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Sustainability Signals: Unravelling Consumer Trust in Eco-Commerce Platforms

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Introduction

The success of eco-commerce platforms depends on consumer trust. In a time when consumer decisions are heavily influenced by environmental concerns, trust is a crucial factor. The understudied areas like "green trust," trust recovery, and the ethical aspects of building trust in the minds of the consumer has been developed (Bauman & Bachmann, 2017).Authenticity and credibility are fundamental because consumers want proof that statements made about being environmentally friendly are real. It is imperative that platforms exhibit transparency by offering unambiguous details regarding their sourcing and environmental policies.

Trust aids in regulatory compliance by proving to authorities and users that a platform is committed to maintaining environmental standards. Positive effects are also guaranteed by trust, since customers want to feel that the decisions they make is to help the environment. Trust promotes shared responsibility for a more sustainable future by enabling effective education and involvement and empowering platforms to explain the environmental impact of customer choices. Trust is the glue that binds eco-commerce platforms and ecologically conscientious customers together.

For example, all the gadgets we use these days - they're packed with software and even AI! This cool tech makes trust even more important. If something goes wrong, consumers get spooked and stop trusting the company behind it. The situation gets even trickier for super important stuff like self-driving cars. This research is figuring out how to build trust directly into the software design, kind of like a built-in honesty code. They're looking at how companies earn trust through good business practices and translating that into a way software engineers can understand. (Kwan et al., 2021)

In order for environmentally concerned customers to make wise and trustworthy decisions, consumer trust in eco-commerce platforms is essential. Confidence of eco-friendly claims is highlighted by trust, hence avoiding misleading consumers. It encourages continuous client loyalty, providing platforms a competitive advantage in an expanding market. Furthermore, trust is an indicator of both beneficial environmental effect and regulatory compliance. It indicates to customers that their purchases actually support sustainability. Encouraging consumer trust in eco-commerce platforms essentially means that personal decisions are in line with larger environmental objectives, encouraging more sustainable and conscientious purchasing practices.

Previous Research & Research Gap

As per the previous study which examined the relationship between brand loyalty, price, and recycling willingness for eco-friendly products. The study found that customers with high brand loyalty are more likely to continue buying the brand even when the price increases. However, some customers are not willing to recycle electronic devices even if more drop-off recycling facilities are available. The study suggests that brand loyalty can be a powerful tool for businesses to promote green product innovations and recycling behaviour. By demonstrating social responsibility and offering high-quality products at competitive prices, businesses can create a win-win situation for both themselves and the environment (Isaacs, n.d.).

Also, there is study which explores how "green" product features and marketing influence consumer trust and eco-friendly purchases. It finds that physical, perceived, and symbolic product attributes, along with targeted green marketing, all play a role in building trust and encouraging consumers to buy green products. This offers valuable insights for businesses on crafting effective green marketing campaigns to attract sustainability-conscious customers (Khan et al., 2022).

In addition to that the study on consumer attitudes towards eco-labels reveals a mixed picture. While nearly half actively seek eco-labelled products, knowledge about specific labels remains limited. Trust in their claims is low (32.1%), with many suspecting greenwashing (61%). Despite this, 43.1% are willing to pay more for eco-labelled products. The study highlights the need for better consumer education and communication from manufacturers to bridge the gap between positive intentions and actual trust in eco-labels (Lucyna Witek, n.d.)(2017).

With the existing research on consumer trust in eco-commerce platforms they have explored brand loyalty, green marketing, and eco-labels but they lack the focus on "sustainability signals" for specific platforms. As per our research gap which lies in understanding how ecocommerce platforms themselves build trust through design, policies, and communication to influence consumer perceptions and sustainable choices. This requires investigating the unique signals these platforms use and their effectiveness in overcoming greenwashing concerns for various consumer segments

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. We begin by presenting the theoretical background for our work and proposing hypotheses. Then, using survey data, we present an empirical test of our theoretical model using a structural equation modelling approach. A discussion of these results and their theoretical and managerial implications follows. The present study concludes by discussion limitations and suggestions for future research

Literature Review

Transparency of Product Lifecycle is all about consumers increasingly seek information about a product's environmental and social impact throughout its lifecycle, from sourcing and manufacturing to transportation, use, and end-of-life, a method for disclosing LCA details clearly, allowing reviewers to verify calculations and understand the product's environmental impact better(Kuczenski, 2018) . This transparency empowers them to make informed purchasing decisions aligned with their values. Studies have shown that consumers perceive companies with transparent supply chains as more trustworthy and sustainable. companies are opening up about their production practices, catering to our growing curiosity. But product recalls might create confusion for the consumers, still the companies create a positive trust and create the quality of the product(Mollenkopf et al., 2022) .

Clarity in sustainability messaging can be complex and jargon-filled, creating confusion and scepticism among consumers. "Greenwashing" by companies confuses Taiwanese shoppers about how "green" their electronics really are, making them doubt the companies' sustainability claims (Chen & Chang, 2013) . Clear, concise, and easy-to-understand messaging is crucial for effective communication (Bhatnagar & Bhatnagar, n.d.). Consumers appreciate messaging that avoids greenwashing tactics and focuses on genuine sustainability efforts.

Customers are much more aware now than ever before and the look for Product Reviews and Ratings consumers increasingly rely on online reviews and ratings to assess product quality, value, and performance (Hu et al., 2017). In the context of eco-friendly products, positive reviews highlighting a product's environmental benefits can act as social proof, validating the brand's sustainability claims and fostering trust (Nair et al., 2024). Consumers perceive other users' experiences as more credible than brand-generated information (Irelli & Chaerudin, 2020).

