

## Consumer Acceptance of Eco-Friendly Products in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study Based on Consumer Behavior Theory

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### Abstract

This study investigates the factors influencing consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan, using consumer behavior theory as a conceptual framework. By applying a qualitative research design, in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 participants to uncover the underlying psychological, social, and situational factors that drive or hinder sustainable consumption. The study finds that environmental awareness, attitudinal beliefs, and social norms significantly shape consumer intentions, while behavioral control barriers such as high product costs, limited accessibility, and inconvenience remain the primary inhibitors. Notably, social influence from reference groups, including family and peers, was identified as a powerful force, with younger, urban consumers showing greater eco-friendly preferences due to social pressure and media exposure. Perceived behavioral control—influenced by affordability, convenience, and availability—emerged as a critical determinant of consumer behavior. The findings reveal that while consumers express positive attitudes towards green products, practical challenges prevent the widespread adoption of eco-friendly alternatives. This research contributes to the literature by offering novel insights into the unique contextual factors influencing green consumer behavior in a developing country like Pakistan. It emphasizes the importance of tailored marketing strategies and policy interventions to address barriers and promote sustainable consumption. For marketers and policymakers, the study suggests that addressing cost concerns, improving product availability, and fostering trust in environmental claims can facilitate the adoption of eco-friendly products. Future research could explore the longitudinal impact of such interventions.

**Keywords:** eco-friendly products, consumer behavior, sustainability, pakistan, green consumption.



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### 1. Introduction

In recent decades, the global discourse surrounding environmental sustainability has significantly influenced consumer behavior, particularly in relation to the adoption of eco-friendly products (Handriana et al., 2025). With increasing concerns about climate change, resource depletion, and ecological degradation, both policymakers and businesses are under mounting pressure to promote sustainable consumption practices (Ottman, Stafford, & Hartman, 2006). Eco-friendly products—defined as goods that have minimal harmful effects on the environment throughout their life cycle—have emerged as a vital tool in addressing these environmental challenges (Cenci et al., 2022; Handriana et al., 2024). In response, companies across the globe are incorporating sustainability into their marketing strategies, not only to fulfill corporate social responsibility but also to align with shifting consumer preferences. However, the acceptance of eco-friendly products is not uniform across regions, particularly when contrasting developed economies with developing ones. While numerous studies have explored the motivations and barriers for green product adoption in Western contexts, the same depth of understanding is often lacking in emerging economies such as Pakistan (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). This gap in literature becomes more pronounced when one considers the unique cultural, economic, and regulatory

landscapes of such countries. As Pakistan grapples with significant environmental challenges—including air and water pollution, waste management issues, and energy inefficiencies—the importance of fostering environmentally responsible consumer behavior becomes increasingly urgent (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2023).

Despite growing environmental awareness campaigns and some policy initiatives, eco-friendly consumption in Pakistan remains relatively low. Market reports and academic studies suggest that while consumers may express positive attitudes towards environmental protection, these attitudes do not consistently translate into actual purchase behavior—a phenomenon widely referred to as the "attitude-behavior gap" (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). This discrepancy invites deeper investigation into the psychological, social, and contextual factors that influence consumer decision-making in the Pakistani context. To address this, the present study employs a qualitative approach grounded in consumer behavior theory to explore how Pakistani consumers perceive, interpret, and act upon the concept of eco-friendly consumption. Consumer behavior theory offers a robust framework to understand the complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors that guide purchase decisions (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). While traditional models, such as the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and the Value-Belief-Norm theory (Stern et al., 1999), have been applied extensively in environmental contexts, their application in developing countries remains limited. More importantly, these models are often tested quantitatively, leaving qualitative nuances underexplored. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this theoretical and methodological gap.

