

ANALYSIS ON PROTECTING CONSUMERS TO PROMOTE THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY IN CHENNAI

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INTRODUCTION

The transition to a circular economy represents a significant shift in how societies approach production and consumption. Unlike the traditional linear economy—where products are manufactured, used, and discarded—the circular economy emphasizes designing out waste and keeping resources in use for as long as possible. This system not only helps reduce environmental degradation and conserve natural resources but also fosters sustainable economic growth. A key aspect of this transition is protecting consumers by ensuring they receive safe, high-quality products that are durable, repairable, and recyclable. Without adequate consumer protection, there is a risk of companies making misleading sustainability claims or offering products that do not meet essential safety and durability standards. Hence, consumer protection is vital in building trust and encouraging broader participation in the circular economy. Governments, businesses, and consumers must work together to create a system where sustainable products become the norm, and consumers are empowered to make informed choices that contribute to a more sustainable future.

Aim : This study aims to explore the role of consumer protection in promoting the circular economy. Specifically, it seeks to assess how measures like product safety regulations, the right to repair, and eco-labeling can enhance consumer trust, encourage responsible consumption, and reduce environmental harm by promoting the use of sustainable and durable products.

Evolution: The concept of a circular economy has evolved over time in response to environmental challenges and resource scarcity. Early practices

of reuse and recycling were driven by necessity rather than environmental concerns. With industrialization, the linear “take-make-dispose” model became dominant, leading to increased waste and resource depletion. Over the past few decades, rising awareness about climate change, technological advancements, and policy shifts have fostered the development of the circular economy. Today, circularity is viewed as a viable solution for sustainable growth, with a strong focus on consumer engagement through repair, reuse, and recycling initiatives.

Government Initiatives: Governments worldwide have introduced significant initiatives to promote a circular economy while safeguarding consumer interests. The European Union implemented the Circular Economy Action Plan, which mandates product design for durability and reparability. Similarly, India’s National Resource Efficiency Policy aims to improve resource use efficiency and minimize waste generation. The United States has taken steps to enhance recycling infrastructure and promote eco-friendly business models. Additionally, laws like the Right to Repair are being enforced in many countries, ensuring consumers can extend the life of their products by repairing rather than discarding them.

Factors Affecting the Topic: Several factors influence consumer protection and its role in fostering a circular economy. Regulatory frameworks play a key role in defining product safety standards, repair rights, and eco-labeling. Consumer awareness is crucial, as well-informed consumers are more likely to demand sustainable products and adopt responsible consumption practices. Technological advancements enable the production of high-quality,

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recyclable goods, while corporate responsibility ensures businesses prioritize sustainability in product design and marketing.

Current Trends: The circular economy has witnessed several notable trends in recent years. The Right to Repair movement has gained momentum, advocating for consumer access to repair services and spare parts. Product-as-a-service models, where companies lease products instead of selling them outright, are becoming more common. Eco-labeling is on the rise, helping consumers identify sustainable and recyclable products. Startups focused on upcycling waste into high-value products have emerged, and innovations in waste-to-energy technologies are helping reduce landfill use. These trends indicate a growing shift towards circular practices in both consumer behavior and business strategies.

Comparison: In a traditional linear economy, products are designed for short-term use, leading to high levels of waste. Conversely, in a circular economy, products are designed for durability, repair, and recycling, ensuring minimal waste and maximum resource efficiency. Traditional consumer protection focuses on ensuring product safety and quality, while in a circular economy, it extends to safeguarding consumer rights related to repair, reuse, and recycling. This comprehensive approach not only promotes sustainability but also fosters consumer trust in eco-friendly business models, creating a win-win scenario for consumers, businesses, and the environment.

OBJECTIVES :

To explore the role of consumer protection in promoting sustainable consumption and circular economy practices.

To analyze the impact of regulatory frameworks on enhancing product durability, reparability, and recyclability.

To evaluate current initiatives and business models supporting circular economy principles.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE :

