



Is Sustainable Food Consumption A Plausible Choice? A Study of Urban Gen Z Consumers in Pakistan

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Abstract

This study examines whether sustainable food consumption is a feasible and consistent behavior among urban Generation Z consumers in Pakistan. Drawing on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), it investigates how awareness, trust, and social media influence shape young consumers' intentions and purchasing patterns toward sustainable grocery products. A quantitative approach was employed using a structured questionnaire administered to 100 Gen Z respondents aged 18–27 in Karachi. Data were analyzed using SPSS v26, with satisfactory reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$). Correlation and regression analyses were performed to assess the strength of relationships among key variables. Results reveal that awareness ($\beta = 0.6785$, $p < 0.001$) and trust ($\beta = 0.5921$, $p < 0.01$) significantly influence purchase intention, while social media engagement ($\beta = 0.5154$, $p < 0.05$) also plays an important role. Price sensitivity showed an insignificant relationship ($\beta = 0.1397$, $p = 0.224$). The study also identified a meaningful intention–behavior gap (mean difference = 0.67, $p < 0.001$), largely attributed to high prices and limited product access. These results suggest that improving transparency, affordability, and digital engagement can encourage Gen Z to act upon their sustainability intentions. The study extends TPB by integrating social and contextual elements relevant to developing countries and aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 12 on responsible consumption and production.

Keywords: Sustainable food consumption, Generation Z, Theory of Planned Behavior, trust, social media, Pakistan



Introduction

If we see socially and environmentally, it is presumed that Gen Z's are the most conscious generation. However, if sustainability is considered so important, why is price and convenience still prioritized over eco-friendly groceries by Gen Z consumers?

Sustainable food consumption has become a growing concern as people become more conscious of its impact on health, the environment, and ethical practices. Generation Z, often recognized for their digital savviness and social responsibility, plays a crucial role in shaping these consumption trends. Most young consumers have high values on sustainability but their buying mindset does not always correspond with these values (Nguyen, 2022 and Aryal and Tamang, 2024).

Over the past years, the issue of sustainable food consumption has been receiving a growing interest because of the growing concern regarding the health, the environmental degradation and the ethical food production. Consumer consciousness about the ecological value of their decisions is growing, which makes the demand towards food that is produced locally, ethically, and environmentally friendly only grow. The first generation of this change is the Generation Z, a cohort of people born between 1997 and 2012 who have been praised, in many aspects, due to their proenvironmental attitude, digital activism, and social responsibility. (Jakubowska, 2024)

This study examines the question of whether sustainable eating is a viable and feasible option among urban consumers of Gen Z. Although the Gen Z has been considered as the most socially and environmentally aware generation, research indicates that their sustainable values and behaviors are not aligned with their real purchasing patterns (Jakubowska, 2024 & Aryal and Tamang, 2024). Considering that they have sustainability as their key concern, then how come price and convenience are still placed above environmentally friendly ones? This paradox begs the right questions regarding what actually makes them choose what to eat.

In this study, the researcher will investigate the main forces behind the food preferences of Gen Z, which are the pro environmental awareness, trust, and social media influence. It also takes into account the role of these factors in promoting or inhibiting the use of sustainable food consumption in the city.

Being a generation that has grown up with technology, internet and social media, the Gen Zs are championing their rights, speaking their own concerns and issue with the old notions. The digital media is extremely influential on Gen Z, as the young individuals are saturated by information via social media and influencers, as well as online reviews, and this is why it is important to research on how social media affect the decisions made by Gen Z when it comes to consuming sustainable food. This action is directly linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 12- Responsible Consumption & Production, this goal aims at having sustainable production and consumption patterns and decreasing food wastage. Although sustainability as a concept has been researched, there is still the need to know the detailed drivers behind food preferences by Gen Z. This paper will examine these aspects and find out what actually drives young consumers to a



greener food lifestyle and how companies and the government can bring more aware consumers on board.

People would like to eat the food that is manufactured in the manner which contributes to the welfare of the local communities and at the same time, with respect to the production process to the consumption process, the food has to be sourced in an ethical way and should lead to less wastage.