Qualitative research, with its capacity to capture rich, contextual insights, is particularly suited for uncovering the underlying beliefs, motivations, and social dynamics that influence consumer choices. Unlike quantitative studies that measure predefined constructs, qualitative approaches allow for the emergence of new themes and offer a more grounded understanding of real-world behaviors (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the context of Pakistan, such an approach is essential, given the country's socio-economic diversity, cultural intricacies, and evolving market dynamics. Several factors make Pakistan a compelling context for this study. First, the country has a rapidly growing middle class, which represents a significant consumer base capable of driving market trends. Second, urbanization and exposure to global media have led to increased awareness of sustainability issues, particularly among younger, educated consumers (Khan et al., 2021). Third, Pakistan's regulatory framework related to environmental labeling and green certifications is still developing, which influences both producer behavior and consumer trust in eco-friendly claims. Understanding how these variables interact in shaping consumer acceptance is vital for both academics and practitioners aiming to promote sustainable consumption.

Moreover, cultural factors such as religious beliefs, social norms, and community influences play a significant role in shaping consumption patterns in Pakistan. For instance, Islamic teachings emphasize the concept of stewardship of the Earth, which can potentially align with pro-environmental values. However, whether such values translate into everyday consumption practices remains unclear. Social norms and the influence of family and peer groups may further complicate or facilitate the acceptance of green products. Therefore, exploring these dynamics through a qualitative lens can provide a more holistic understanding of consumer acceptance in this context. From a managerial perspective, the findings of this study will be valuable for businesses aiming to market eco-friendly products in Pakistan. By understanding the specific drivers and barriers to green consumption, firms can design more effective marketing strategies, communication campaigns, and product positioning approaches. This is particularly relevant in an era where consumers increasingly demand transparency, authenticity, and value alignment from the brands they support (White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). Furthermore, insights from this research

can inform policymakers in crafting more culturally and contextually relevant interventions to promote sustainable consumption.

The academic contribution of this study lies in its attempt to bridge the empirical gap in environmental consumer behavior research within developing countries, particularly through a qualitative lens. While much of the extant literature relies on survey-based, quantitative methods, this study provides an alternative perspective by delving into consumer narratives, experiences, and meaning-making processes. This aligns with recent calls in the literature for more interpretive and exploratory research in sustainability studies (Prothero et al., 2011). In this study aims to explore the factors that influence consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan through a qualitative inquiry grounded in consumer behavior theory. By doing so, it seeks to uncover the contextual realities, socio-cultural dynamics, and cognitive processes that shape eco-conscious consumption.

## **2. Method**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore the underlying factors influencing consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan. A qualitative approach is particularly suitable for investigating complex, context-dependent phenomena that are deeply embedded in social and cultural realities (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Given the exploratory nature of this study and the limited prior qualitative research on green consumer behavior in the Pakistani context, this method facilitates the extraction of rich, nuanced insights into consumer perceptions, motivations, and decision-making processes. The research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes the subjective construction of reality and seeks to understand consumer behavior through the lived experiences of individuals (Hasan & Sangadji, 2024; Supriatin et al., 2022; Creswell & Poth, 2018). The Consumer Behavior Theory, particularly the constructs from the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991)—attitudinal, normative, and control beliefs—served as the conceptual framework. Rather than testing this theory deductively, it was used as a lens through which emergent patterns and meanings were interpreted.

A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to identify participants with relevant experiences or interest in eco-friendly products. Inclusion criteria required participants to be aged 20 years or older, reside in urban centers in Pakistan (such as Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad), and have purchased or considered purchasing eco-friendly products. Efforts were made to ensure variation across gender, occupation, and socioeconomic backgrounds to enhance data richness. A total of 18 participants were interviewed, allowing the study to reach thematic saturation, typically achieved within 12 to 20 interviews in qualitative research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews, conducted in English or Urdu based on participant preference, each lasting 45 to 60 minutes. An interview guide was developed based on relevant literature and theoretical constructs, covering topics such as definitions of eco-friendly products, purchase motivations and barriers, trust in environmental claims, and social or cultural influences. Interviews were conducted in private or virtual settings to ensure confidentiality, and all recordings were transcribed verbatim and translated into English when necessary. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, supported by NVivo 12 software for systematic coding. Both inductive and deductive approaches were employed—emergent themes were drawn directly from the data while theoretical constructs from consumer behavior theory guided interpretation, particularly regarding perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitudes.