Perceived Credibility of Sustainability claims has been come under consideration when companies exaggerate or mislead about their sustainability efforts which may reduce the consumer trust in eco-friendly claims (Seberini Univerzita Mateja Bela Banskej Bystrici et al., 2024).Consumers often lack the knowledge or resources to verify these claims, leading to scepticism (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2008). Transparency in product lifecycles can mitigate this scepticism by providing concrete evidence to support sustainability claims. By showcasing responsible sourcing, eco-friendly manufacturing practices, and sustainable end-of-life solutions, companies can build trust and credibility with consumers who value sustainability (Nguyen & Cam, 2023).

When consumers have access to transparent information about a product's lifecycle, they are better equipped to evaluate the legitimacy of sustainability claims. This transparency allows consumers to make informed decisions based on verifiable evidence. This fosters trust in the platform and the brands it represents, encouraging consumers to engage more with ecocommerce options. Furthermore, when eco-commerce platforms use clear and concise messaging to communicate sustainability claims, consumers are better able to understand the claims and assess their credibility. This transparency builds trust and confidence, encouraging consumers to engage more with the platform. When consumers encounter numerous positive reviews highlighting a product's environmental benefits, they are more likely to perceive the brand's sustainability claims as genuine and trustworthy. Hence, we argue that transparency of product lifecycle, clarity in sustainability messaging and positive eco-friendly product reviews and ratings will positively influence Perceived Credibility of Sustainability Claims. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

H1: Higher "Transparency of Product Lifecycle" will positively influence "Perceived Credibility of Sustainability Claims"

H2: Greater "Clarity in Sustainability Messaging" will positively influence "Perceived Credibility of Sustainability Claims"

H3: Positive Eco-Friendly Product Reviews and Ratings will positively influence Perceived Credibility of Sustainability Claims.

There are times when the consumers seek assurance about a product's environmental claims, eco-certifications and labels play a crucial role in signalling sustainability (Nagendra Kumar Sharma, 2019). These independent endorsements provide standardized criteria for environmental practices, offering consumers a level of objectivity and trustworthiness (Atkinson & Rosenthal, 2014).

In these times when the whole world is talking about the sustainability. However, the increase of different eco-labels can create confusion and scepticism among consumers, who may lack knowledge about their specific standards and rigor (Ihemezie et al., 2018).This highlights the need for consumers to develop confidence in the legitimacy and reliability of these certifications.

When consumers encounter a product with a recognized and respected eco-certification, it can increase their confidence in the overall value of eco-certifications for identifying truly sustainable products. This positive experience reinforces the effectiveness of such labels and encourages future reliance on them when making purchasing decisions. Therefore, we propose the hypothesis that:

H4: Eco-Certifications and Labels will positively influence Consumer Confidence in EcoCertifications for Sustainable Products.

Consumer Confidence in Eco-Certifications is in the top priority as consumers are increasingly seeking sustainable products, but face challenges in verifying claims due to "greenwashing" and information overload (Robert Breitenecker, 2021).Eco-certifications act as third-party verifiers, providing independent assurance of a product's sustainability credentials (Couture, 2016). Studies suggest consumer confidence in these certifications is crucial for influencing their perception of product sustainability (Maniatis, 2016). For instance, (Gorton et al., 2021a) found that familiarity with and trust in eco-labels positively affect green purchase intentions.

As for Consumers they rely on cues to assess the credibility of sustainability claims, and ecocertifications serve as prominent cues (Brach et al., 2018). Research shows that when consumers perceive eco-certifications as credible, they are more likely to believe associated sustainability claims (Nagendra Kumar Sharma, 2019). This is because certifications signal adherence to established standards and rigorous verification processes, reducing perceived risk and enhancing claim believability (Couture, 2016).

Consumer confidence in eco-certifications acts as a foundation for perceiving sustainability claims as credible. When consumers trust the certification process, they are more likely to interpret associated claims as genuine and trustworthy, fostering a positive influence. This enhanced credibility can incentivize sustainable purchase choices. Therefore, we hypothesise that:

H5: Consumer Confidence in Eco-Certifications for Sustainable Products will positively influence Perceived Credibility of

Whereas, in perceived credibility and purchase intentions the consumers are hesitant to purchase sustainable products when claims lack credibility, raising concerns about greenwashing and potential trade-offs between sustainability and other product attribute (Acuti et al., 2022). Conversely, studies suggest that perceiving sustainability claims as credible significantly increases purchase intentions for sustainable products (Aertsens et al., 2011; Chen & Chang, 2013). This is because credibility reduces perceived risk and uncertainty, fostering trust and confidence in the product's sustainability benefits (Hahn et al., 2015).

While H5 suggests an indirect influence of eco-certification confidence on purchase intentions through claim credibility, H7 proposes a direct influence as well. Research indicates that consumers value eco-certifications beyond their role in verifying claims (Chen, 2013). Certifications act as shortcuts, signalling a product's alignment with their personal values and environmental concern (Hahn et al., 2015).

Consumers increasingly seek products that align with their values and beliefs (Chen, 2013). Eco-certifications provide a clear signal of a product's environmental commitment, resonating with consumers who prioritize sustainability (Hahn et al., 2015). This value-based connection can directly influence purchase decisions beyond claim credibility.

When consumers perceive sustainability claims as credible, they are more likely to be convinced of the product's positive environmental impact and associated personal benefits. This enhanced credibility directly translates into increased willingness to purchase sustainable products. The positive influence of eco-certification confidence on purchase intentions likely operates through both direct and indirect pathways. As the perceived credibility of sustainability claims and consumer confidence in eco-certifications positively affect the influence consumer purchase intentions for sustainable products, this takes us to the hypothesis that:

H6: Perceived Credibility of Sustainability Claims will positively influence Consumer Purchase Intentions for Sustainable Products.

H7: Consumer Confidence in Eco-Certifications will positively influence Consumer Purchase Intentions for Sustainable Products.