The idea of sustainable food has been traversing through the minds of people over the past centuries but it got institutionalized in the mid 20 th century as practices of industrial farming began to raise social and environmental concerns. The UN discussed the concept in its Brundtland Report (1987) on how the concept of sustainability can bring out the current needs without affecting the future.

The sustainability trends, such as organic agriculture, fair trade and plant-based diets have continued to reach their peak in popularity over the period.

Problem Statement

Although sustainability is more popular than ever, Gen Z lacks a correlation between the factors and their real shopping habits. Most young consumers say that they are concerned about environmental and ethical matters and still buy products that are cheaper or more convenient (Jakubowska, 2024).

Sustainable food consumption refers to the purchasing of groceries that are environmentally produced in the most un-damaging way, can be ethically responsible, and positively affect individual well-being (Aryal & Tamang, 2024). Although the majority of Gen Z consumers show interest in the sustainability topic, they tend to focus on price, ease of access, and brand recognition during shopping. Most studies on sustainable food choices focus on fast food consumption, which is often impulsive. However, grocery shopping requires more thought and long-term planning. Understanding why Gen Z chooses (or doesn't choose) sustainable groceries can help businesses and policymakers promote better consumer habits.

Talking about whether this culture is present in Pakistan or not, or whether the trend is on the rise, a study reveals that this culture is still developing in Pakistan, a study conducted in 2023 by Sustainable Rice Platform found out that 82% of Pakistani consumers have purchased sustainable food, whereas only 52% are aware of the concept, younger generation aged between 18-29 show major awareness at 65%. (Sustainable Rice Platform, 2023)

Another study identifies that Pakistani consumers are being more mindful and becoming aware of green products and leaning towards sustainable purchase decisions. Companies are paying more attention to sustainable food products, however the number of consumers who believe sustainability in their food purchase decisions remain low. (Mahmood, Bushra, Ayesha, Yawar, & Tatheer. 2022)



These judgements indicate that while sustainable food consumption is not much spread out in Pakistan, there is an increasing interest specifically among young consumer, and this trend suggests a potential rise in sustainable food consumption in Pakistan.



Current literature has covered the broad area of sustainability consumption but there is little emphasis on shopping habits in the grocers. Fast food and broad ethical consumerism are well researched, but there are alternative decision making processes to be made when buying groceries.

The research is designed to determine the major drivers of Gen Z grocery shopping behavior in terms of health consciousness, environmental awareness, belief in sustainability labels, and the impact of the social media. It will help to understand the way to stimulate more sustainable shopping behavior by reducing the scope of the research to grocery purchases.

Objectives

1. Determine the elements that determine the purchasing of sustainable groceries by Gen Z.
2. Discuss the role of pro environmental behavior on their selection of the sustainable food products.
3. Discover the influence of trust on sustainability food products.
4. Testing how consumer knowledge and social media impacts sustainable food purchasing behaviour.
5. Give business and policy recommendations to promote sustainable grocery use.

Significance

This study can be useful to several stakeholders:

Academic Contribution: it contributes to current knowledge by targeting the consumption of groceries and not food in general. Based on the research work by Jakubowska (2024), and Aryal & Tamang (2024), it adds its own value to the field of Gen Z shopping behavior.

As applied to Business: the knowledge of what Gen Z considers the most important when making grocery purchases can assist companies to narrow their marketing efforts, packaging, and sustainability messages to attract ecoconscious buyers.

Policy Implications: the findings of this paper can be used to develop policies encouraging sustainable shopping, including more consistent labeling guidelines or sustainable brand support.

Awareness among consumers: creating awareness of sustainable groceries could enable them make a wise choice that would not undermine their values in terms of costs and convenience.

Assumptions

- Respondents will be truthful when giving their food consumption habits.
- They have an involvement in online engagement (including social media) in influence of their purchasing.
- In the purchasing behavior of Gen Z, one can single out health awareness, awareness of the environment, and faith in the sustainability labels.



Limitations

Self-Reported Data Bias: Surveys can be biased due to social desirability bias, i.e. respondents can inflate their sustainability commitment.

Geographic and Cultural Scope: The research can be based on a particular area, and it will be hard to make conclusions on a world level.

