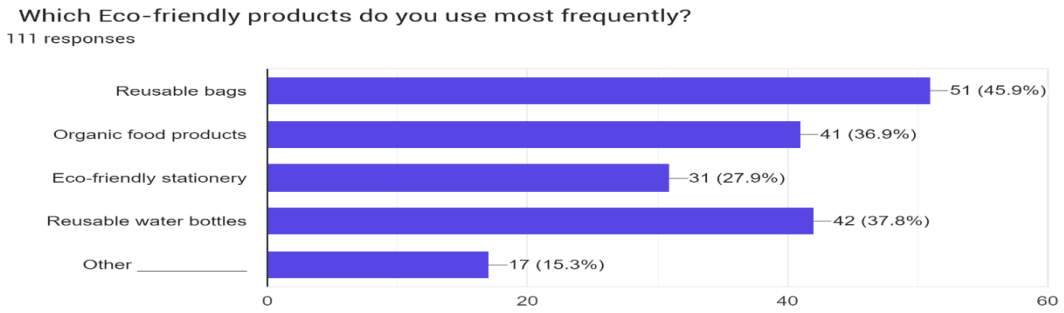
The sample was concentrated in the 18–20 age group, which accounted for 65 of the 111 respondents (58.6%). Respondents below 18 years numbered 23 (20.7%), while 13 (11.7%) were 21–23 and 10 (9.0%) were above 23. The gender distribution was 75 male respondents (67.6%) and 36 female respondents (32.4%).



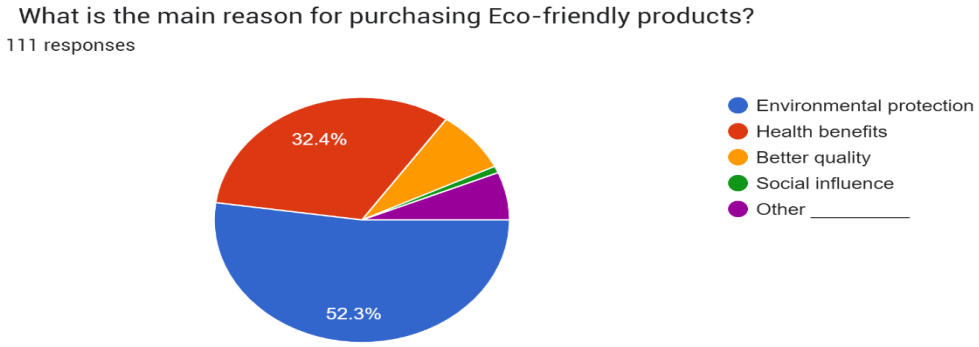


Awareness was high: 94 respondents (84.7%) reported that they were aware of eco-friendly products, while 17 (15.3%) reported that they were not. However, regular purchasing was less widespread. Twenty-three respondents (20.7%) reported always purchasing eco-friendly products and 14 (12.6%) reported doing so often. The largest group, 56 respondents (50.5%), selected sometimes. Ten respondents (9.0%) reported rarely purchasing them and eight (7.2%) reported never purchasing them.

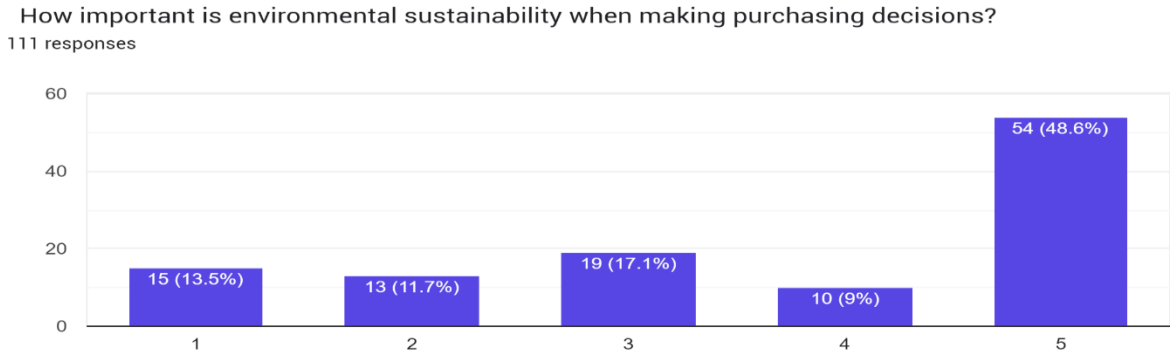
This distribution illustrates the difference between awareness and repeated behaviour. High awareness coexists with intermittent purchasing for many respondents. That pattern is consistent with the knowledge–behaviour gap discussed by Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002), although the present study cannot identify the exact causes of the gap.