Camacho-Otero, J., Boks, C., & Pettersen, I. (2018) This study examines consumer behavior in the context of the circular economy (CE) and identifies factors influencing the acceptance of circular solutions, such as knowledge, experience, social aspects, risks, uncertainty, and perceived benefits. It systematically reviews 111 articles, emphasizing the need for future research on socio-material and cultural aspects of consumption and the role of digitalization. The study highlights how consumer perceptions of quality, trust, and convenience impact the adoption of circular products and services. **Mishra, R., & Varshney, D. (2024)** This research explores the role of consumer protection laws in enhancing market fairness, accountability, and transparency to support informed decision-making in the digital economy. Using a normative and exploratory approach, it analyzes global policy documents and scholarly sources. The findings emphasize the importance of consumer protection frameworks in addressing the complexities of digital transactions and promoting sustainability while integrating circular economy principles. **Vidal-Ayuso, F. (2023)** This study identifies six main research areas linking consumer behavior with the circular economy: consumer behavior, purchase intention, sustainable consumption, product lifetime and reparability, recycled materials, and innovation. A systematic literature review highlights the need for further research into post-purchase behavior and the role of digitalization in CE adoption, addressing gaps in consumer knowledge and behavior. **Pasqualotto, C., & Menegon, N. (2023)** This study identifies key drivers and barriers to CE adoption from a consumer perspective. Barriers include a lack of awareness and interest, while drivers include environmental concerns and perceived benefits. By reviewing consumer behavior at different stages of the consumer journey, the research suggests enhancing awareness and providing incentives to promote CE adoption. **Mont, O., & Heiskanen, E. (2015)** This paper examines how consumer attitudes toward product durability can be shifted to support the circular economy. It identifies that perceived obsolescence leads to preferences for new products, while increasing awareness of product longevity can encourage sustainable consumption. The study recommends policy interventions and educational campaigns to promote durable goods

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and address cultural and psychological factors driving the “throwaway society.” **Testa, F., Bartoletti, E. (2022)** This research investigates how consumer trade-offs between brand loyalty and environmental concerns affect circular economy adoption. Survey-based analysis shows that brand loyalty often outweighs concerns about plastic usage, hindering CE adoption. The study suggests brands should align with environmental values to encourage sustainable consumer behavior. **Bocken, N. M., van der Grinten, B. (2016)** This study explores strategies like product durability, modularity, and leasing models to promote the circular economy. Using case studies, it emphasizes improving consumer awareness of these models and designing products for reparability. The research highlights the role of business models in driving consumer acceptance of circular products. **Geissdoerfer, Hultink, E. J. (2017)** This study defines the circular economy and its implications for sustainability and consumer protection. It emphasizes the importance of consumer education and collaboration between businesses and consumers to implement CE principles successfully. The research calls for integrating CE practices into education and business operations. **Stahel, W. R. (2016)** This article advocates for the circular economy as a solution to resource efficiency and consumer protection. CE reduces waste and costs, creates jobs, and enhances consumer access to quality goods. Supported by case studies, it recommends strong legal frameworks to support CE initiatives and benefit consumers and the environment. **Lacy, P., & Rutqvist, J. (2015)** This book explores how businesses can achieve cost savings and enhance consumer trust through circular economy practices. It analyzes business models and suggests government incentives to encourage CE adoption. The study emphasizes the consumer benefits of CE, such as affordability and improved product access. **Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2013)** This report highlights the economic and consumer benefits of transitioning to a circular economy. It shows how CE reduces costs, promotes sustainability, and protects consumers from resource scarcity. Through case studies and economic modeling, the report encourages businesses to prioritize product lifecycle and consumer education. **Reike, D., Vermeulen, W.**

J., & Witjes, S. (2018) This study examines varying interpretations of the circular economy and their implications for consumers. It argues that diverse CE definitions cause consumer confusion and advocates for standardized definitions to improve understanding, trust, and adoption of CE principles. **Kirchherr, J., Reike, D., & Hekkert, M. (2017)** This paper analyzes 114 definitions of the circular economy, finding wide variations that affect consumer adoption. It calls for harmonized definitions to guide policy and enhance consumer clarity, emphasizing the role of clear communication in implementing CE successfully. **Tunn, V. S., Bocken (2018)** This study identifies business models supporting sustainable consumption in the circular economy, such as sharing and leasing models. Based on expert interviews and case studies, it recommends policies to encourage innovative CE business models that benefit consumers. **Ghisellini, P., Cialani, C., & Ulgiati, S. (2016)** This review examines the benefits of CE for both the environment and consumers, including reduced costs and improved access to sustainable goods. It calls for stronger collaboration between governments and businesses to implement CE and protect consumers. **Hobson, K., & Lynch, N. (2016)** This study explores alternative approaches to the circular economy that prioritize social equity and consumer protection. It promotes inclusive policies to address inequalities and highlights the potential of CE to tackle resource scarcity while safeguarding consumers. **Lieder, M., & Rashid, A. (2016)** This paper reviews the implementation of CE in the manufacturing sector and its benefits for consumers, such as improved product quality and longevity. It advocates for policies that incentivize CE practices in manufacturing to enhance consumer experiences. **Fischer, A., & Pascucci, S. (2017)** This research examines institutional incentives for the circular economy and their effects on consumers. It highlights the role of policies in promoting CE and protecting consumers from resource scarcity, using policy analysis and case studies. **Taurino, T., & Costa, A. (2020)** This study investigates the role of digital platforms in enhancing consumer engagement with CE. It finds that technology improves consumer access to CE products and services and calls for investments in digital tools to foster participation.