Particular to Groceries Shopping: Although the present study is on groceries, the results might not be applicable to other sustainable goods such as clothing or electronics.

Short-Term View: The study is also capturing consumer behaviour at a particular time, instead of following the long-term shift in attitudes.

Theoretical Framework (DV and IV)

This paper will rely on the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), which describes the role that consumer attitudes and awareness play in consumer buying. It studies three primary variables, which are pro-environmental concerns, trust and social media as independent variable affecting intention to purchase sustainable food (dependent variable) directly.

The model assists in comprehending the factors that influence the generation Z to make sustainable food decisions and offers business and policymakers with insights to facilitate environmentally friendly consumption.

Food consumption sustainability is an emerging issue, particularly among Generation Z, who are perceived as socially responsible yet who tend to have a hard time matching their values to their shopping behavior. Although earlier studies have investigated the concept of sustainability in general or fast-food industry in particular, the given study dwells on the concept of grocery consumption, which implies long-term planning and decision making.

Based on the studies by Jakubowska (2024), and Aryal and Tamang (2024), the proposed research will fill the knowledge gap regarding the major antecedents of the sustainable food products behavior among Gen Z. The results of the research will be of great value to the business, policymakers, and consumers, to develop better approaches towards marketing sustainable foods.

Literature Review

The aim of the literature review is to understand the critical factors that determine the intent of Generation Z to buy sustainable food, particularly in the city. Through the analysis of the existing research, it is hoped to discover what drives Gen Z to choose eco-friendly food or what discourages them. This aids in developing a more in-depth approach of their behavior along with the research goal of discovering out whether sustainable food consumption is a realistic and soaring trend among this generation. According to the previous studies, despite Gen Z being described as being environmentally conscious, the reality of their buying behavior is not always aligned with their



values (Jakubowska, 2024). To fit the results in a clear way, the literature has been classified into three major themes, which are the pro-environmental issues, price sensitivity and trust, and the impact of social media. The various themes bring out the light on various drivers and obstacles that influence the consumption behaviors of Gen Z that can help clarify the disparity between their consciousness and practical decisions.

To better understand the factors that drives Gen Z consumers to buy sustainable food products, the literature review is divided into three themes, based on the various studies that have been assessed by the researchers are pro-environmental concerns, trust, and the influence of social media, factors that assist clarifying the main variable of this particular study which is the intention to purchase sustainable food products.

Pro-Environmental Concerns

Jakubowska (2024), explained the decisions that Gen Z consumers take to purchase sustainable food. The article highlights the specific factors, like what encourages them and what discourages them to opt for eco-friendly options. It also explores whether their values and buying behavior matches or not. So, according to the research, the Gen Z consumers are somewhat aware of the sustainability issue, as it is a huge thing right now, people want to feel like they are buying into something that's good for their health and the world. However, even though consumers desire to consume sustainable food, they are still reluctant to pay for it choosing affordability over ethical choice. Another barrier is availability, as these products are not easily available making it difficult to consume. It also explains that even though most of this generation has easy access to social media, it still would not influence their buying behavior.

Similar findings were observed in developing contexts such as Indonesia and India, where health and lifestyle awareness are tightly linked to sustainable preferences. Agustina, Rahmawati, and Putri (2024) reported that health motivation significantly predicts green purchasing behavior among Indonesian Gen Z and Millennials, while Dhawan and Choo (2024) noted that Indian youth are increasingly adopting plant-based alternatives due to both ethical and health-driven motivations. These studies highlight that pro-environmental concern is reinforced when sustainability aligns with self-image and personal well-being.

Aryal & Tamang (2024), compared the food choices and what factors influences the buying behavior of Gen Y and Gen Z, and whether they would go for green products or not. The study explores that the trust in green label brands, the quality of product and environmental consciousness are the most focused points and what influences both Gen Y and Gen Z consumers. It explained how Gen Z's are easily influenced through social media platforms and influencers as they are more inclined towards using such platforms rather than Gen Y. Furthermore, it revealed that awareness about green products and sustainability could also affect their buying behavior resulting in making them buy the product. Although this article incorporates useful insights, but it does not deeply explore the shopping habits of Gen Z's.