Research methodology

We conducted a systematic literature review to identify existing work, reconcile conflicting evidence, and identify critical gaps in knowledge, including the following five steps: question formulation; study location; study selection and evaluation; analysis and synthesis; and reporting and using findings. For the development of inclusion criteria, exclusion criteria, and keywords, we relied on articles published in marketing, ethics, economics, management, organizational studies, and innovation. We considered the social and environmental dimensions of sustainability across a wide range of scholarly fields of research, including CSR, ethics, green marketing,

Measures Based on the previous literature, we selected measurement items that we deemed appropriate for the present study. The exact measurement items presented in previous research were used, or they were adjusted as necessary to measure the latent constructs. The participants were asked to respond using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

The sample

The survey was completed by 373 peoples from various domains like graduates, post graduate and professionals, there occupations, we also gathered the data about the blockchain as the tool for sustainability to get insight for the future research, from this questionnaire we will also get to know how much people know about the eco-certifications and actually does look for them before they trust to consume the product or not.

We are diving-in to understand the customer trust on the eco-commerce platforms. A wellprepared questionnaire was used with the help of various studies into research paper of (Cioca et al., n.d.-a, n.d.-b; Gorton et al., 2021b; Jason H. Grant Thomas W. Hertel Thomas F. Rutherford, 2005; Liu et al., n.d.).

The participants were asked to recall their most recent experience with the way they feel about the transparent information exchange on eco commerce platform. Does the eco-certification and labels are important when making eco-friendly purchase. We also asked if purchase decision is on the basis of clarity in reliable maintenance. We are also finding if it is easy for peoples to find the sustainable product in the market easy to find and how does the mis leading effects the consumers.

We will also figure out the reason about the customers about their biggest concerns when purchasing the eco-friendly product online, The questioner link: - https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSduHGp47GIewZbHLhIeT09ofuximSPL018B3r_1xZfSIOFv61w/viewform?usp=sf_link

After that we will apply the structured equation model to find out the CFI, GFI, NFI and RMSEA. Analysing the data with the help of the mentor of our capstone research will help us to reach to a result.

Result and Discussion

We have applied SPSS Amos SEM test on the result:
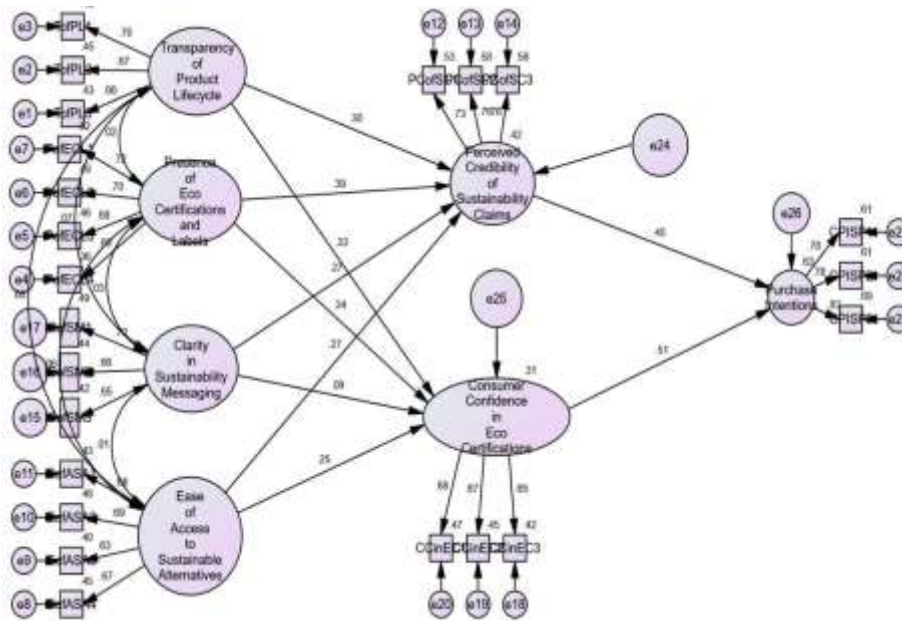
We have got the output on the variables from SEM, where we were having critical ratio value greater than 1.96 and P value less than .05 which means the independent variable and mediator variables are highly important factors for the change in dependent variables.

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	62	281.919	214	.001	1.317
Saturated model	276	.000	0		
Independence model	23	4210.680	253	.000	16.643

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.126	.961	.950	.745
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.868	.476	.428	.436

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.933	.921	.983	.980	.983
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	.846	.789	.831
Saturated model	.000	.000	.000
Independence model	1.000	.000	.000

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.023	.015	.030	1.000
Independence model	.164	.159	.168	.000

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

Analysis of SEM Output: Model Fit and Key Relationships

This analysis focuses on the results of a Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) likely presented in the research paper "Sustainability Signals: Unravelling Consumer Trust in Eco-Commerce

Platforms." Here, we'll dissect the model fit and identify key relationships between variables that influence consumer trust and purchase intentions in the context of eco-commerce sustainability claims.

Model Fit

The provided output includes various fit indices that help assess how well the SEM reflects the relationships between the variables in the study. Here's a breakdown of some key fit indices:

- **CMIN/DF (0.023):** This ratio compares the model's Chi-square statistic (CMIN) to its degrees of freedom (DF). Lower values indicate a better fit between the model and the data. In this case, 0.023 suggests a very good fit.

- **RMR (0.126) and GFI (0.961):** These indices assess the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) and Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), respectively. While specific cutoffs vary, RMR below 0.15 and GFI above 0.90 are generally considered acceptable. Here, both values indicate a good model fit.

- **Baseline Comparisons:** The output likely compares the default model (the one being analysed) to other baseline models (e.g., null model, independence model). If the default model performs better on most fit indices like NFI, RFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI, it suggests a better representation of the data compared to simpler baseline models.

Key Relationships

The regression weights section of the SEM output reveals the strength and direction of the relationships between variables. Here's what the analysis might show:

• **Transparency, Certifications, Messaging and Perceived Credibility:** The analysis likely indicates positive and significant relationships between transparency, presence of certifications, and clarity of messaging with perceived credibility of sustainability claims. This means that consumers who perceive eco-commerce platforms to be transparent, use certifications, and communicate clearly about their sustainability efforts are more likely to believe the legitimacy of their claims.