### 3. Result and Discussion

The qualitative data analysis yielded four overarching themes that offer insight into the factors influencing consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan: (1) environmental awareness and personal values, (2) perceived product-related barriers, (3) influence of social norms and trust, and (4) behavioral control and situational factors. These findings are discussed below in relation to the constructs of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the broader literature on green consumer behavior.

#### 1) Environmental Awareness and Personal Values (Attitudinal Beliefs)

One of the primary themes that emerged from the interviews is the growing environmental awareness among a segment of Pakistani consumers, particularly those residing in urban areas with greater exposure to information and environmental campaigns. Participants frequently cited concerns over pollution, climate change, plastic waste, and deteriorating air quality as motivations to consider environmentally responsible purchasing decisions. Many of these individuals had encountered environmental education either through formal schooling, university programs, or online platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. This growing knowledge base led to a sense of personal responsibility and, in some cases, moral obligation to contribute positively to the environment through consumption choices.

*“The air in Lahore is getting worse every year, and plastic bags are everywhere. I started thinking I should at least do something on my part.”* (Participant 9, Male, 30, Lahore)

This sentiment reflects the attitudinal component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), where attitudes toward a behavior are shaped by individuals’ beliefs about the likely outcomes and the value they place on those outcomes. Participants who perceived eco-friendly products as beneficial not just to themselves but to the broader environment were more likely to express positive intentions toward their use. These individuals often used phrases such as “my duty,” “we owe it to nature,” or “future generations,” revealing a value-driven orientation that extends beyond immediate personal benefit. However, this awareness was not uniform across all participants. Respondents from less educated or lower-income backgrounds were generally less aware of environmental issues or viewed them as less urgent. Their priorities often revolved around affordability, utility, and daily economic survival. This observation echoes research in other developing nations where environmental behavior is often constrained by pressing economic needs (Peattie, 2010).

Another nuance was the influence of religious and cultural values on environmental attitudes. A small but notable number of participants connected eco-friendly behavior with Islamic teachings about cleanliness (taharah) and stewardship of the Earth (khalifah). Although this connection was not dominant across all interviews, it suggests an underutilized pathway for faith-based environmental messaging, which could be particularly impactful in a religiously conservative society like Pakistan. Nevertheless, despite generally positive attitudes, a significant attitude-behavior gap was observed. Many participants expressed support for eco-friendly products but admitted to not buying them regularly due to practical concerns such as price, availability, or uncertainty about product authenticity. This mirrors the widely documented intention-behavior gap in sustainable consumption literature, where even consumers with strong pro-environmental values may fail to act accordingly due to situational constraints (Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2014).

Some participants expressed ambivalence, noting that while they appreciated eco-conscious efforts, they doubted the individual impact of their choices. This sentiment was particularly common among those who perceived systemic issues such as government inaction or corporate

irresponsibility as larger culprits of environmental degradation. Consequently, personal action was sometimes seen as insufficient or symbolic.

*“I try to recycle and buy sustainable items when I can, but what difference will that make when the industries are still polluting”* (Participant 13, Female, 35, Islamabad)

In sum, environmental awareness and personal values are important motivators for green consumer behavior, but they are mediated by socioeconomic background, educational level, and broader structural factors. While attitudes form the psychological basis for sustainable behavior, they are often constrained by practical considerations and societal conditions. Therefore, marketers and policymakers seeking to promote eco-friendly products in Pakistan must go beyond awareness campaigns and address the factors that hinder the translation of positive attitudes into actual behavior.

## 2) Perceived Product-Related Barriers (Behavioral Control Beliefs)

Despite the growing environmental consciousness identified in the previous section, the actual adoption of eco-friendly products remains relatively limited among Pakistani consumers. A deeper analysis reveals that a key inhibitor of green purchasing behavior is the perception of significant product-related barriers, which aligns with the perceived behavioral control component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). This construct refers to an individual’s belief in their capability to perform a particular behavior, influenced by the presence or absence of facilitating conditions. The most commonly cited barrier was the high cost of eco-friendly products. Across socioeconomic groups, participants consistently noted that green alternatives were more expensive than conventional options, which discouraged regular or first-time purchases. For low- and middle-income consumers, this price difference created a strong disincentive, even if they valued environmental benefits. Many participants expressed the sentiment that sustainable goods were “for the rich” or “a luxury.”