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Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2013) This foundational report advocates for accelerating the transition to a circular economy, emphasizing its potential to reduce costs, improve sustainability, and protect consumers from price volatility and resource scarcity.

METHODOLOGY :

The study deals with empirical research i.e., non-doctrinal study. It deals with both primary as well as secondary sources of data and various secondary sources like books, articles, research papers etc. were used as reference. Primary data collected through questionnaires. Age, gender, qualifications, occupation and protecting consumers to promote the circular economy. Simple percentage and graphs were used.

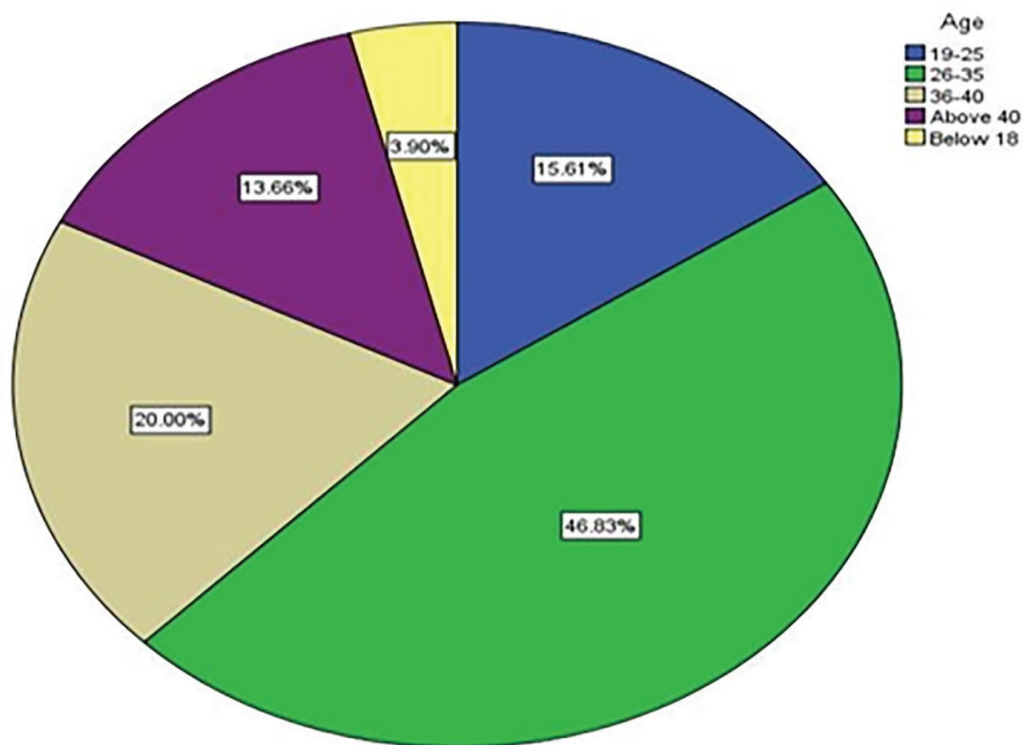
HYPOTHESIS:

This research is protecting consumers to promote a circular economy. Using the convenient sampling method various dependent and independent variables have been used as stated above.

HO: There is no significant association regarding protecting consumers to promote the circular economy.

Ha: There is a significant association regarding protecting consumers to promote the circular economy.