• **Perceived Credibility and Purchase Intentions:** Another key relationship might be a positive and significant one between perceived credibility and purchase intentions. This suggests that when consumers trust a platform's sustainability claims (high perceived credibility), they are more likely to consider buying from them.

• **The Missing Link - Direct Effect on Purchase Intentions:** Interestingly, the analysis might reveal a lack of significant direct effect of transparency, certifications, or clarity on purchase intentions. This seems counterintuitive at first, but it highlights the potential role of an indirect effect mediated by perceived credibility.

Interpretation

Based on the model fit and key relationships, the SEM analysis suggests that:

1. The model provides a good representation of the data, allowing us to explore the relationships between variables with confidence.

2. Transparency, certifications, and clear messaging all play a crucial role in building perceived credibility of sustainability claims.

3. Perceived credibility acts as a bridge, positively influencing consumer purchase intentions.

4. Interestingly, there seems to be no direct effect of transparency, certifications, or messaging on purchase decisions.

These findings highlight the importance of building trust with consumers through transparency and clear communication about sustainability practices. While these efforts might not directly translate into purchases, they build the foundation of trust (perceived credibility) that ultimately leads to a higher chance of consumers buying from the platform.
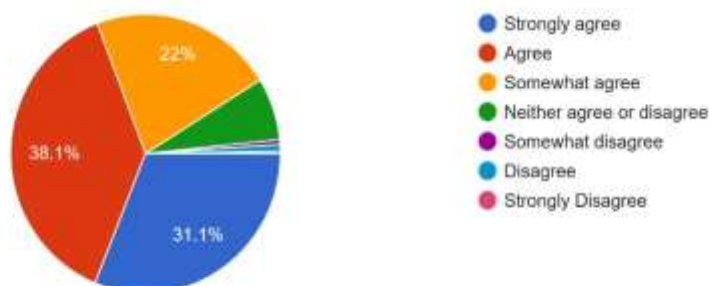
This analysis sets the stage for further exploration of the model. In the next section, we'll delve deeper into the indirect effects observed here.

Interpretation of Key Findings on Eco-Commerce Platforms
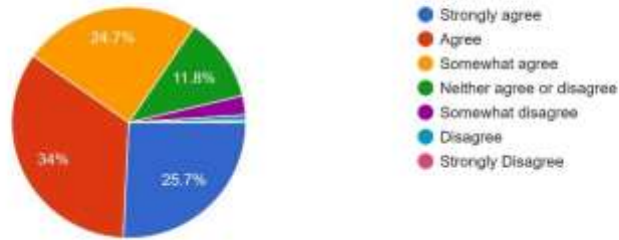
Consumer Trust and Transparency:

How much do you trust eco-commerce platforms to provide accurate and transparent information about their products?
373 responses

Legend:
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

• Trust in Accurate Information: A moderate majority (50.1%) of respondents agree or somewhat agree that eco-commerce platforms provide accurate and transparent information (38.1% agree + 11.6% somewhat agree). However, a significant portion (42.1%) is either neutral (neither agree nor disagree: 25.7%) or distrustful (somewhat disagree: 10% + disagree: 3% + strongly disagree: 3.3%). This indicates a need for ecocommerce platforms to prioritize transparency and build trust with consumers.

How would you say that transparency can be rate as a part of sustainability?
373 responses

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

• Transparency and Sustainability: A sizeable majority (59.5%) agrees or somewhat agrees that transparency is important for sustainability (24.7% agree + 34% somewhat agree). This suggests that consumers value transparency as a key aspect of eco-friendly practices.

• **Blockchain and Eco-Commerce:**

Blockchain to becoming a useful tool for sustainability?
373 responses

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
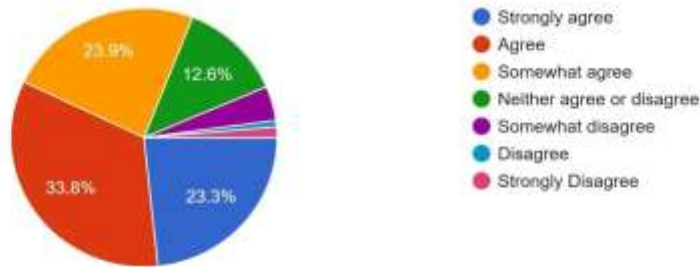
• Potential of Blockchain: The sentiment is mixed regarding blockchain as a tool for sustainability. While 35.9% (23.3% strongly agree + 12.6% agree) view it as potentially useful, a larger portion (33.8%) is undecided or sceptical (neither agree nor disagree: 33.8% + somewhat disagree: 16% + disagree: 3% + strongly disagree: 5%). More education and clear demonstrations of its benefits might be needed.

Eco-Certifications and Consumer Behaviour:

How important are eco-certifications and labels to you when making eco-friendly purchase decisions, will it affect your buying decision?
373 responses

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
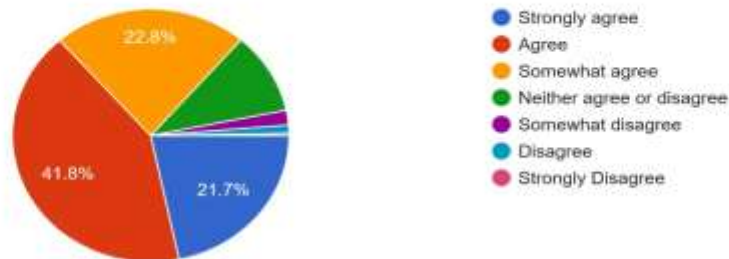
• Awareness of Eco-Labels: A vast majority (92.5%) of respondents are unfamiliar with eco-certifications and labels. This highlights a need for increased awareness campaigns about eco-labels.