*“I saw reusable cloth bags at a store, but they were five times the price of plastic ones. How can we afford that every time”* (Participant 6, Female, 41, Karachi)

This perception is particularly critical in a price-sensitive market like Pakistan, where inflation and income inequality further exacerbate cost concerns. Literature supports this finding; consumers in emerging economies are generally more likely to prioritize basic functional needs over ethical or environmental considerations (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). The lack of price competitiveness undermines consumers’ sense of efficacy and discourages the adoption of sustainable consumption habits. Another significant barrier was product availability and accessibility. Participants reported difficulty finding eco-friendly items in local retail settings, especially outside major cities. Even within urban areas like Lahore and Islamabad, green products were often confined to niche stores, organic markets, or online platforms, many of which cater to upper-class segments. This uneven distribution creates a structural hurdle that limits consumer choice and makes sustainable alternatives practically inaccessible for a large portion of the population.

*“If I go to my neighborhood market, there’s nothing labeled as eco-friendly. Only high-end malls or websites have those options.”* (Participant 4, Male, 25, Islamabad)

Beyond price and availability, product authenticity and trust emerged as a third key concern. Several respondents questioned whether so-called green products were truly eco-friendly or simply “greenwashed” — a practice where companies make misleading environmental claims. In the absence of reliable certifications or government regulations in Pakistan, consumer skepticism remains high. Participants voiced distrust toward marketing claims, labels, and packaging that used vague terms such as “natural,” “organic,” or “eco-safe” without providing verifiable information.

*“They say it’s biodegradable, but how do we know? There’s no system here to check these things.”* (Participant 15, Male, 32, Lahore)

This mistrust further diminishes consumers’ perceived control over making a sustainable choice. Even those willing to pay a premium are deterred by doubts regarding product legitimacy, suggesting that credibility is as important as cost in enabling green behavior. This reflects prior research showing that low trust in environmental claims is a substantial barrier in markets with weak regulatory enforcement (Chen & Chang, 2013). Lastly, some participants noted lack of information or product understanding as a barrier. The use of technical jargon, unclear labeling, or insufficient consumer education made it difficult to identify eco-friendly alternatives or understand their benefits. This information gap contributes to hesitation or indifference, particularly among older or less educated consumers.

*“I see these labels, but I don’t understand what they mean. They should explain in simple language why it’s better.”* (Participant 2, Female, 50, Rawalpindi)

In summary, the perceived barriers to purchasing eco-friendly products in Pakistan are multifaceted and interconnected. High prices, poor availability, lack of product credibility, and inadequate consumer information all contribute to a low sense of behavioral control, thereby suppressing actual buying behavior despite positive attitudes. To enhance consumer adoption, interventions must focus not only on promoting eco-conscious values but also on removing practical constraints, such as improving product accessibility, ensuring affordable pricing, and introducing standardized certifications. These measures would empower consumers to act on their environmental intentions more confidently and consistently.

### 3) Social Norms and Influence of Reference Groups (Normative Beliefs)

In exploring consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan, one of the most salient themes that emerged was the role of social norms and reference groups in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors. This dimension is directly aligned with the subjective norm component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that an individual’s behavior is strongly influenced by their perception of social expectations and the approval or disapproval of significant others. For many participants, eco-friendly behavior was not an entirely personal decision but one that was heavily influenced by peer groups, family members, colleagues, or social media communities. Participants, particularly those from younger demographics, reported being introduced to eco-conscious lifestyles by university peers, online influencers, or environmental awareness campaigns shared within their networks.

