

## **Investigating Ethical Consumption among Nigeria Universities Undergraduates**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper investigates ethical consumption behaviour among Nigerian university undergraduates. The specific objectives of this study are to ascertain the extent of gender differences in ethical consumption behaviour and to establish the influence of ethical consumption levers on youth ethical consumption behaviour. Two hypotheses were tested in this study. In this study, the survey research design method was adopted. The population of study are the entire university undergraduates in Bayelsa state while the accessible population are undergraduates from two universities in Bayelsa state. Four hundred copies of a structured questionnaire were conveniently administered to undergraduate students in their respective universities. From the 400 copies administered, 375 were properly filled and found useful. With the aid of SPSS 25, the collated data were analyzed with mean and standard deviation while the formulated hypotheses were tested with inferential statistics t-test, one-way analysis of variance, multiple linear regression and Pearson Correlation coefficient. All the tests were executed at a 5 % level of significance. The result shows a significant difference between male and female in their consumption practices as well as all the levers of ethical consumption except government policies and regulations positively influence ethical consumption. This paper concludes that the gender of a consumer greatly accounts for ethical consumption behaviour prevalent in a society just as there are several factors that influence ethical consumption behaviour. This paper recommends that marketing managers should be conscious of modern consumers' rights in their ethical campaigns while government agencies should be decisive in enforcing ethical standards.*

**Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Ethical Consumption, Ethics Marketing, University Undergraduates**

**JEL Classification Codes: M21, E21, D12, D18**

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### **1. Introduction**

Over the years the primary responsibility of business is the provision of satisfying offerings to consumers. Expectedly, the consumption of goods and services is intended to confer benefits on consumers. However, present day realities indicate that consumers' consumption practices are reported to

have negative impact on the individual, environment and the entire society (Nkamnebe, Obeta, & Ayodele, 2019). The foregoing suggests that products are expected to exert minimal effects on humans, animals and the society. Ethical consumption is exhibited in the deliberate selection of goods and services that have been produced, processed and delivered in an ethical manner. Interestingly, Ijewere and Obeki (2017) conclude that firms often embark on continuous consumers education with the intent of embracing ethical practices in the purchase, use, and disposal of products. Experience has shown that the rate at which customers embrace the tenets of ethical consumption is regrettably low. It is the common consensus among scholars that ethics underpins ethical consumption. As a matter of fact, business core values have emerged as the primary concern of consumer ethics. According to Rajan (2016), the core values of a business are implicated in consumers' social justice, morality and just behaviour.

Several scholars have identified the motives underlying consumers' ethical consumption. These motives range from the concern for consumers health, equity, political or religious motives, environmental consideration and personal values (Volle, 2013). However, Brinkman and Peattie (2011) categorized these reasons into individual or health and environmental and animal welfare motives. To Ferrel (2015) the purpose for ethical consumption advocacy is to enhance personal wellbeing as well as promotes environmental protection and animal welfare.

Several researches report on the differences in the outcomes on ethical consumption studies. Specifically, Magnusson, Arndt, and Holmberg (2013) found that environmental and, individual health motives are stronger motivation for ethical consumption behavior. This finding is similar to Schifferstein and Oude-Ophuis (2008) earlier study. The scholars report that found individual or health motives to better explain ethical consumption behavior. On this basis of these findings, this study aligns with Magnusson *et al.* (2013) proposition of consumers' welfare as the underpinning motivation for consumers' ethical consumption. Consequently, this paper is poised to investigate universities undergraduates' ethical consumption practices prevalent in Nigeria. This choice is predicted on the consequences of unbridled food and drugs consumption practices of the Nigerian youth.

Furthermore, the eminent dangers inherent in unethical and unbridled consumption especially on the health of individuals is yet another rationale for his study. Interestingly, the global prevalence of unbridled consumption is yet another motive for this study. In fact, Yoon (2019) remarked that the prevalence of unbridled consumption heightens the global clamour for ethical consumption among the populace. The outcome of a study of this nature will be of great importance to individuals and the society. In fact, the study is

expected to emphasize the necessity to embrace ethical consumption practices with the intent of promoting individual health and safety while safeguarding the environment.