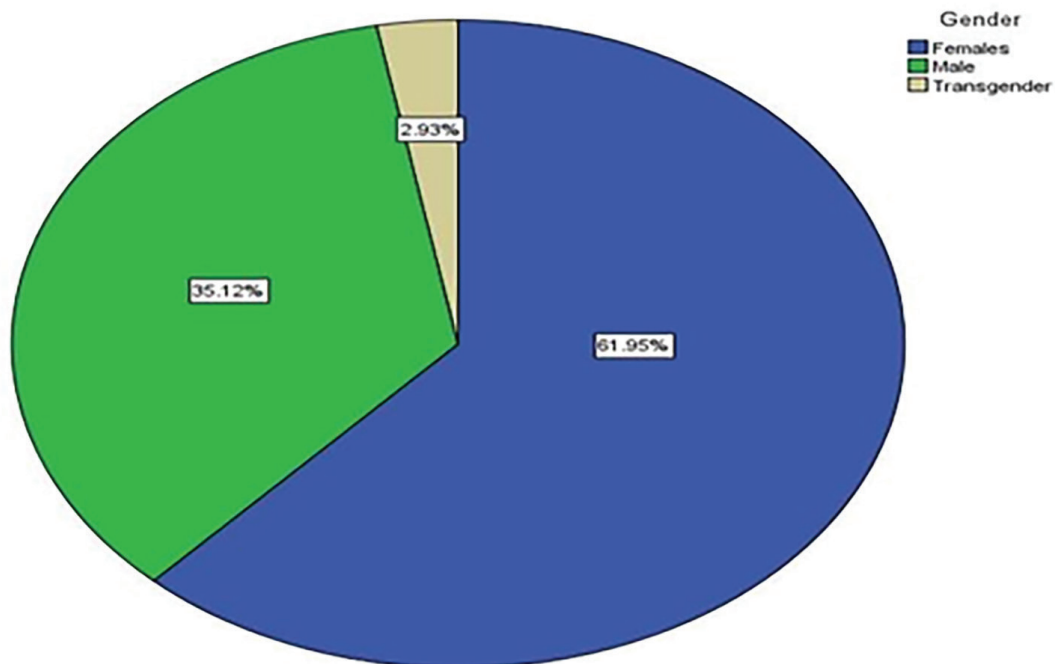
Figure : 1



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the independent variable are divided based on their Age.

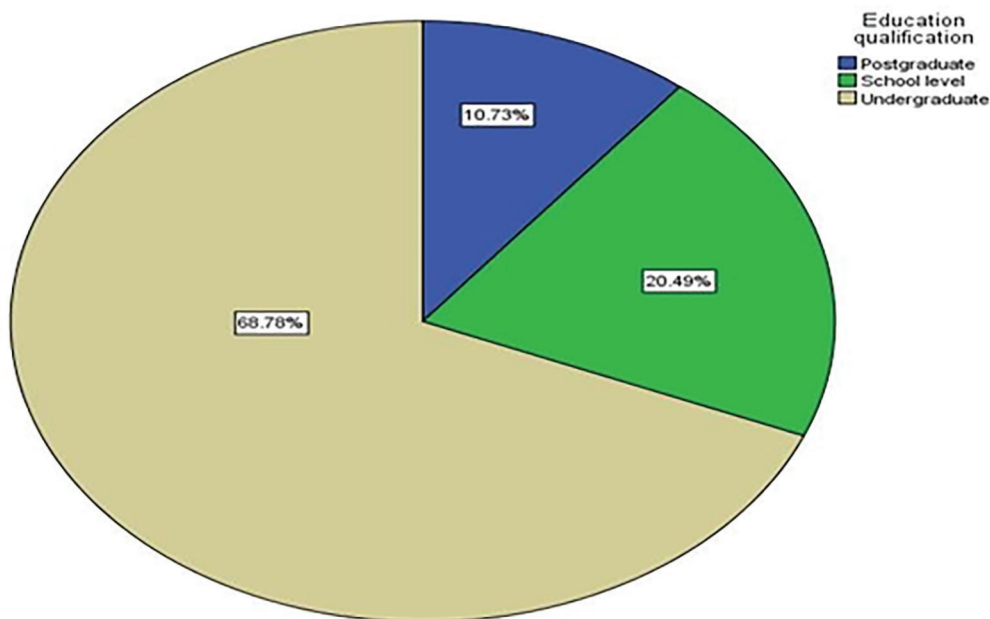
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Figure : 2



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the independent variable are divided based on their Gender.