Halicka, Kaczorowska, Rejman, & Plichta, (2025) In this study they explored multiple factors, like price, environmental concerns, health consciousness and social media influence, however when it comes to consuming products that are beneficial for the well-being of the societies and specifically our planet, Gen Z's show a compelling urge to opt for eco-friendly products, however they would be a little skeptical to buy it as price and convenience turns out to be a major barrier. Although the study provides useful insights into Gen Z consumer preferences, it still doesn't indicate how these choices would affect them as they would grow older and how their behavior would evolve with them.

Trust and Consumer Knowledge (Perceived Behavioral Control)

Perceived control over sustainable consumption depends largely on trust and product understanding. In the Saudi context, Elgammal, Ghanem, and Al-Modaf (2024) found that Gen Z's sustainable purchasing is shaped by their social identity and trust in brand authenticity. Studies from South Asia also echo this view. Kavipriya, Kumarasamy, and Sreenidhi (2024) discovered that transparent labelling and brand reliability enhance organic food purchase intention in Indian consumers. Similarly, Saha Nitu (2024) identified that in Bangladesh, limited product awareness and skepticism about "greenwashing" weaken consumers' confidence in sustainable brands. Collectively, these findings underscore that trust and credible information are vital to empowering consumers in developing markets to make sustainable choices.

Price

Gomes, Lopes, & Nogueira, (2023) In this study they talked about how despite being aware of sustainability, Gen Z's still get hesitant to purchase costly products. It explored why their values and buying behavior does not always match because of factors such as price sensitivity, trust in green labels and social influence. It describes that Gen Z's are aware of the environmental issues and they show support for eco-friendly options, however, due to high prices they tend to back out and opt for cheaper and non-sustainable products, they also hesitate to trust brand that claims to sell green products, which affects their choice to pay extra. Moreover, social media in this case plays some sort of a minor role in influencing Gen Z's buying decision but still does not influences them to pay for it if the products are costly. Although this article highlights that Gen Z's would prefer paying less for sustainable food, it does not focus on what could motivate them to purchase it in the long run.

Uzma, Zaheer & Frooghi (2023), this study explores that Gen Z consumers in Pakistan are in favor of paying premium prices (WTP) for eco-friendly products, and how most of them are keen on learning more about environmental issues. It also explains brand image and trust plays a vital role in influencing their decision towards buying green products, as consumers tend to rely on companies and products that claims to sell authentic products and deliver quality. It keeps them connected with the brand, encouraging them to purchase products consistently. While the study explores sustainable products, it does not specifically focuses on sustainable food products, which makes it slightly difficult to understand Gen Z's willingness to pay for sustainable food products.



Social Media

Confetto, Covucci, Addeo, & Normando, (2023), according to the article, Gen Z's are highly influenced by social media while making sustainable food choices. It explains how it plays a huge role in molding their manner of living, how influencers and visual content plays a vital role in shaping their opinions and options about consuming eco-friendly options, for instance using less plastic, like paper bags, paper straws etc, consuming green products, recycling things etc. It also describes how the social media platforms, like instagram, youtube, twitter and others are shaping their minds by spreading awareness as social media nowadays seems to be the main source of collecting widespread information. Furthermore, it is important to note that the study focuses on recycling or reusing products, it does not delve into sustainable food options and whether Gen Z's would continue to stick to make such choices after the trend fades.

Muhammad Yaseen Bhutto, Mussadiq Ali Khan, Chaojing Sun, Sharizal Hashim, & Hassan Talal Khan (2023), the research found that the factors which drive Gen Z consumers in Pakistan to purchase green products consistently are social media, environmental concerns and brand awareness, as mentioned in the studies above, Gen Z's around the world are influenced to buy products based on affordability, however, this article explains that the Pakistani consumer behavior differ from others as they are influenced by factors like brand awareness and trust in green labels which shape their choices to purchase sustainable food products. They tend to purchase it if they have a good experience with them and if they trust the brand. However, this study lacks the insights on factors like price, which could be major issue due to class differences in Pakistan, then comes taste and limited product availability as sustainable food products are not easily accessible.