The pertinent questions this paper seeks solutions to are, Is youth consumption pattern invariant with gender? To what extent are the levers of ethical consumption capable of influencing youth ethical consumption? The objective of this study is to investigate ethical consumption behaviour among university undergraduates in Bayelsa state. However, the specific objectives of this study are to evaluate the forces that shape youth consumption and to ascertain the extent of gender differences in youth consumption patterns. The formulated hypotheses for this study stated in the null form are;

- i. There is no gender difference in ethical consumption among Nigerian undergraduates.
- ii. There is no significant difference in the forces (cultural, social, economic and personal) that shape the ethical consumption pattern of Nigerian undergraduates.

## **2. Conceptual Review**

### **2.1 Concept of Ethical Consumption**

Literature reveals that consumption plays a significant role in a society. In fact, an individual's consumption pattern serves as a basis for social identity just as it has equally become an issue of great concern. Present day realities have shown that ethical consumption has shifted from being a matter of survival to becoming a social phenomenon and a way of life. What drives consumers to either purchase or not purchase ethical products remain a mystery to consumer behavior scholars. It is however heartening to note that ethical consumerism researchers' inquiry into understanding consumers' intention to purchase ethical products elicits great interest.

It is interesting to reveal that issues of ethical consumption occupy a central place in literature. In ethical consumption literature, the most contentious issue is being able to recognize the signs that herald the clamour for ethical consumption. Dickinson and Garcie-Sierra (2014) assert that the call for ethical consumption is anchored on the demand for consumers to be circumspect. This caution is premised on the advocacy for consumers' insistence on the purchase and consumption of products from corporations in support of fair wages, worker's rights and safety while being environmentally friendly. Bello, Suleiman, and Danjuma (2012) found that consumers' ethical consumption behaviour could be positive, negative or discursive.

As a matter of fact, ethical consumption reflects the extent of discrepancy between sustainability and equity-related ethics, and actual consumption. Ethical consumption is evident in the form of sustainable

consumption. In fact, sustainable consumption could be strong or weak. Strong sustainable ethical consumption central theme is on changing consumption patterns while decreasing the utilization of resources. Similarly, weak sustainable consumption, primary issue revolves around the emergence of technical solutions for efficient use of resources. The truth is that strong sustainable consumption is an all-embracing concept that encompass the components of green consumption, consumer boycotts, voluntary simplicity and fair trade (Carrington, Zwick, & Neville, 2016). Evidently, the weaknesses of ethical consumption centers round the perception that the drive for ethical consumption is grossly ineffective. To some persons, ethical consumption is an avenue to pronounce the middle class guilty of unethical practices. The truth is that the majority considers ethical consumption as an individualistic form of politics. In actual fact, these politics enable neoliberal governments to encourage consumers to become 'responsible'.

Simply put, ethical consumption refers to the conscious and deliberate decision of consumers to purchase products that are produced by companies that adhere to certain ethical standards. Ethical consumption, therefore, is about making informed and intentional choices that align with consumers values and promote positive outcomes. In fact, ethical consumption is about understanding the full lifecycle of a product from its production to its disposal as well as its impact at each stage. It is also about recognizing consumers' roles in shaping the market and influencing businesses to adopt more responsible practices. The principles of ethical consumption can be broadly categorized into environmental sustainability, social justice, and economic equity. Environmental sustainability is perhaps the most widely recognized focus of ethical consumption. In actual fact, environmental sustainability is concerned with the reduction of environmental footprints. Social justice is yet another primary focus of ethical consumption. Social justice is concerned with promoting fair labour practices, protecting human rights, and supporting social causes. Of recent, the social justice perspective of ethical consumption also involves the support of social cause such as gender equality, racial justice, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queers rights.

Literature highlights several drivers of ethical consumption. Some scholars classify them as cultural, social, economic and personal. However, Tjiptono, Arli, and Winit (2017) categorized the drivers of ethical consumption as personal values and beliefs, social norms and peer pressure, information and education, and government policies and regulatory forces. This paper aligns with Tjiptono *et al.* (2017) typology and hence the elements of this classification are examined as follows.