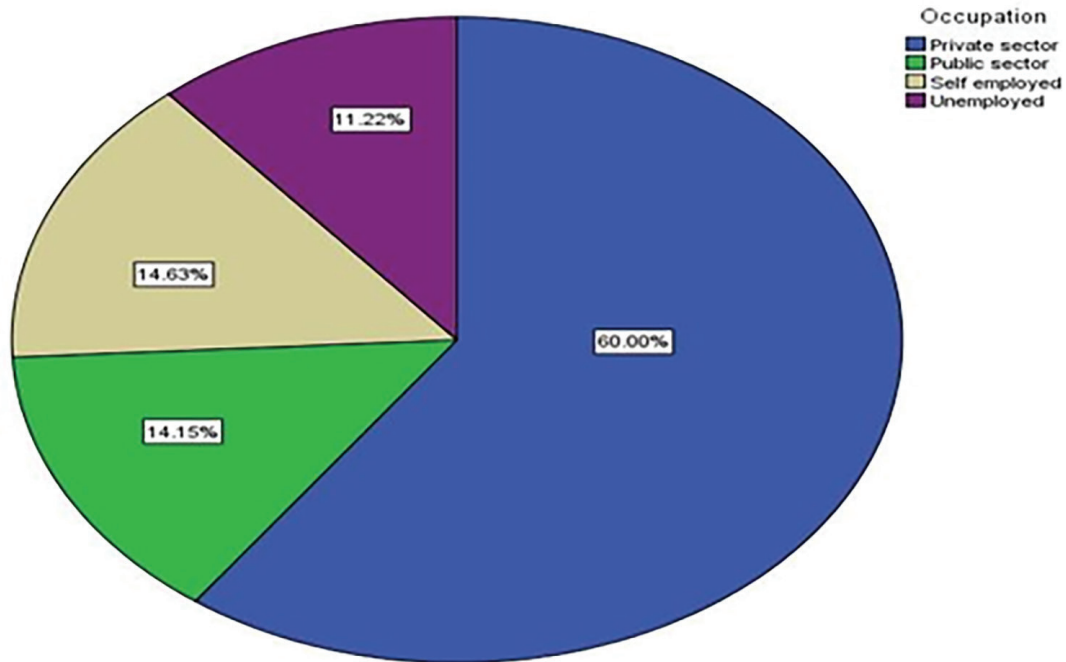
Figure : 3



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the independent variable are divided based on their Education qualification.

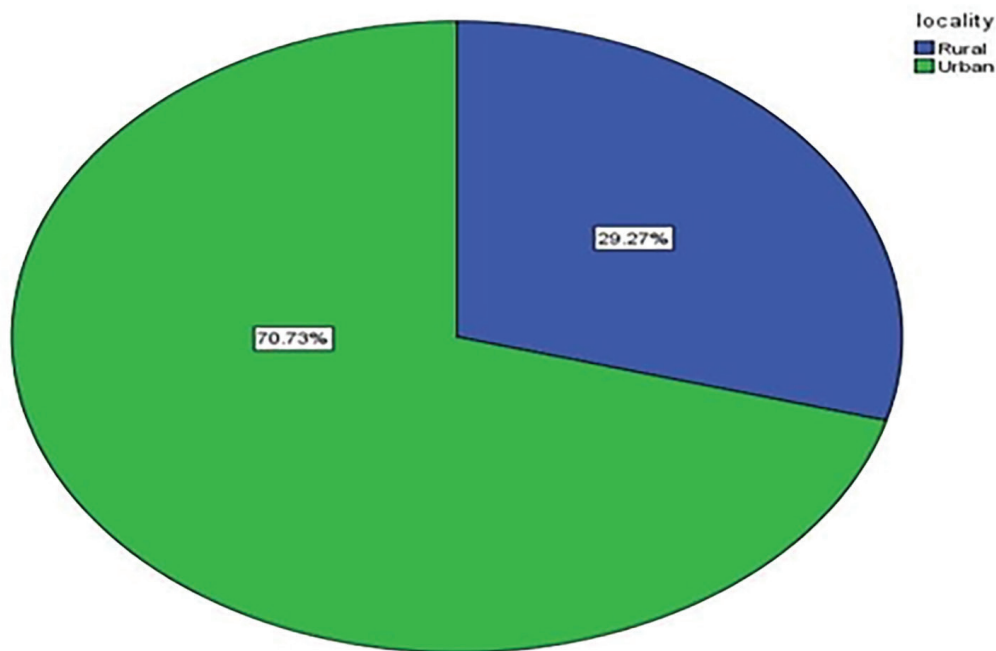
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Figure : 4



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the independent variable are divided based on their Occupations.