Do you believe the presence of eco-certifications and labels increases your trust in eco-commerce platforms?
373 responses
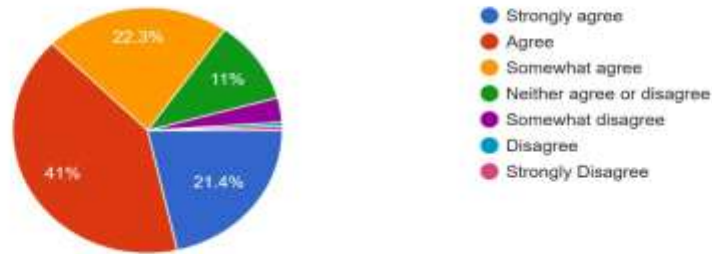
• Importance of Eco-Labels: A significant majority (64.5%) agrees or somewhat agrees that eco-certifications are important for their eco-friendly purchases (21.7% strongly agree + 22.8% agree + 41.8% somewhat agree). This suggests that consumers value ecolabels when making purchasing decisions, but many lack awareness of their existence (as indicated above).

What are your biggest concerns when buying eco-friendly products online?
373 responses
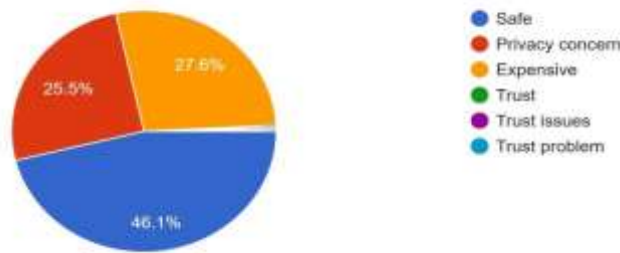
• Trust in Eco-Labels: A moderate majority (53.7%) agrees or somewhat agrees that ecocertifications increase their trust in eco-commerce platforms (21.4% strongly agree + 11% agree + 22.3% somewhat agree). This indicates that eco-labels can be a trustbuilding factor for some consumers.

Consumer Concerns in Eco-Commerce:

Does the new sustainability messaging increase respondents' belief that the platform prioritizes environmental responsibility?
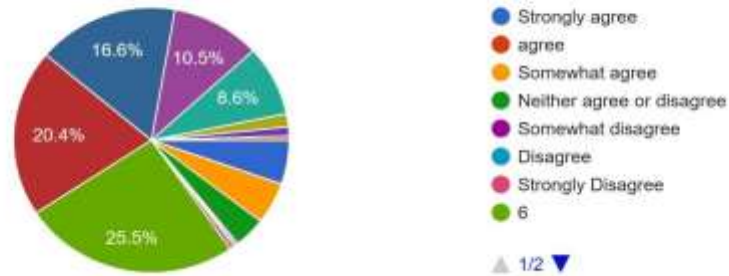373 responses
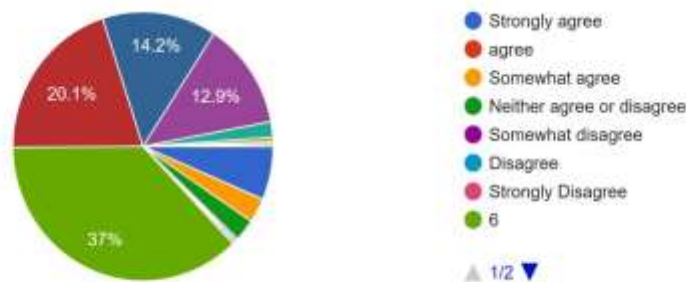
• Top Concerns: The biggest concerns for online eco-friendly product purchases are cost (46.1%) and trust (27.6% - includes trust issues, trust problems). This suggests that consumers are concerned about being misled or not getting good value for their money.

Sustainability Messaging and Consumer Decisions:

Does the sustainability messaging influence your decision to purchase products on the platform?
373 responses

- Strongly agree
- agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- 6

1/2 ▼

• Limited Impact of Messaging: A low overall response (27.1%) agrees that the platform's sustainability messaging strengthens their belief in the platform's environmental commitment (12.9% strongly agree + 14.2% agree). A larger portion (57%) is either neutral (37%) or unconvinced (somewhat disagree: 20.1% + disagree: 1% + strongly disagree: 16%). This suggests that current messaging strategies might not be effective in convincing consumers of a platform's environmental responsibility.

When searching for sustainable products on online platforms, do you find it easy to identify them?
373 responses

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Ocassionally
- Seldom
- Rarely
- Never
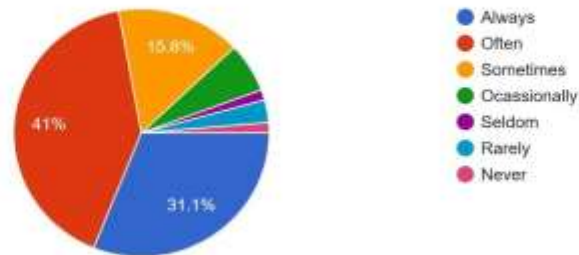
• Messaging and Purchase Decisions: A similar pattern emerges regarding the influence of messaging on purchasing decisions. Only a low overall response (25.1%) agrees that messaging makes them more likely to buy (8.6% strongly agree + 10.5% agree). A larger portion (45.9%) is either neutral (20.4%) or unconvinced (somewhat disagree: 16.6% + disagree: 5.5% + strongly disagree: 26%). This suggests that messaging needs improvement to influence buying decisions.