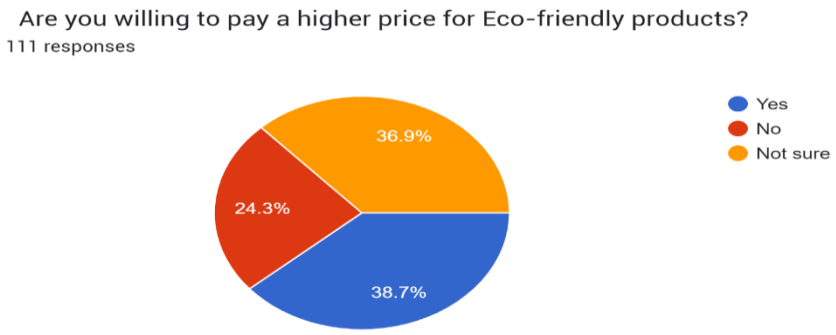
Reusable water bottles were mentioned by 53 respondents, followed by reusable bags (52), eco-friendly stationery (30), organic food products (39), and an 'Other' category (17). Because some respondents selected multiple products, these totals exceed the sample size when summed and should be interpreted as category mentions.



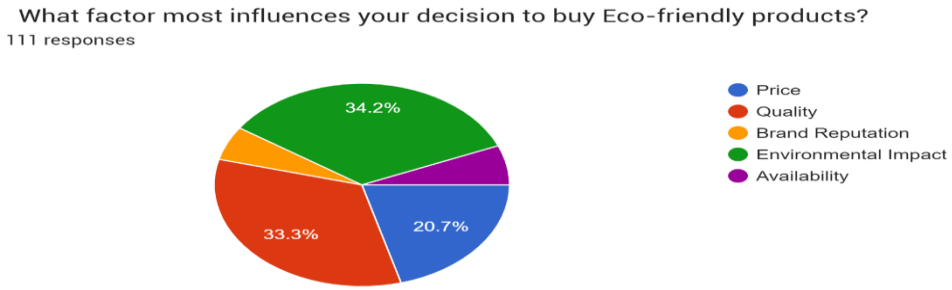
Environmental protection was the leading stated reason, selected by 58 respondents (52.3%), while 36 (32.4%) identified health benefits. Better quality was selected by nine respondents (8.1%), seven (6.3%) used the other response option, and one respondent (0.9%) identified social influence. The results indicate that both collective environmental considerations and personal benefits are relevant to green purchasing in this sample.



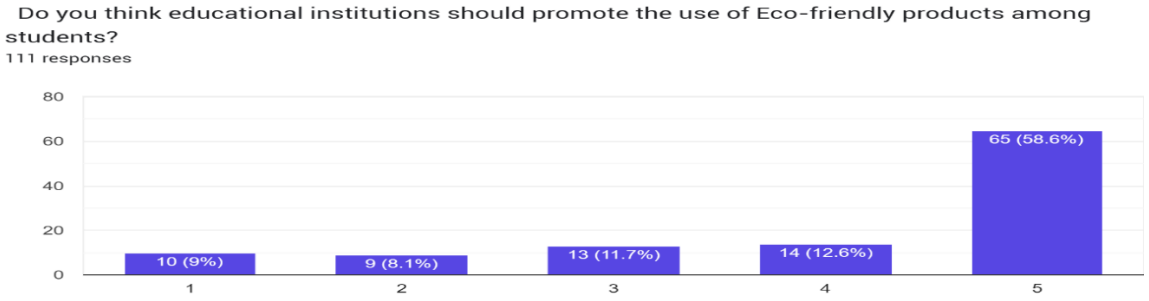
The sustainability-importance item showed a concentration at the highest response value: 54 respondents (48.6%) selected 5. Another 19 (17.1%) selected 3, 13 (11.7%) selected 2, 10 (9.0%) selected 4, and 15 (13.5%) selected 1. Overall, the distribution suggests that many students give substantial weight to sustainability, although responses are not uniformly high.



Only 43 respondents (38.7%) clearly indicated willingness to pay a higher price. A similar 41 respondents (36.9%) were unsure, while 27 (24.3%) were unwilling. The relatively large 'not sure' group is important: it suggests that willingness to pay may depend on the size of the price difference, perceived quality, trust in environmental claims, or the specific product involved. This is compatible with the broader policy literature emphasizing affordability and accessible sustainable choices (OECD, 2026).



Environmental impact was the most frequently selected purchase influence (38 respondents; 34.2%), closely followed by quality (37; 33.3%). Price influenced 23 respondents (20.7%), while availability and brand reputation were selected by seven (6.3%) and six (5.4%), respectively. The closeness of environmental impact and quality suggests that respondents may expect eco-friendly products to satisfy both environmental and functional expectations.