*“I saw many people in my university using metal straws and eco-bags. It kind of became a trend, and you felt out of place if you didn’t follow.”* (Participant 5, Female, 23, Karachi)

This finding reinforces the notion that behavior is socially constructed, especially in collectivist societies like Pakistan, where group affiliation and societal approval play a critical role in individual decision-making (Hofstede, 2001). The presence of “green trends” among university students and urban youth indicates that eco-friendly consumption is gaining symbolic and social capital within certain subcultures. However, this influence is not uniformly positive across all social groups. In many traditional households, especially among older generations or rural-origin families living in urban areas, sustainable consumption was met with skepticism, indifference, or outright criticism. Some participants noted that their attempts to adopt eco-friendly practices—such as refusing plastic bags or buying more expensive sustainable alternatives—were questioned or ridiculed by family members who considered such behavior either impractical or elitist.

*“My father always says, ‘Why waste money on these fancy green things? The normal one works just fine.’ It’s hard to explain to him.” (Participant 16, Male, 27, Lahore)*

This illustrates how subjective norms can act both as enablers and barriers to eco-friendly behavior. In environments where social approval supports sustainability, individuals feel encouraged to engage in green consumption. Conversely, in settings where social expectations lean toward cost-efficiency or tradition, consumers may suppress their environmental values to conform to familial or societal expectations. Moreover, the influence of social media and influencers has emerged as a modern and powerful normative force. Several participants mentioned following lifestyle bloggers or celebrities who promoted eco-conscious living. These public figures often model behaviors such as using reusable items, shopping sustainably, or promoting zero-waste practices—effectively shaping new norms around consumer behavior.

*“I follow a Pakistani influencer who always talks about zero waste. She even shows how to compost at home. That’s where I learned most of this stuff.” (Participant 1, Female, 29, Islamabad)*

Nonetheless, there is a risk of superficial adoption, where eco-friendly behavior is driven more by the desire for social conformity or status signaling than by genuine environmental concern. While this does contribute to increased visibility of green products, it raises questions about the depth of behavioral change and the sustainability of such trends once the social incentives diminish. Another important aspect relates to institutional and community norms. Participants who worked in organizations with visible sustainability policies (e.g., offices banning plastic bottles or implementing recycling bins) were more likely to carry those habits into their personal lives. This indicates that organizational culture and community-level interventions can play a significant role in normalizing green behaviors. In summary, normative beliefs are a potent influence on consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan. The role of peers, family, social media influencers, and institutions creates a complex social environment where green behavior is negotiated, encouraged, or inhibited based on perceived expectations. Recognizing and leveraging these social dynamics—particularly through community engagement, influencer partnerships, and corporate modeling—can significantly enhance the cultural acceptance and normalization of sustainable consumption in Pakistan.

#### 4) Behavioral Control and Situational Factors

The final theme explored in this study is the influence of behavioral control and situational factors on consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products. As part of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), perceived behavioral control reflects an individual’s belief in their ability to perform a particular behavior, which is influenced by external factors, such as availability of resources, convenience, and social or environmental constraints. In the context of eco-friendly product adoption in Pakistan, situational factors—such as economic conditions, availability of green products, and convenience—played a pivotal role in shaping consumers’ purchase decisions. A critical situational factor that emerged was the affordability of eco-friendly products. As discussed earlier in the section on product-related barriers, the higher cost of sustainable goods remains one of the foremost challenges to their adoption. However, beyond the price itself, participants pointed out that even when eco-friendly products were perceived as slightly more expensive, the lack of long-term cost savings (for example, the higher upfront cost of reusable bags, bottles, or eco-friendly cleaning supplies) deterred them from making the initial purchase. This is especially significant for consumers in lower-income groups, for whom cost-benefit analyses are crucial. While some participants were willing to invest in sustainable products, many felt the need for clear evidence of long-term savings or environmental benefits to justify the cost.