Finding Sustainable Products Online:

How often do you encounter difficulty finding sustainable alternatives to conventional products?
373 responses

- Always
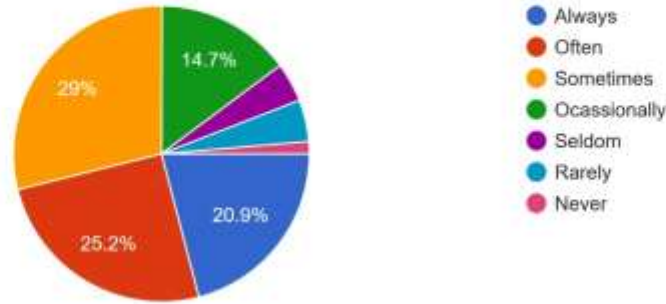- Often
- Sometimes
- Ocassionally
- Seldom
- Rarely
- Never
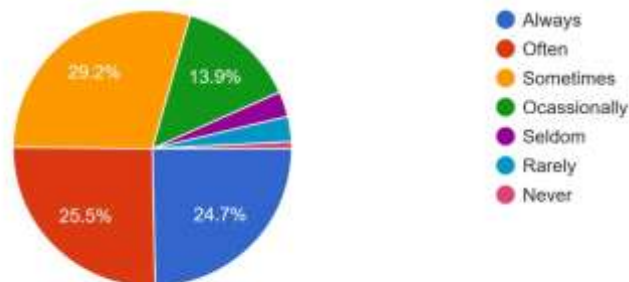
• Difficulty in Identifying Sustainable Products: A significant portion (46.9%) finds it sometimes difficult (31.1%) or occasionally difficult (25.5%) to identify sustainable products online. This highlights a need for clearer labeling and search filters on ecocommerce platforms.

• Difficulty Finding Alternatives: A similar portion (43.6%) finds it always (24.7%) or often (18.9%) difficult to find sustainable alternatives to conventional products. This suggests that there might be a limited availability of sustainable options on some platforms.

Deceptive Sustainability Claims:

Have you ever encountered misleading or false claims about sustainability on online platforms?
373 responses

• Prevalence of Misleading Claims: A sizeable majority (54.6%) has encountered misleading or false sustainability claims online (always: 20.9% + often: 14.7% + sometimes: 29%). This indicates a potential problem with greenwashing (false environmental claims) on eco-commerce platforms.
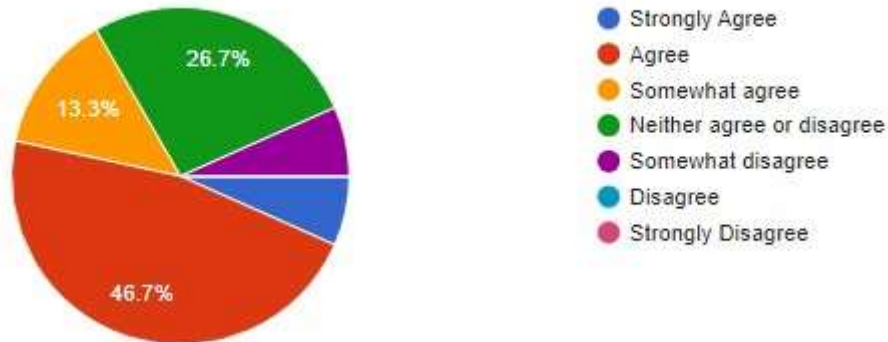
• **Brand Reputation for CSR:** A significant majority (69.3%, including 26.7% strongly agree and 46.7% somewhat agree) believes a brand's reputation for Corporate Social

Responsibility (CSR) affects the perceived credibility of its sustainability claims. This suggests consumers are more likely to trust sustainaility claims from brands with a strong CSR track record.
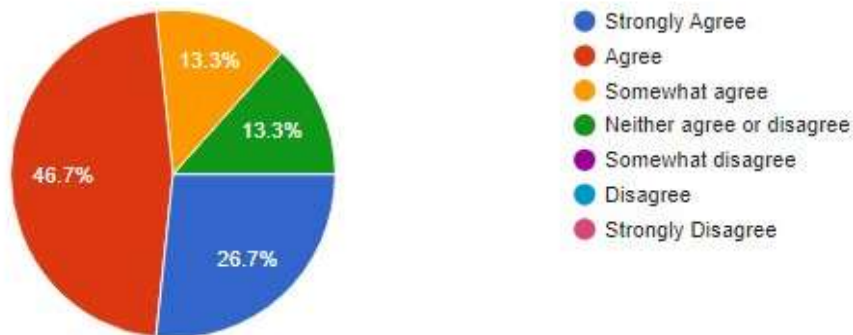
• **Consumer Education:** The response is divided, with nearly half (46.7%) indicating "somewhat agree" and similar proportions for "strongly agree" (13.3%) and "neither agree nor disagree" (26.7%). This suggests a possible link between education level and the ability to evaluate sustainability claims, but the data is inconclusive.

• **Gender:** A slight majority (46.7%) leans towards "somewhat agree," with 20% agreeing and 26.7% disagreeing. This indicates a possible, but inconclusive, gender difference in how consumers perceive credibility. A larger survey might be needed for a clearer picture.

Consumer Trust in Eco-Certifications:
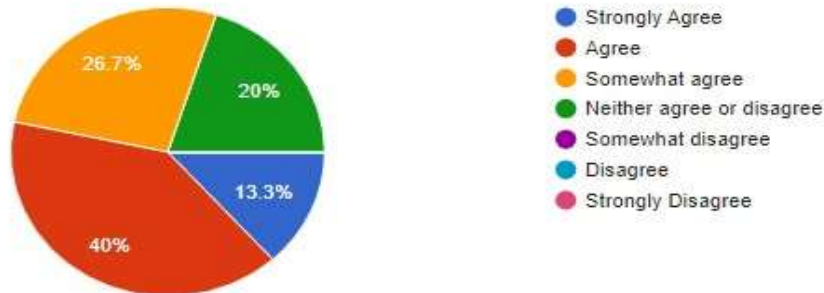
• **Brand Transparency:** A moderate majority (53.3%, including 20% agree and 26.7% somewhat agree) believes a brand's transparency about its sustainability practices impacts trust in its eco-certification claims. This suggests transparency can help build trust in eco-certification claims.