**Personal Values and Beliefs:** An understanding of what constitute personal value is very critical in the clamour for ethical consumption among the populace. Consumers personal values is so important as it is recognised for its role in setting directions. Interestingly, personal values once learnt becomes set in a person's value system. In fact, an individual value system can be likened to a basket that consists of values. The importance of values is evident in the order they occupy in the criteria for decision making. Experience has shown that values are applied in the order of priority. As such values are circumplex. Personal values closely resonate with openness to change and self-enhancement. Indeed, the social perspective of personal values relates with conservation and self-transcendence. Literature acknowledges that individual aspiration for growth and especially freedom from fear and anxiety include self-transcendence. Self-transcendence is self-centredness while openness to change is personal focus. Literature closely associates person's focus of values with seeking self-protection and anxiety avoidance. The truth is that human values are depicted in terms of openness to change against conservatism and self-enhancement versus self-transcendence values. Furthermore, consumption values are independent in nature. Extant marketing literature recognises consumption values as influencers of consumer choice behavior. These consumption values have functional, social, emotional, epistemic and conditional values. The truth is that a purchase decision could be influenced by any or a combination of some or all of these consumption values.

Interestingly, experience reveals that personal values and beliefs play a significant role in decision making. Shaw, Shiu, and Clarke (2010) assert that a person's ethical beliefs largely drive ethical consumption. The level of an individual's ethical beliefs is reflected by the extent of the person concern for product and environmental safety. As a matter of fact, this decision includes but is not limited to ethical consumption. Eckhardt, Belk, and Devinney (2010) assert that consumers who hold strong ethical beliefs are more likely to engage in ethical consumption behaviours. The truth is that religious, cultural, and social values can also influence consumers ethical beliefs.

**Social Norms and Peer Pressure:** Social norms and peer pressure are also recognized as drivers of ethical consumption. In actual fact, people tend to conform to social norms. When ethical consumption becomes a normative behaviour within a social group, individuals are more likely to adopt such behaviours (Chan, 2013). Boldero and Francis (2012) assert that peer pressure also plays a significant role in shaping ethical consumption behaviour. This assertion is premised on the capability of individuals to imitate peer behaviour.

**Information and Education:** Literature affirms that the extent of information availability and dissemination as well as consumers' education about ethical consumption positively influence ethical behaviour. The truth is that consumers who are well-informed about the ethical implications of their consumption decisions are more likely to make well-informed ethical choices. Specifically, consumer education is also helpful to develop consumers' ethical reasoning and decision-making skills. Schaubroeck and Pickett (2019) are of the opinion that the amount of knowledge acquired through adequate consumer education can further enhance their ethical consumption behaviour.

**Government Policies and Regulations:** Government policies and regulations are acknowledged to play prominent roles in influencing consumers' ethical consumption behaviour. In specific terms, government policies and regulations that promote sustainable production practices, fair labour standards, and animal welfare are recognised for the creation of a favourable environment suitable for ethical consumption. Furthermore, government policies that require a company's full disclosure of information with respect to firms' activities' impact on the society and environment has the capacity to likely inform the consumers of ethical consumption decisions.

## 2.2 University Undergraduates' Ethical Consumption Behaviour

Globally university undergraduates predominantly fall within the age group considered as youth. The United Nations considers young adults between the age of 15 years and 24 years as youth (United Nations, 2015). However, in Nigeria youths are recognized as persons aged 18 to 29 years. Youth are recognized for their inquisitiveness, high tendency to explore the unknown, possesses high energy levels and are very intelligent. Youth in some cases have undeveloped personality as well as character. Mukandoli (2020) affirms that the possession of social conscience, inclination toward activism, and loyalty to family, friends, communities, and self rather than to corporate entities are the unique characteristics of youth.

The concept of youth ethical consumption is a multifaceted and an intriguing subject. In fact, it encompasses the intricate processes and an array of factors that influence youth product choice. An understanding of these intricate processes and forces serves as a guide towards gaining invaluable insights into appreciating the reasons behind youth choice of products. The underlying forces encompasses psychological, social, and cultural dimensions. These dimensions assist in shedding light on consumers motivations to make purchase decisions. Diekmann and Preisendörfer (2021) conceive consumer albeit youth buying behaviour as the processes and actions that enable consumers make a purchase decision. The authors identified motivation,

information processing, and decision making as the main elements that influence consumer buying behaviour. Furthermore, literature recognised need based and value base as the basis of consumer motivation. Need-based motives are the forces that propel consumers to make purchase decisions while value-based motivation refers to the emotional and social benefits that consumers seek from a purchase. In fact, motives refine and explain specific personal values and behavioural characteristics.