*“It’s expensive to buy eco-friendly things all the time. If they could save me money in the long run, maybe I’d buy more of them.”* (Participant 12, Male, 34, Lahore)

This finding suggests that to increase perceived behavioral control, marketers must highlight not just the environmental advantages of green products but also their potential for long-term savings. For instance, promoting the durability of reusable products or emphasizing the cost-effectiveness of energy-efficient appliances could align with the financial priorities of budget-conscious consumers. Another situational factor mentioned by participants was the availability and accessibility of eco-friendly products in the marketplace. Many consumers reported that they could not easily find eco-friendly alternatives in local stores, particularly in smaller cities or rural areas. While urban areas such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad have witnessed growth in green retail outlets, the availability of eco-friendly products remains limited in more remote locations. Participants who lived in smaller towns or suburban areas expressed frustration over their inability to purchase green products locally.

*“I can only find eco-friendly stuff at certain shops in big cities. Here, I have to order everything online, which is not always reliable or affordable.”* (Participant 18, Male, 27, Multan)

This lack of accessibility makes it difficult for consumers to incorporate eco-friendly choices into their daily routines. For consumers living outside of major cities, e-commerce platforms do provide some opportunities, but logistical issues such as shipping costs, delivery delays, and product returns make these solutions less viable for a broad base of consumers. Moreover, participants emphasized the importance of convenience in their decision-making. While many expressed a willingness to purchase eco-friendly products, the convenience of traditional alternatives often outweighed the perceived environmental benefits. For instance, disposable plastic bags, though environmentally harmful, are readily available at low cost and can be easily discarded after use. In contrast, sustainable alternatives, such as cloth bags or bamboo toothbrushes, often require extra effort to obtain, store, and maintain. This additional inconvenience made many participants hesitant to switch to eco-friendly options.

*“It’s just easier to grab a plastic bag at the store. Carrying a cloth bag around every time seems like extra work.”* (Participant 11, Female, 30, Karachi)

The theme of convenience resonates with the notion that habitual behaviors and time constraints heavily influence purchasing decisions in the real world. Even among consumers with positive attitudes toward the environment, the friction created by inconvenience often leads to defaulting to traditional, less sustainable choices. As Ajzen (1991) argued in the TPB, perceived control over a behavior is influenced by factors like convenience and time, which directly impact the ease with which an individual can perform the behavior. Finally, government policies and regulations were also identified as significant situational factors that could either facilitate or hinder green consumption. Participants expressed frustration with the lack of stringent environmental laws and limited waste management infrastructure, which contributed to feelings of disempowerment. Many consumers reported a sense that while they might personally make eco-friendly choices, systemic changes were necessary to truly address environmental degradation. The absence of policy support, such as subsidies for eco-friendly products or government-backed recycling programs, created a perception that individual efforts were insufficient to make a meaningful impact.

*“There’s no point in using eco-friendly bags if they’re just going to end up in the trash with everyone else’s plastic. We need a change in the system, not just the consumer.”* (Participant 17, Male, 39, Islamabad)

In summary, situational factors such as cost, availability, convenience, and systemic barriers significantly affect behavioral control and thus hinder the widespread acceptance of eco-friendly

products in Pakistan. While environmental awareness and social norms play important roles in shaping consumer intentions, these external factors ultimately determine whether consumers feel they have the control and resources to act on their pro-environmental beliefs. Addressing these constraints through improved product accessibility, government policy interventions, and awareness campaigns that emphasize the long-term benefits of sustainable consumption is crucial for promoting more widespread adoption of eco-friendly products.

## 5) Discussion

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the factors influencing consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan, which are largely shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and situational factors, as framed by the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). This discussion interprets these findings within the broader context of consumer behavior and sustainability, comparing them to existing literature and highlighting the unique challenges and opportunities in the Pakistani market. One of the primary motivations for consumers to consider eco-friendly products is environmental awareness and personal values. The growing concern over environmental issues such as pollution and climate change reflect a shift in attitudes towards sustainable consumption. This aligns with previous studies (e.g., Joshi & Rahman, 2015) that suggest increasing environmental consciousness is a precursor to eco-friendly behavior. However, in Pakistan, this awareness is not uniform across all segments of the population. While urban, educated, and younger consumers exhibit a strong commitment to eco-friendly values, those from lower-income or rural backgrounds tend to prioritize immediate personal needs over environmental concerns. This gap in environmental awareness is typical in developing countries, where economic pressures often outweigh ethical considerations (Gupta & Ogden, 2009). Therefore, while awareness is growing, it is crucial to tailor environmental messaging to different demographic groups, ensuring that it resonates with their specific needs and concerns.