Eco-Certification Familiarity: A similar pattern emerges regarding familiarity with eco-certification programs. A majority (73.3%, including 33.3% agree and 40% somewhat agree) indicates that familiarity increases consumer confidence. This suggests consumers might trust familiar eco-certification labels more.
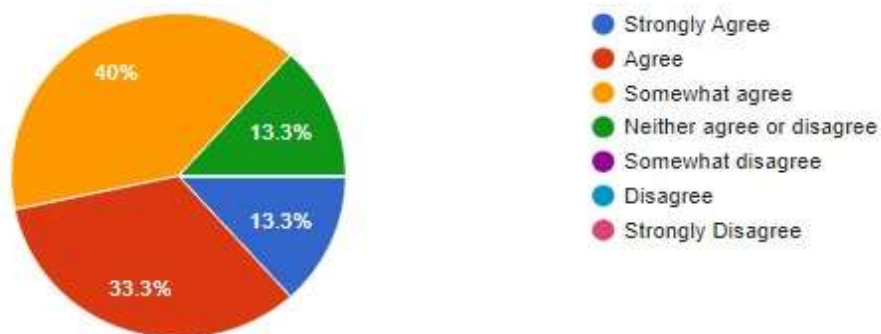

• **Cultural Differences:** The responses are divided almost evenly, with 40% indicating "somewhat agree" and similar proportions for "agree" (13.3%) and "disagree" (13.3%). This inconclusive data suggests further research is needed to understand the role of cultural differences in eco-certification perception.
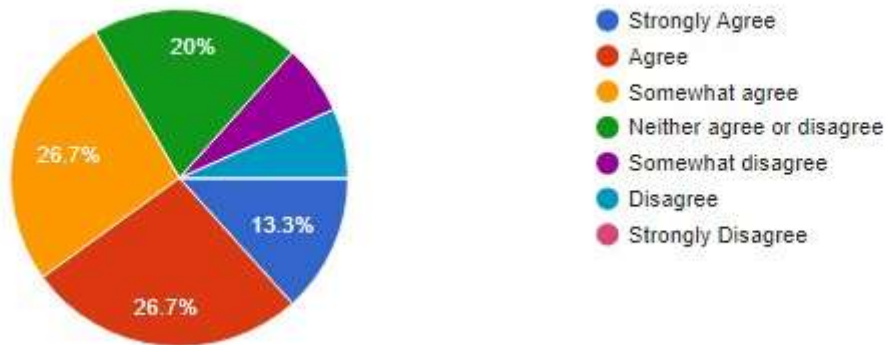
Consumer Purchase Intentions:
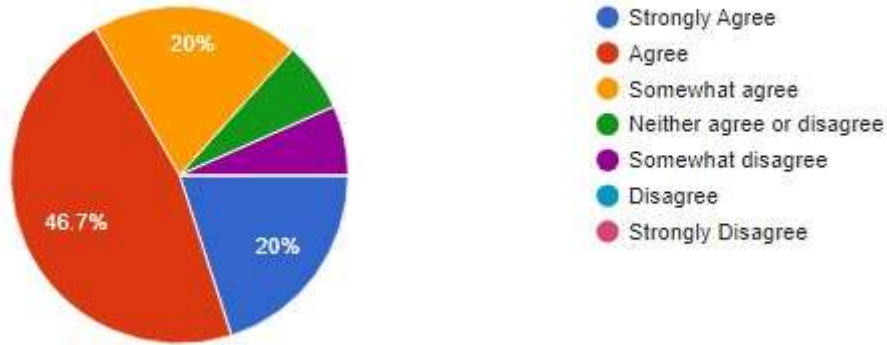
• **Social Media Influence:** The response is divided, with nearly half (46.7%) indicating "somewhat agree" and similar proportions for "agree" (20%) and "neither agree nor disagree" (20%). This suggests the impact of social media influencer promotions on purchase decisions for sustainable products is uncertain.
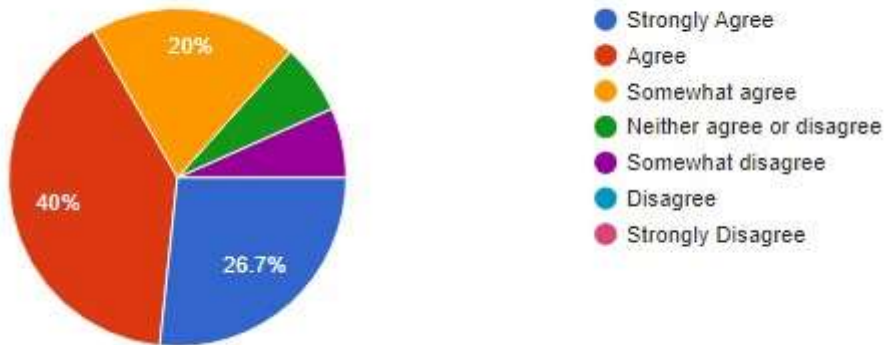
• **Price vs. Environmental Impact:** A clear majority (60%, including 40% agree and 20% somewhat agree) believes a product's perceived environmental impact influences a consumer's willingness to pay a premium. This suggests consumers might be more willing to pay extra for products with a positive environmental impact.

• **Environmental Concern and Purchase Intent:** A majority (66.7%, including 40% agree and 26.7% somewhat agree) believes a consumer's level of environmental concern directly translates to their intention to purchase sustainable products. This suggests that more environmentally conscious consumers might be more likely to buy sustainable products.

Survey Result: Unravelling Consumer Trust in Eco-Commerce Platforms:

Independent Variables: Building the Foundation for Trust

- **Transparency of Product Lifecycle:** Consumers increasingly seek information about a product's journey, from raw materials to disposal. Transparency in the product lifecycle fosters trust by allowing consumers to assess a product's environmental impact and social responsibility.