Without doubt, literature affirms human values as the driver of behaviour. This assertion suggests that ethical consumption practice of an individual is sufficiently portrayed by the persons' value system. An individual's value system can be likened to a basket containing a collection of individual values. Empirical evidence reports that there is varied motivation behind the ethical behaviour of individuals. These sources of motivation literature include but are not limited to health, quality, environmental concerns, animal welfare, higher self-accountability, product choice and peer pressure (Argo, Janiszewski, & Hastak, 2012).

Experience has shown that it is now conventional among youth that when traditional signals of product attributes are in contest, ethical consumption decision becomes quite ease. Bhattacharya and Sen (2013) observed that there is an increased likelihood for consumers negative response when the attributes of ethical products are being compromised. In fact, similar incidence occurs when youth perceive sales coercion (Henrie & Taylor, 2009).

### **2.3 Empirical Review**

Katrandjiev, Delistavrou, and Tilikidou (2017) sought for an understanding of ethical consumption in Greece. The study was poised to ascertain the consequences of positive, negative and discursive ethical consumption among the populace. The scholars adopted a survey research method conducted in Thessaloniki urban area, Greece. The stratified sampling method was employed involving 420 consumers. The results revealed that Greeks do not frequently engage in any of the three types of ethical consumption. The analyses of the results indicated the demographic, attitudinal and psychographic antecedents of ethical consumption. Specifically, the study reports that positive ethical consumption is endorsed by middle-aged, highly educated women, who receive relatively high family incomes. Similarly, negative ethical consumption is endorsed by highly educated consumers, who feel more politically powerful, less ethically indifferent and hold higher post-materialist values than their counterparts while the discursive ethical consumers are young, post-graduate professionals. In fact, these consumers are less indifferent to ethical consumption issues, less

sceptical about ethical products, less materialistic and feel more politically powerful.

Similarly, Szmigin and Carrigan (2019) conducted qualitative research to explore the dimensions of ethical consumption. Through in-depth interviews with 60 participants, they found that personal values and ethics play a significant role in guiding consumers' purchasing decisions, with environmental sustainability, social justice, and animal welfare being common considerations. Social influences, such as social norms, peer pressure, and media, were identified as drivers that could both reinforce and challenge personal values.

Furthermore, Zanoli and Naspetti (2022) embarked on an extensive inquiry into the intricate domain of ethical consumption. With a keen eye on theories and empirical evidence, their study unearths a comprehensive panorama that unveils the multifaceted nature of ethical consumer behaviour. By delving into the labyrinthine landscape of motivations, barriers, and consequences, the authors provide an illuminating exploration of the factors that shape this phenomenon. The scholars shed light on the profound influence of consumers' ethical values and attitudes on their decision-making processes. They adeptly navigate the intricate interplay of individual ethics with broader considerations, revealing how social norms, product attributes, and the reputation of companies interlace to sway ethical choices. This synthesis of internal and external dynamics unveils a tapestry where personal beliefs intertwine with external factors to shape consumption patterns.

Equally, Otika, Olise, and Uche (2020) relying on the tenets as espoused in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), sought to investigate the factors that influence ethical consumption behaviour among consumers in south east Nigeria. The scholars employed a descriptive research design to solicit data from 193 respondents in Nigeria. With the aid of SPSS 23, multiple regression analysis was used in analyzing the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The study found that subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and environmental knowledge have a significant positive influence on ethical consumption behaviour while attitude does not have a significant influence on ethical consumption behaviour. From the foregoing, the paper recommended that all stakeholders, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) in particular assist in ensuring that consumers imbibe and maintain ethical consumption behaviour

Also, Diekmann and Preisendörfer (2021) investigated the implications of environmental forces on consumers behaviour towards the purchase of green products in Germany. The scholars investigated 2307 randomly selected sample. The findings of the investigation show that



respondent's knowledge and awareness about environment positively correlates with consumers attitude and behaviour towards environment.

## **2.4 Theoretical Underpinning**

### **2.4:1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**

According to Anyanwu and Okereafor (2019); Ajzen (1985) propounded the theory of planned behaviour. Marketing history traces its origin to psychology. Truth be told, the TPB is designed to explain general behaviour. In fact, it is not restricted to ethical decision-making. This notwithstanding, the TPB theory in recent years has gained wide application in ethical consumption behaviour studies. This theory holds that attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control are the primary determinants of behavioural intentions.