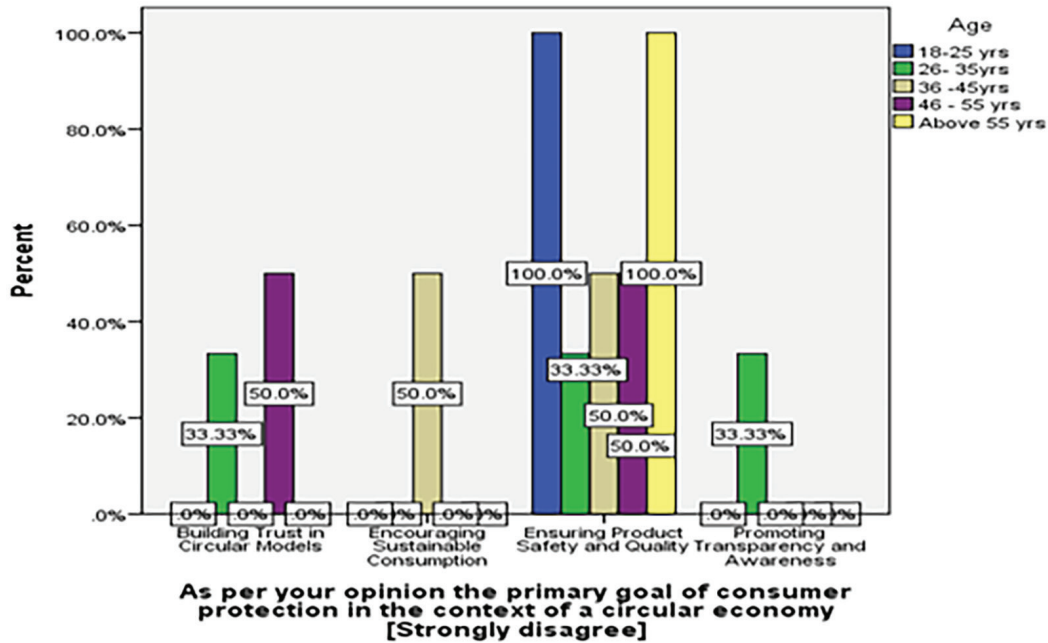
Figure : 5



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the independent variable are divided based on their Locality.

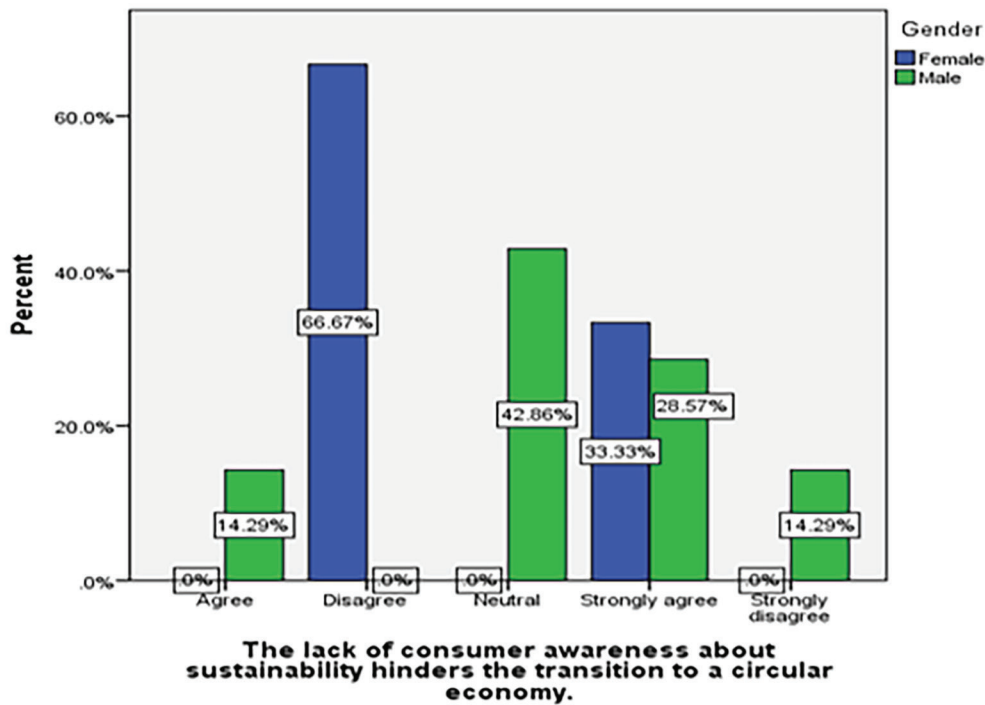
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Figure : 6



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the dependent variable are divided based on their Age.