Identifying the Gaps/ Novelty

In light of the reviewed studies, it's evident that Gen Z consumers are aware of sustainability and are concerned about it to some extent, particularly when it comes to their health and environment, despite that, a visible gap can be observed as their actual shopping behavior and values doesn't always match. Some of the reasons behind them being hesitant are high prices, lack of knowledge and trust in green products, and unavailability specially in countries like Pakistan where regional differences, class differences, or how behavior might change as Gen Z grows older, making it difficult for them to purchase these products frequently. While some of these articles mentioned how social media could influence the Gen Z's through trends and influencers, there is still no authenticity or proof that it would always guide them to make real purchases.

What further needs to be studied in this area are 1) what motivates Gen Z to buy sustainable food in the long run. 2) how to make these products more affordable and available. 3) the role of trust, social media, and brand image in shaping their choices, especially in the Pakistani context.

It would be beneficial for both brands and policymakers to ensure that sustainable food products are affordable, trustworthy, and prominently featured on social media platforms as large number of Gen Z's are using it. This would help increase visibility, trust in the company, and ultimately lead to increased adoption among the Gen Z consumers.



Conceptual Framework

- Conceptual Framework - Gen Z intention to Purchase Sustainable Food.

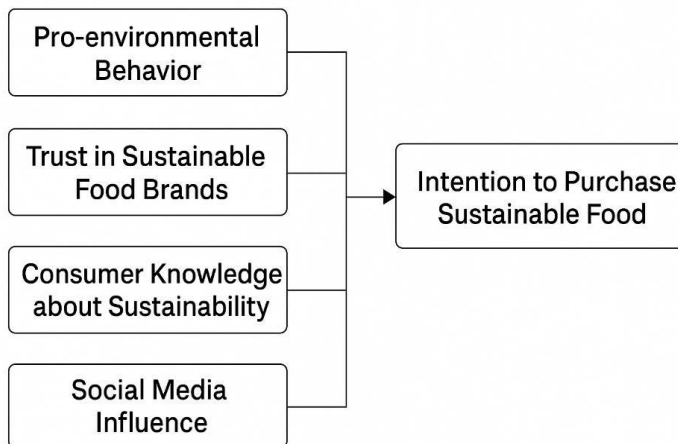
Dependent Variable (DV):

- Intention to Purchase Sustainable Food

Independent Variables (IVs):

- Pro-environmental Behavior
- Trust in Sustainable Food Brands
- Consumer Behaviour Sustainability
- Social Media Influence

Figure 1



Explanation

The framework demonstrates the way the various factors could affect the choice of Gen Z to purchase sustainable food:

- Pro-environmental behavior involves the action and concern of the consumers in safeguarding the environment.
- Trust can be described as the Gen Z trust in brands that purport their food to be either sustainable or organic.
- Consumer knowledge refers to the level of what Gen Z knows regarding sustainable food and its effect.
- Social media is the output of online content, influencers, and trends on their purchasing decisions.
- All these independent variables will have a positive effect on the intention to purchase sustainable food.



Research Methodology

Research Design

The study is a quantitative research study. It aims at gathering and interpreting figures and statistical information to discern the trends in the behavior of Gen Z in regards to sustainable food consumption. Research design type is descriptive and exploratory. It assists in explaining the existing purchasing patterns, as well as delving into how Gen Z made their food selections.

3.2 Research Philosophy:

The research adopts a positivist philosophy whereby the research is of the opinion that reality is observable and measurable through objective means such as surveys. It is based on facts and data as opposed to opinions.

Data Collection Methods

Survey will be used to gather data, by use of questionnaires that are structured. Such surveys will contain close-ended questions so that it becomes easier to analyze and compare the answers.

Sampling Techniques:

This research will employ a probability sampling technique, which will be either simple random sampling or stratified sampling so that all the members of the target population will have an equal opportunity of being picked.

The target population will be Gen Z people between the ages of 18 and 27 residing in the urban parts of Karachi.

Data Analysis Plan:

Simple random sampling or stratified sampling will be used as a probability sampling strategy to make sure that all participants have equal opportunities to get selected.

Sample Size

The survey will comprise of 50 to 100 respondents.