The theory of planned behaviour is reputed for introducing the notion of perceived behavioural control into the discourse of ethical consumerism. The thesis of this theory is that the possession of strong attitudes and social norms toward the intent of making sustainable purchases, tend to make the outcome realizable (Hwang & Ok, 2013). In the same vein, the theory holds that behavioural beliefs play a pivotal role in the formation of either a positive or negative attitude towards a particular behaviour. Interestingly, beliefs considered as a major influencer of customers, are relevant to individual's attitude. Experience has shown that individuals' subjective norms are obscured in the TPB theses. This implies that its holistic application to ethical consumer decisions is restricted.

Furthermore, Ajzen (1991) isolated perceived behavioural control as the major obstacle associated with the conduct of certain behaviours. In the same vein, Ajzen (2002) identified perceived self-efficacy and perceived controllability as interconnected variables that closely resonate with perceived behavioural control. In fact, intentions are actions indicative of the effort individuals are willing to exert. These intentions might lead to immediate or delayed actions over a period of time. This implies that purchase behaviour connotes those actions consumers take to acquire a product. In sum, the theory of planned behaviour provides a well-structured framework for explaining individuals' behaviour. In short, the model serves as an aid that enables firms gain insights and understanding of consumers' behavioural intentions. Truth be told, consumers' behavioural intentions are largely influenced by attitude, subjective norms, perceived norms, and perceived behavioural control.

### 3. Method

This study adopted Ayuba (2017) model. The Ayuba study adopts a research design that is descriptive, explanatory and exploratory in nature. The choice of this research design is predicated on the fact that this study seeks to describe ethical consumption among Nigeria university undergraduates, to establish the relationship between the drivers of ethical consumption and students buying behaviour as well as validate the reliability of the propositions of the study. The study population are the entire university undergraduate students in Bayelsa state. The choice of students as the study object is hinged on the perception that students are among the most organized segments of youth and are easily accessible in their universities. The accessible population are the undergraduate students in Bayelsa state universities. Students from two public universities form the subjects of the study. The field survey was conducted by distributing self-administered questionnaire to a convenience sample of university students in two universities in Bayelsa state. The sample size for this study was ascertained in conformity with Cooper and Schindler (2010) assertion that a finite population above 10000 units, a sample size of not less than two hundred units and not more than five hundred should be adequate for such an investigation. On the basis of this assertion, two hundred (200) students from each university were conveniently selected. This translates to four hundred students as the total sample size for the study.

Four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were conveniently administered on the students in their various lecture venues before the commencement of lectures. The fill now and collect method was engaged. The questionnaire was administered on the students in July and September 2023. An aggregate of 375 copies were found to be completely filled and usable. This represents about 95% return rate. The collated data were analyzed with mean and standard deviation while the formulated hypotheses were tested with inferential statistics. Specifically, hypothesis one was tested with t- test and one- way analysis of variance while hypothesis two was tested with multiple linear regression and Pearson Correlation coefficient. With the aid of SPSS 25, all the tests were executed at 5 % level of significance. This mathematical model is:

$$EC = f(Pvb, Snp, Ine, Gpr) \tag{1}$$

Equation (1) variables can be further reduced to the general regression format to obtain

$$EC_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 Pvb_t + \alpha_2 Snp_t + \alpha_3 Ine_t + \alpha_4 Gpr_t + e_t \tag{2}$$

Where;  $EC$ = Ethical Consumption,  $Pvb$ = Public value/beliefs,  $Snp$ = Social norm/pressure,  $Ine$  = Information/education,  $Gpr$  = Government policies/ regulations,  $\alpha$ = coefficients of the independent variables,  $e$  = error term.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Respondents Profile**

Dimension	Number	Frequency
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	185	49.33
Female	190	50.66
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	266	70.93
Engaged	85	22.66
Married	24	06.41
<b>Age brackets</b>		
Below 20years	177	47.20
21-25 years	180	48.00
26-30 years	18	04.80
<b>Level of study</b>		
100	82	21.86
200	72	19.20
300	78	20.80
400	62	16.53
500	81	21.61
<b>Faculty of Study</b>		
Arts	45	12.00
Engineering	82	21.86
Social Sciences	100	26.66
Science	60	16.00
Management	88	23.48
<b>Annual Expenditure</b>		
Below #100000	26	06.93
#100001-#150000	70	18.66
#150001-#200000	86	22.93
#200001-# 250000	91	24.27
Above #250000	102	27.21