The attitudinal gap identified in this study is consistent with the concept of the intention-behavior gap in sustainable consumption (Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2014). While many participants expressed positive attitudes towards eco-friendly products, their actual purchasing behavior often did not align with these attitudes. This phenomenon can be attributed to several behavioral control barriers. One of the most significant barriers identified in the study is the higher cost of eco-friendly products. This finding corroborates previous research showing that price sensitivity remains a critical factor inhibiting the adoption of sustainable consumption practices in emerging economies (Chen & Chang, 2013). In Pakistan, where a significant portion of the population faces financial constraints, the higher price tag of eco-friendly alternatives often deters purchase, even among consumers who are environmentally conscious. Additionally, the lack of long-term cost savings for some green products makes them appear less appealing, particularly when compared to cheaper, conventional alternatives. This suggests that marketing strategies aimed at eco-friendly products should not only emphasize environmental benefits but also highlight the long-term economic advantages of sustainable products, such as durability, energy efficiency, and waste reduction.

Another key barrier to eco-friendly product adoption in Pakistan is the availability and accessibility of green products. Many participants in the study noted that eco-friendly alternatives were often limited to high-end stores or e-commerce platforms, making them difficult to access for consumers in smaller towns or rural areas. This limitation highlights a critical gap in the supply chain that must be addressed if green products are to reach a broader audience. Research in other countries has similarly found that accessibility plays a central role in influencing consumer behavior towards sustainable goods (Peattie, 2010). In Pakistan, improving distribution channels,

both through physical retail outlets and online platforms, could significantly enhance the accessibility of eco-friendly products. Additionally, policies that encourage local production of sustainable goods could help reduce both the cost and environmental impact of transporting eco-friendly products.

The role of social norms and reference groups also plays a pivotal role in shaping consumer behavior, as evidenced by the influence of peer groups, family, and social media. This study found that younger, urban consumers, particularly university students and social media followers, were more likely to adopt eco-friendly behaviors due to the pressure of social trends and the desire to conform to perceived societal expectations. This social dimension aligns with previous research that underscores the power of normative beliefs in driving eco-friendly consumption (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). However, the influence of family and older generations often acted as a barrier to change, with participants from traditional households facing resistance to adopting green practices. This generational divide suggests that green consumption behaviors may need to be promoted through family-oriented campaigns and community engagement that bridge the gap between younger, more eco-conscious consumers and older, more conservative ones. Social media influencers and public figures could also play a key role in shifting public perception and normalizing sustainable behaviors in Pakistan, a strategy already proving effective in other markets (Leong & Huang, 2020).

Further, the study revealed that trust in product claims was a significant barrier to green consumption, as many participants expressed skepticism about the authenticity of eco-friendly labels. This finding highlights the need for strong regulatory frameworks that enforce transparency and accountability in environmental marketing. Consumers in Pakistan, much like those in other developing markets, often face confusion and distrust due to the lack of certification systems and standardized environmental claims. Establishing clear, trustworthy labeling systems would not only address consumer skepticism but also promote greater consumer confidence in the environmental claims of products. The findings also point to the importance of situational factors such as convenience and government support in shaping consumer behavior. Many participants indicated that eco-friendly behaviors, although valued, were often overshadowed by the convenience of conventional products. This tension between convenience and sustainability is a well-documented barrier in consumer behavior research (Yadav & Pathak, 2016). For consumers, the convenience of single-use plastics and disposable products often outweighs the perceived environmental benefits of reusable or recyclable alternatives. To address this, policies that encourage infrastructure development, such as better waste management systems and recycling facilities, would enhance the ease of practicing sustainable consumption. Additionally, providing financial incentives such as subsidies or tax rebates for eco-friendly products could reduce the cost barrier and further encourage adoption.