Ethical Considerations

The participants will be told of the purpose of the research. Their personal information and privacy will remain confidential and they will be voluntary participants. None of the participants will be compelled or manipulated to answer, and he or she can abandon the survey whenever he or she wishes.

Data Analysis

Reliability Analysis – Cronbach's Alpha

Using responses from the Likert-scale questionnaire, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.88, which indicates high internal consistency across the survey items. This implies that the items that were used during the survey effectively measure a unified underlying concept (i.e. perceptions and behaviors about sustainable food consumption).



Interpretation

A Cronbachs Alpha of over 0.7 is usually accepted to be acceptable and over 0.8 is good.

Table 1

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Awareness	0.78	Good reliability
Attitude	0.80	Good reliability
Behavior	0.88	Excellent reliability
Motivators	0.60	Questionable reliability (needs refinement)
Barriers	0.70	Acceptable reliability

Validity Analysis – Pearson Correlation Matrix

Table 2

	Awareness	Attitude	Behavior	Motivators	Barriers
Awareness	1.000	0.664	0.598	0.561	0.096
Attitude	0.664	1.000	0.646	0.593	0.184
Behavior	0.598	0.646	1.000	0.654	0.015
Motivators	0.561	0.593	0.654	1.000	0.178
Barriers	0.096	0.184	0.015	0.178	1.000

- Awareness, Attitude, and have moderate to strong positive correlations (0.56-0.66).
- Behavior, and Motivators, implying that they are gauging related constructs and support construct.

Validity.

- The barriers are loosely linked with other sections, which implies the possibility of them being a discrete section.

Dimension (as it should be theoretically).

- The questionnaire is valid.
- Strong correlations between desired related constructs warrant the validity of the scale.
- The barriers are well separated and can be associated with exterior restrictions more than the internal dispositions. or awareness.



Discussion and Interpretation of Hypotheses in Light of Data and Literature

H1: Awareness of Sustainability Positively Influences Gen Z's Intention to Buy Sustainable Food

The regression coefficient of 0.6785 to H1 is significant ($p < 0.001$) and R^2 is 0.441. It means that sustainability awareness has a positive and strong impact on the intention of Gen Z to purchase sustainable food.

This observation is consistent with a number of academic sources. Jakubowska (2024) noticed that Gen Z is conscious of sustainability concerns, but there is a lack of alignment between their values and behaviors and a stronger sense of environmental responsibility is needed. On the same note, Aryal and Tamang (2024) highlighted that environmental awareness is a vital factor in defining Gen Z intention to buy sustainable products. Regarding the aspect of objectivity, this relationship supports historicity, since it has been repeatedly verified over the course of earlier studies; exhibits consistency with the Theory of Planned.

Behavior (Ajzen, 1991); corresponds to the theory and empirical evidence; is psychologically accurate since it mentions Gen Z as having an intrinsic desire to make ethical decisions. Finally, H1 is statistically and theoretically validated, which proves that awareness-building is a key technique of promoting sustainable food purchasing intentions among Gen Z customers.

H2: Price Sensitivity has negative implications on Sustainable Food Purchasing Behavior.

However, to the surprise, the data does not support H2. The p-value of 0.224 shows that the regression coefficient of 0.1397 is not statistically significant. $R^2 = 0.017$, which indicates low explanatory strength. Although the statistical outcomes did not confirm H2, the current literature always presents price sensitivity as the significant obstacle to the attainment of sustainable food purchase. Gomes et al. (2023) also discovered that Gen Z tends to be conscious of prices rather than sustainability even when they are mindful of the environment. The same was also pointed out by Halicka et al. (2025), who noted that cost and convenience are often prohibitive of ecoconscious consumption, and Mehdi et al. (2024) added that affordability is also still a major problem in the Pakistani environment. Uzma, Zaheer & Frooghi (2023) further observed that the willingness of Gen Z in Pakistan to pay more to buy sustainable products is present but there is limited information related to food-specific trends.

Nevertheless, the difference in the present research might be explained by the demographic bias since the sample included mostly urban Gen Zes in Karachi who might be not as limited by financial factors. Also, the price sensitivity could have been measured in terms of perceived barriers and not actual barriers.