Source: SPSS 25 Computation of Field Survey

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents. Females (190) were reported to be the most dominant gender (50.66%) while males were 185(49.34%). With respect to respondents' marital status, the single (266) were the commonest (70.93%) while the married (24) were the least common (06.41%). In the same vein, respondents below the age bracket of 20 years were the most frequent. This is closely followed by age group 21- 25 years while those between 26-30 years were the least frequent. On the level of study,100 level students were the most dominant (21.86%) while 400 level students were the fewest (16.53%). Similarly, student's faculty of study show that students from the Social Sciences dominated (26.66%) the sample

population while students from the Arts faculty were the rarest (12.00%). Also, as regard students’ annual expenditure, the study reveals that majority of the students (27.21%) expend above 250000 naira annually on food consumption while very few (06.93%) spend less than 100000 naira on food consumption.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

Variables	Mean	Std Dev.	1	2	3	4
Ethical Consum..	4.012	.774	1			
Personal values/Beliefs	4.192	.591	.589**	1		
Social norms/Peer press.	3.891	.821	.789**	.747**	1	
Inform./ Education	3.743	.654	.647**	.624**	.602**	1
Gov. policies/Reguls.	4.214	.709	.817**	.786**	.749**	.714**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS 25 Computation of Field Survey

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients of the drivers of ethical consumption. The result reveals that government policies and regulation have the highest mean score of 4.214 while personal values/ beliefs closely follow with a score of 4.192. The test result also report that information and education exhibit the least mean score of 3.743. On the basis of standard deviation, social norms/peer pressure (.821) report the highest standard deviation while personal values/beliefs (.591) show the least deviation from mean. In the same vein, all the drivers of ethical consumption exhibit positive and strong strength in their relationship with ethical consumption. Specifically, government policies/regulation, social norms/peer pressure and information/education exhibits strong strength ( $r > .6 < .9$ ) in expressing their relationship with ethical consumption while personal values/beliefs show moderate strength ( $r > .5 < .6$ ) in expressing its relationship with ethical consumption.

#### 4.1 Test of Hypotheses

**Hypothesis One:** There is on gender difference in ethical consumption among Nigerian undergraduates.

**Table 3: Test of equality of means for Gender: Group Statistics**

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	185	4.1076	.75713	.08721
Female	190	3.8048	.55491	.02453

Source: SPSS 25 Computation of Field Survey

A t-Test of equality of mean for gender was done to ascertain the extent of significant difference between male and female in their ethical consumption tendencies.

**Table 4: Independent Samples Test (t- Test) for Gender**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Diff.	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	4.599	.107	-1.964	373	.018	-.092917	.038404	-.278645	.023514
Equal variance not assumed			-1.682	368	.035	-.082714	.023451	-.147162	.002327

Source: SPSS 25 Computation of Field Survey

A p-value of 0.018 as in Table 4 indicates the presence of significant difference between male and female in their ethical consumption practices. The implication of this finding is that male and female respondents appear to differ in their ethical consumption behaviour.

**Table 5: Analysis of variance of Gender**

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	13.912	2	6.956	5.330	.011
Within Groups	486.957	373	1.305		
Total	500.869	375			

Source: SPSS 25 Computation of Field Survey

Furthermore, a one-way analysis of variance was performed to ascertain the extent of difference in the relationship between gender and ethical consumption. From Table 5, p-value of 0.011 suggests the rejection of null hypothesis. The result is indicative of a significant gender difference in ethical consumption. This implies that consumers gender does significantly influence ethical consumption practices of university undergraduates. The consequence of this finding is that on the basis of gender there is variation in university undergraduates' ethical consumption practices.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant difference in the forces that shape the ethical consumption pattern of Nigerian undergraduates.

**Table 6: Model Summary of Multiple Regression**

R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.782	.768	.729	.243151

Source: SPSS 25 Computation of Field Survey

Table 6 reports the results of the multiple regression analysis of the drivers of ethical consumption. The result shows that the coefficient of determination (R) is .782 while the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is .729. The result implies that the drivers of ethical consumption can explain about 72% systematic variation in ethical consumption. The result also suggests that other factors not represented in the model account for about 28 % variations in youth ethical consumption practices.