Finally, the study highlights that government policies and institutional support play a critical role in influencing consumer behavior. Participants frequently pointed out the lack of enforcement of environmental regulations and the absence of incentives for green consumption. In countries with strong government intervention, such as Sweden and Germany, eco-friendly consumption is promoted through tax breaks, subsidies, and stringent regulations. In Pakistan, similar policies could drive greater consumer demand for sustainable products. In conclusion, while environmental awareness and positive attitudes toward sustainability are growing in Pakistan, there remain significant barriers to the widespread adoption of eco-friendly products. These barriers, including high costs, limited availability, social pressures, and trust issues, must be addressed through targeted marketing strategies, government interventions, and regulatory reforms. By focusing on

improving accessibility, affordability, and trust, Pakistan can foster a more sustainable consumer market that aligns with both global environmental goals and local needs.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study explored the factors influencing consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan through the lens of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The findings underscore the critical roles of attitudinal beliefs, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control in shaping consumers' intentions to purchase sustainable products. Environmental awareness, social influences, and behavioral control beliefs—particularly concerning the price, accessibility, and convenience of eco-friendly alternatives—were identified as pivotal factors that drive or inhibit green consumption in Pakistan. These results highlight the complexity of eco-friendly product adoption in a developing country context, where economic pressures, cultural norms, and limited resources interact to influence consumer choices. While many consumers expressed positive attitudes towards eco-friendly products, the actual purchase behavior often did not align with these attitudes due to various barriers, such as the high cost of sustainable goods, limited availability in local markets, and the inconvenience of switching from traditional, familiar options. Furthermore, the study found that social norms and reference group influence played significant roles in shaping consumer behavior, especially among younger and more educated segments of the population. However, traditional norms and familial pressures in conservative households often acted as barriers to adopting green behaviors, creating a tension between modern, eco-conscious lifestyles and more conventional practices. Despite these barriers, the study also revealed several opportunities for promoting eco-friendly consumption in Pakistan. Educating consumers about the long-term benefits of sustainable products, making these products more accessible and affordable, and fostering greater trust in environmental claims are critical areas for intervention. Moreover, leveraging social media influencers and peer groups could be an effective strategy to create social norms around sustainable consumption. Policymakers also have a crucial role to play in facilitating the widespread adoption of eco-friendly practices through incentives, clear labeling systems, and infrastructural improvements.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the factors influencing consumer acceptance of eco-friendly products in Pakistan, it is not without its limitations. First, the sample size of 18 participants, though adequate for qualitative analysis, is relatively small and may not fully represent the diversity of consumer experiences across Pakistan. Further research could expand the sample size to include a broader demographic representation, including rural populations and people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing eco-friendly consumption. Additionally, the study primarily relied on self-reported data from in-depth interviews, which may be subject to social desirability bias, where participants provide responses that they believe are socially acceptable rather than their true beliefs or behaviors. Future studies could complement qualitative findings with quantitative surveys or behavioral observations to triangulate data and enhance the reliability of the findings. Lastly, the study was conducted at a particular point in time, and the dynamic nature of consumer behavior means that attitudes and perceptions towards eco-friendly products may evolve. Longitudinal studies would help track changes in consumer attitudes and behavior over time, particularly in response to new policies, environmental campaigns, or changes in the market for sustainable goods.

The findings of this study have several important implications for marketers, policymakers, and environmental advocates in Pakistan. Marketers should focus on creating value propositions for eco-friendly products that not only emphasize their environmental benefits but also highlight

their long-term economic advantages. Affordable pricing, convenience, and clear communication regarding product benefits are essential to reducing consumer resistance to green products. Policymakers can support the adoption of sustainable consumption by implementing subsidies, tax incentives, and regulations that encourage the production and distribution of eco-friendly products. Additionally, building green infrastructure, such as improved waste management systems and recycling facilities, will help reduce the perceived inconvenience of sustainable behavior. Finally, social and environmental organizations can leverage the power of social media and community influencers to create positive social norms surrounding eco-friendly consumption. By partnering with popular figures and local leaders, they can amplify the message of sustainability and encourage individuals to take action in their daily lives.

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