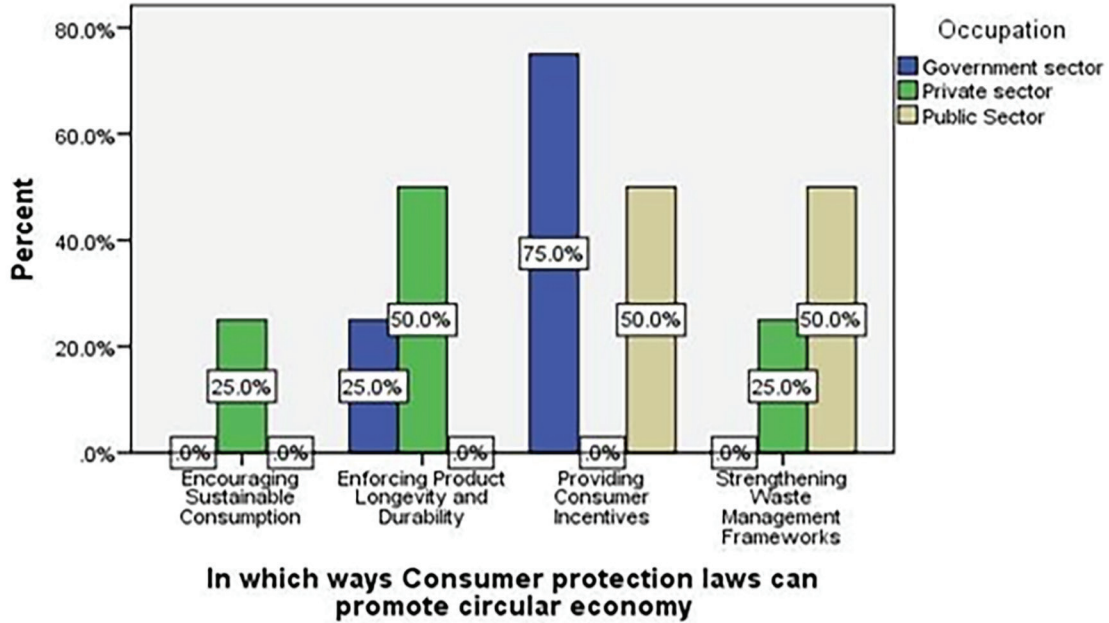
Figure : 7



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the dependent variable are divided based on their Gender.

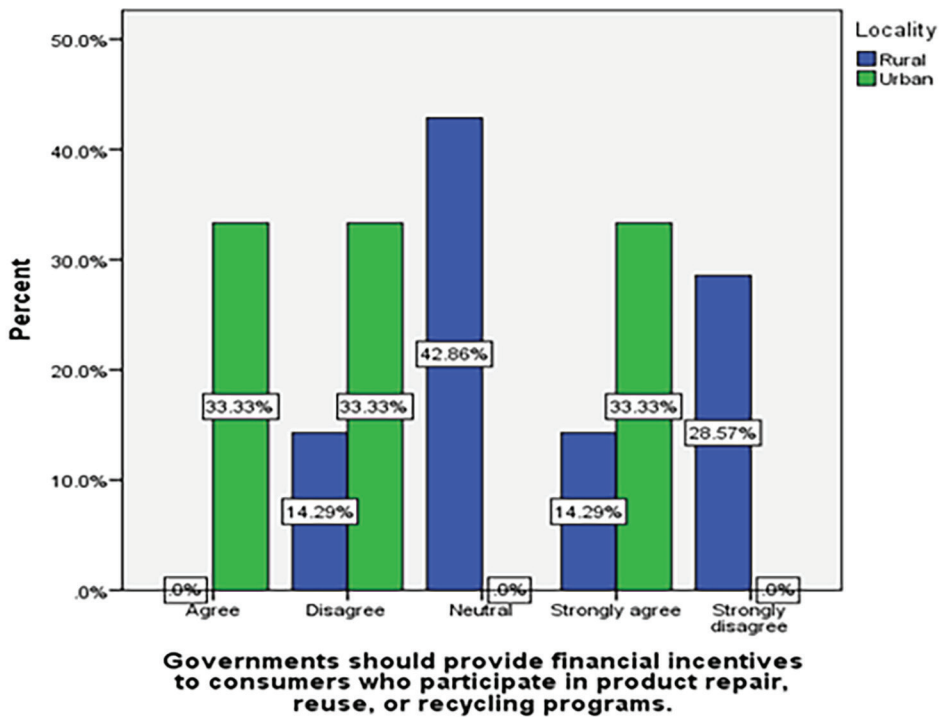
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Figure : 8



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the dependent variable are divided based on their Occupation.