**Table 7: Multiple Regression Coefficients**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.05	.024		9.42	.001
Personal values / Beliefs	.579	.138	.494	1.273	.002
Social norms / Peer pressure					
Information / Education	.491	.235	.384	9.721	.000
Government policies/ Regulations	.601	.029	.578	.980	.007
Ethical consumption	.127	.027	-.811	.764	.113
	.816	.036	.704	2.321	.002

Source: SPSS 25 Computation of Field Survey

As seen in Table 7, on the basis of standardized coefficients the beta value for all the variables except government policies and regulations report direct relationship with university undergraduates’ ethical consumption behavior. In specific terms, social norms/peer pressure reports the least positive magnitude while information/education exerts the greatest positive effect on youth ethical consumption. However, government policies and regulations show negative effect on ethical consumption practices.

## 4.2 Discussion of Findings

On the basis of the first objective, the study established the existence of significant gender difference in youth consumption behavior. Specifically, the study found a significant difference between male and female in their ethical consumption practices. The most probable reason for this finding could be associated with the difference in human anatomy. As a matter of fact, literature assert that several factors associated with gender account of the differences in actions. Several among these forces are individual, social factors and situational opportunities. Due to the commonality of individual differences, the individual forces are in the form of knowledge, values, personal goals, morals and personality while social factors could be cultural norms, the internet and friends and family. It is interesting to observe that males are generally utilitarian in nature while females are naturally hedonistic in decision making.

Furthermore, this finding corroborates Katrandjiev *et al.* (2017) Greece study of ethical consumption pattern in developing countries. The researchers report that females tend to exhibit different consumption pattern from males. The implication of this finding is that consumers gender does significantly influence ethical consumption practices of university undergraduates. The conclusion that can be drawn from this outcome is that there is observable intrinsic gender difference in consumer ethics.

Similarly, the findings of the second objective reveal that, all the drivers of ethical consumption except government policies and regulations report direct relationship with university undergraduates' ethical consumption. This finding affirms Szmigin and Carrigan (2019) study that found government effort aimed at the promotion of ethical consumption are often resisted. The most probable reason could be located in the lack of sanctions for noncompliance with ethical breaches. Consequently, government policies and regulations efforts intended for the enforcement of ethical consumption practices have negative implication on ethical consumption patterns. In addition, the multiple regression analysis result shows the coefficient of determination (R) as .782 while the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is .729. This result implies that the drivers of ethical consumption can explain about 72% systematic variation in ethical consumption. The result also suggests that other factors not represented in the model account for about 28 % variations in youth ethical consumption. This finding is as expected. In fact, literature acknowledge cultural, religion among other forces contribute to consumers ethical consumption. The foregoing suggests that consumers ethical beliefs significantly influence their consumption behaviors.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Marketing literature re-echoes the intent of ethical marketing. The essence of ethical marketing is essentially the promotion of ethical conduct in the society. Ultimately, the primary purpose of ethics in marketing is to ignite in the consumers the concern for ethical consumption of products. Proponents of ethical marketing identified divergent prisms for the study of ethical consumption. Prominent among these approaches are cause-related marketing, socially responsible business practices, corporate social marketing, and corporate cause promotions. This study is conceived from the cause-related marketing perspective.

This paper investigates ethical consumption practices among Nigeria university undergraduates. The essence of this study is to ascertain the influence of gender in ethical consumption among youth as well as to establish the relationship between the levers of ethical consumption and youth ethical consumption behavior. The study found a significant difference between male and female in their ethical consumption practices. The implication of this finding is that consumers' gender does significantly influence ethical consumption practices among university undergraduates. The inference that can be drawn from this outcome is that there is intrinsic gender difference in consumer ethics.

Furthermore, the study found that all the drivers of ethical consumption exert great influence on ethical consumption pattern of consumers. Also, the study report that all the levers of ethical consumption except government policies and regulations positively influence ethical consumption. This paper concludes that the gender of a consumer greatly accounts for ethical consumption behaviour prevalent in a society just as there are several factors that include but not limited to individual, social and situational forces that influence ethical consumption behaviour.

Sequel to the findings of this study, these recommendations become inevitable;

- i. Marketing managers should design their marketing efforts in such a way that it takes into cognize gender differences.
- ii. In light of the present-day realities of social justice, gender equality, racial justice, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queers rights, operating managers should endeavor to deploy appropriate strategies that encompass these groups to avoid being perceived as discriminatory in practice.
- iii. Government at all levels should enact policies and establish regulations that emphasizes the need for consumers to be ethically conscious in consumption. It is also equally important for government to embark on campaign that promote ethical consumption while legislating on the appropriate sanctions to be melted out to defaulters of ethical breaches.



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