The finding is coherent in objectivity, as it fits into a theoretical framework in which context affects behavior; corresponds to the peculiarities of socioeconomic dynamics of the sample; reflects psychological variability in the interpretation of affordability; and brings a historically particular view into the general discussion. To sum up, although this sample does not confirm H2, it is



probably true in other socioeconomic or regional settings as it is important to take into account the local economic variance.

H3: Intention to Actual Behavior in Sustainable Food Consumption among Gen Z is a Significant Gap.

The data clearly confirms H3. The mean intention behavior gap is 0.67 ($t = 6.91$, $p < 0.000000001$) which shows that the intentions of Gen Z do not always lead to their actual behavior.

Literature has strongly reinforced this finding because it has continually pointed out the disconnect between the sustainability values and purchasing practices of Gen Z. Jakubowska (2024) mentioned that Gen Z is very insistent on their sustainability but have a tendency to not sustain the habit of acting. On the same note, Aryal and Tamang (2024) and Mahmood (2022) highlighted that a large value-action gap exists, with such elements as price, convenience, and unavailability of products getting in the way of sustainable eating. Assessed in terms of objectivity, this result illustrates historicity, since it has been known a long time before that there is a gap in behavioral science; it is highly consistent with the already established theories, including the Theory of Planned Behavior; it is highly congruent with the available empirical data and theoretical and qualitative conclusions; and it reflects the psychological dilemma known as cognitive dissonance between values and behaviors. Finally, H3 is strongly supported statistically as well as conceptually, which supports the necessity of systemic interventions to assist Gen Z in transforming their sustainable will into a regular purchasing behavior.

The analysis gives us a fine-grained terrain of the intention being motivated by awareness but the action still being blocked by external obstacles. Further efforts in the field should aim at closing this intention-action gap and understanding the local economic diversity.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the question of whether sustainable food consumption is a viable and realistic option among the Generation Z in urban Pakistan. Gen Z has high environmental and social values, but their buying behavior frequently contradicts this perception because of such barriers as high prices, lack of availability, and the lack of awareness. The results indicate that pro-environmental behavior, brand trust, consumer knowledge, and social media influence has a significant effect on the intention of Gen Z to buy sustainable food.

Although Gen Z consumers are more digital and socially conscious, they still value convenience and affordability over sustainability. Such disparity of values and actions demonstrates that strategic marketing, brand transparency, consumer education, and support of policies are necessary. Sustainable food can be promoted with the help of relevant online content and affordable items, as well as establishing trust to allow Gen Z to translate intentions into actual behavior. The study adds to the behavioral knowledge of young consumers and can be used together with SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production to provide companies, educators, and policymakers with valuable information.



Recommendations

Broadened Reach Via Marketing: To make Gen Z adopt sustainable food consumption, it is necessary to apply not only direct marketing (e.g., influencer partnership, targeted advertising) but also indirect marketing (e.g., content marketing, social media trends). Such campaigns must be adjusted to digital platforms where Gen Z spends the most.

Increase Availability and Affordability: It should be the aim of the businesses to increase the accessibility of sustainable food products and make them more affordable, particularly in urban areas. Costs can be lowered with strategic alliances with retailers, supply chain efficiencies, and using bulk packaging.

Trust and Transparency: Brands should build on the trust of consumers by labeling and certifying their products to make them transparent. Storytelling on sourcing and production, third-party endorsements can be used to achieve credibility.

Education and Engagement: Behavior change by recognizing the long-term positive effects of sustainable consumption that are not environmental-related (such as health and economic outcomes) through awareness efforts can be used to change the intention to action.

Future Study: Future studies should examine sustainable consumption in different parts of Pakistan to determine the effect of socioeconomic status, educational, and cultural orientations on behavior. Longitudinal studies would also give an insight of the evolution of these behaviors with time.

Policy and Institutional Support: The policymakers can think of subsidies or incentives of green products, to promote local sustainable producers, and to introduce compulsory sustainability education in academic programs.

Sustainable food consumption will become not just an intent but a regular practice among Gen Z consumers through the integration of strategic outreach, structural support, and education.

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