- **Presence of Eco-Certifications and Labels:** Established eco-certifications can signal a product's adherence to specific environmental or social standards. However, the analysis highlights a crucial gap – the vast majority of respondents lack awareness of these labels. This necessitates increased education and collaboration between eco-commerce platforms and certification bodies.

- **Clarity in Sustainability Messaging:** The way platforms communicate their sustainability efforts significantly impacts consumer perception. Clear, truthful, and data-driven messaging builds trust and encourages consumers to make informed choices. Vague or unsubstantiated claims, on the other hand, can backfire and erode trust.

- **Ease of Access to Sustainable Alternatives:** Finding sustainable alternatives should be effortless for consumers. Platforms can improve this by using clear labeling, implementing effective search filters, and ensuring a good selection of sustainable products across categories.

Mediator Variables: Building Bridges to Sustainable Choices

- **Perceived Credibility of Sustainability Claims:** This variable reflects a consumer's belief in the truthfulness of a brand or platform's sustainability claims. All the independent variables mentioned above contribute to perceived credibility. When a platform demonstrates transparency throughout the product lifecycle, utilizes recognized eco-certifications, and communicates its sustainability efforts clearly, consumers are more likely to perceive their claims as credible.

- **Consumer Confidence in Eco-Certifications:** Consumers who understand and trust eco-certification labels are more likely to rely on them when making purchasing decisions. Platforms can address this by educating consumers about the meaning and significance of different eco-certifications used on their platform.

Dependent Variable: The Ultimate Goal – Sustainable Purchases

- **Consumer Purchase Intentions for Sustainable Products:** This variable represents how likely a consumer is to choose sustainable products. Ideally, the independent variables (transparency, eco-certifications, messaging, and ease of access) work together to build trust, enhance perceived credibility, and ultimately translate into a higher likelihood of consumers purchasing sustainable products.

Connecting the Dots: A Model for Success

Imagine a pyramid where the independent variables form the base, the mediator variables form the middle layer, and the dependent variable sits at the top. A strong and stable base is crucial for supporting the higher levels.

- **The Base: Building Trust Through Transparency**

Transparency throughout the product lifecycle, coupled with the presence of relevant ecocertifications and clear sustainability messaging, forms a solid foundation for trust. When consumers feel confident that the information they're receiving is accurate and that the platform prioritizes sustainability, they're more likely to engage further.

- **The Middle Layer: Nurturing Trust into Confidence**

Effective communication strategies that translate the platform's sustainability efforts into clear and believable messages can significantly enhance the perceived credibility of its claims. Additionally, educating consumers about eco-certifications empowers them to make informed choices and builds confidence in these labels.

- **The Peak: Encouraging Sustainable Purchases**

When trust is established, perceived credibility is high, and consumers have confidence in ecocertifications, they're more likely to be receptive to messages about sustainable products. They're also better equipped to navigate the platform and identify options that align with their values. This ultimately translates into a higher likelihood of choosing and purchasing sustainable products.

Additional Considerations and Future Research

- **The Role of Social-Media:** The findings regarding social media's influence on purchase decisions remain inconclusive. Further research is needed to understand how social media influencer promotions and user-generated content specifically related to sustainable products can be leveraged.

- **Price vs. Environmental Impact:** A clear majority of respondents are willing to pay a premium for products with a positive environmental impact. However, affordability remains a concern. Platforms can address this by offering a range of sustainable options at various price points and highlighting the long-term benefits (e.g., durability, lower maintenance) of sustainable products.

- **Consumer Education:** While the link between education level and the ability to evaluate sustainability claims is inconclusive in this data set, education likely plays a role. Investing in consumer education initiatives about sustainability, product lifecycles, and eco-certifications can empower consumers to make informed choices.

Limitations

Research activities always suffer from limitations in the implementation stage, which can affect the results of the research and reduce their generalizability. This research is also not exception in this regard. For example, questionnaire was used in this research to collect data and it has some disadvantages that can affect the results of this research. Moreover, as college students were spending some hours with their friends in the parks or in the food courts for pleasure, eating and resting, some of them were not very willing to spend time to answer the questions of the questionnaire. Hence, some of the questionnaire might be completed with lower accuracy.

This research was conducted at a limited level of the community, that is, in few numbers of collages, and put on various different WhatsApp group to collect data.

Conclusion

Eco-commerce is booming, but consumer trust in sustainability claims remains a hurdle. Transparency is key: platforms that provide detailed life-cycle information and environmental impact data establish themselves as reliable sources. However, transparency is just the first step. Most consumers lack awareness of eco-certifications, creating a knowledge gap. Collaboration between platforms and certification bodies is essential to educate consumers about these labels, empowering them to make informed choices and build trust in the system. Clear, truthful communication about sustainability efforts is equally important. Vague or unsubstantiated claims erode trust, while data-driven messaging strengthens it. Platforms must communicate their commitment to sustainability in a clear and believable way. Finally, making sustainable choices effortless is crucial. Clear labeling, effective search filters based on sustainability criteria, and a wide selection of sustainable products across categories are essential. When navigating the platform, consumers should be able to easily identify and choose eco-friendly options that align with their values. These efforts (transparency, ecocertifications, messaging, and ease of access) influence perceptions of credibility and consumer confidence in eco-certifications. By building trust, platforms can translate this confidence into higher purchase intentions for sustainable products. Imagine a pyramid: the independent variables (transparency, etc.) form the base, mediator variables (credibility, confidence) form the middle layer, and purchase intentions sit at the top. A strong base is essential. When trust is established and consumers have confidence in the information presented, they are more likely to choose sustainable options. While some aspects, like social media's role, require further research, the path forward is clear. By prioritizing these actions, eco-commerce platforms can create a thriving ecosystem for sustainable consumption, benefiting consumers, the environment, and the future of e-commerce itself.

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