Support for institutional promotion was strong in the response pattern: 65 respondents (58.6%) selected the highest response value of 5, and 14 (12.6%) selected 4. Thirteen respondents (11.7%) selected 3, nine (8.1%) selected 2, and 10 (9.0%) selected 1. This indicates substantial support for educational institutions taking an active role in encouraging eco-friendly product use.

Discussion:

The survey gives an unambiguous yet complex overview of student green consumption. Awareness is high and the most common motivation is for environmental protection, but not everyone buys often. This distinction is important since knowledge of the environment and positive attitudes do not necessarily lead to stable behaviour. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002) suggest that a range of internal and external factors are responsible for the emergence of pro-environmental behaviour, and therefore that simple explanations based on information alone are inadequate.

Another helpful interpretation is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991). The high importance placed on sustainability can be interpreted as a positive attitude towards sustainable consumption. If there is support for promotion of the institutions, then social norms and expectations may also be important. Concurrently, the dual willingness to pay coupled with the significant price factor indicates that perceived behavioural control and economic considerations could constrain intentions from becoming consistent purchasing behaviour.

The pattern of the product is also important. The reuse of bottles and bags was regularly referenced, implying that goods linked to repeated consumption and to apparent daily activities were actual forms of sustainable consumption that could be available. These products can potentially be supported by campus infrastructure-for example, refill stations and reduced

reliance on disposable bags. But it was not a survey of actual frequency of use, product life span or environmental impact; such interpretations may be suggestive.

Another finding is that the importance of quality is gaining prominence with the aspect of environmental impact. Green marketing strategies that only address environmental attributes may not be adequate if consumers think that sustainable products are not as long lasting or as useful. It was therefore possible for educational institutions and sellers to convey environmental benefits and functional performance. More clarity around the environmental claims can also help to remove some of the uncertainty surrounding environmental claims, and a measure on affordability might help tackle the large population of the undecided.

Lastly, there is a high level of support for institutional promotion, which is in line with the general sustainable-consumption programme. Education, consumer information, standards, labels, coordinated action among consumers, business and policy makers are all emphasized by the United Nations (United Nations, 2026). Sustainability promotion on a campus can go beyond the classroom, incorporating procurement policies, campaigns to use reusables, refill stations, waste reduction, student-led initiatives and obvious social norms. These interventions target knowledge and context in which decisions are made.

Implications:

Sustainability education is possible during orientation programmes, in classroom education, student clubs and campus campaigns in educational institutions.

Access to refill stations, reusable alternatives, recycling facilities and a clearer sign of eco-friendly products are all things that can help make sustainable choices easier for institutions.

But cost should be taken into account as nearly a-quarter of respondents were not willing to pay more and more than a third were not sure.

Quality should be included as well as environmental advantages since survey results indicate that quality was almost as significant as the environmental impact.

Peer-led campaigns and visible social norms can help to reinforce sustainable practices within institutions without relying on the belief that a change in behaviour can be achieved through awareness creation.

Future studies should examine the actual purchase frequency, price sensitivity, trust in eco-labels, perceived availability of labels, and the importance of peer/family influence.

Limitations: There are a number of limitations to the study. First, you don't have a representative sample of students and shouldn't assume that the 111 survey takers reflect the views of all students. Secondly, the data come from self-report and thus may be subject to social-desirability and/or recall bias. Third, the questionnaire is descriptive in nature and fails to identify causal relationships between awareness, attitudes, price perceptions and purchasing behaviour. Fourth, the product-use question was open-ended, with totals for categories used not being exclusive. Fifth, the five-point items were not considered a validated psychometric scale and therefore should not be interpreted. Thirdly, there is no detailed socioeconomic information in the data-set, which precludes the ability to measure differences in purchasing power.

The results of this study indicate that students in general have a good level of awareness of eco-friendly products, but in the case of purchasing behavior, this awareness is not always reflected. Environmental protection becomes the top reason for product choice, whereas environmental impact and product quality are significant factors influencing the purchase. Meanwhile, the willingness to pay suggests that students are aware of prices and may have some constraints in their choice of sustainable options.

The results indicate that it is not enough to raise environmental awareness to promote sustainable consumption. Eco-friendly products should be within the reach of the public, accessible, convenient, reliable, and have good quality. Educational institutions have a significant chance to make a difference by adopting sustainable products and promoting sustainable practices in their institutions, and by fostering a culture of responsible consumption by making it easier and more accessible. Awareness programmes, practical measures, and institutional support can help close the gap between awareness and action by encouraging students. In general, it can support the formation of more responsible and eco-conscious consumer behaviors among students when considering the development of sustainable choices favorable conditions.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of thesis paper.

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