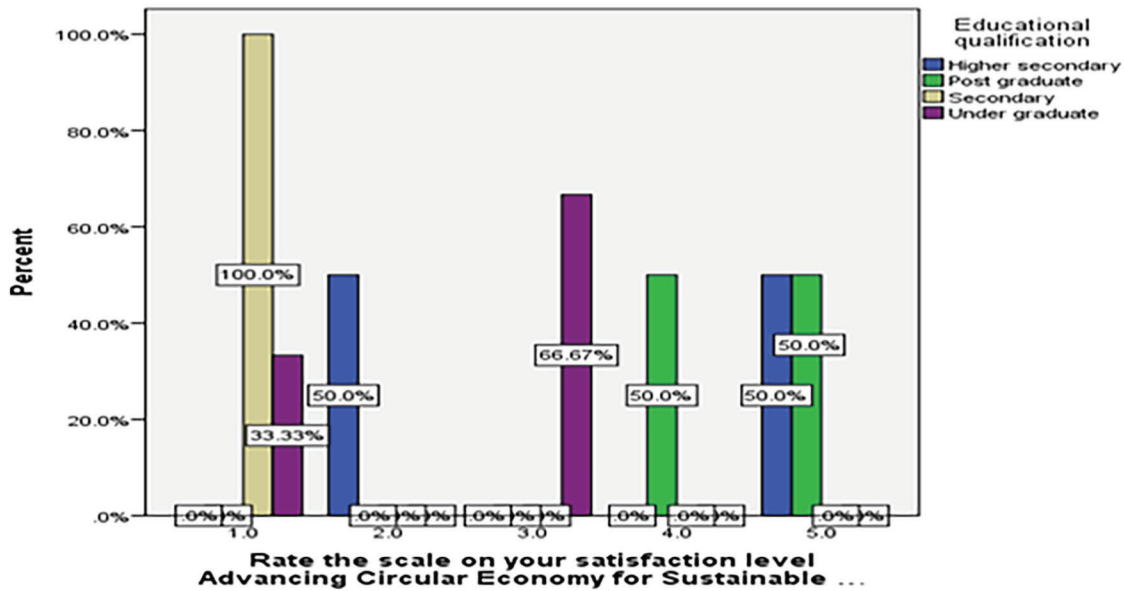
Figure : 9



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the dependent variable are divided based on their locality.

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Figure : 10



Legend : The above given figure shows that the responses collected from the dependent variable are divided based on their Educational Qualification.

Figure : 11

Locality * As per your opinion the primary goal of consumer protection in the context of a circular economy [Neutral] Crosstabulation

Count		As per your opinion the primary goal of consumer protection in the context of a circular economy [Neutral]				Total
		Building Trust in Circular Models	Encouraging Sustainable Consumption	Ensuring Product Safety and Quality	Promoting Transparency and Awareness	
Locality	Rural	1	3	2	1	7
	Urban	1	1	0	1	3
Total		2	4	2	2	10

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.667 ^a	3	.644
Likelihood Ratio	2.173	3	.537
N of Valid Cases	10		

a. 8 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .60.

Legend : represents the chi Square test between the Locality distribution of sample respondents with respect to As per your opinion, the primary goal of consumer protection in the context of a circular economy ?

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Figure : 12

Gender * Governments should provide financial incentives to consumers who participate in product repair, reuse, or recycling programs. Crosstabulation

Count

		Governments should provide financial incentives to consumers who participate in product repair, reuse, or recycling programs.					Total
		Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	
Gender	Female	1	0	0	1	1	3
	Male	0	2	3	1	1	7
Total		1	2	3	2	2	10

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.238 ^a	4	.264
Likelihood Ratio	6.672	4	.154
N of Valid Cases	10		

a. 10 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .30.

Legend : represents the chi Square test between the Gender distribution of sample respondents with respect the Government should provide financial incentives to consumers who participate in Product repair, reuse, or recycling products?

Results :

(Fig 1) shows that about 15.61 percent are from the age of 19 to 25 and 46.83 percent are from 26 to 35 and 20 percent from 41 to 50 and 13.6 percent are from above 40 and 3.9 percent are below 18. (Fig 2) shows about 61.95 percent are females and 35.12 percent are males and 2.90 percent are transgender. (Fig3) shows that about 10.73 percent are post graduates and 20.49 percent are school graduates and 68.78 are the undergraduate. (Fig4) shows that about 60% are in the Private sector and 14% in the public sector and 14.63 percent are self-employed and 11.22 percent are unemployed. (Fig5) shows that 29.27 percent are from Rural and 70 percent are from urban areas. (Fig6) The graph shows that

the primary goal of consumer protection in a circular economy is to ensure product safety and quality for all age groups. This is followed by promoting transparency and awareness (especially for the 18-25 and 26-35 age groups), and then encouraging sustainable consumption (most important for the 36-45 age group). Building trust in circular models is the least important goal. (Fig7) The graph shows that the lack of consumer awareness about sustainability is a significant barrier to the transition to a circular economy. 66.67% of females and 42.86% of males disagree with the statement, while 33.33% of females and 28.57% of males strongly agree. This suggests that raising awareness about sustainability is crucial for promoting a circular economy. (Fig 8) The graph

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shows that the respondents believe consumer protection laws can promote a circular economy in various ways. The most popular opinion is that laws should provide consumer incentives (75.0%), followed by strengthening waste management frameworks (50.0% across all sectors). The least popular opinion is encouraging sustainable consumption (25.0% in the public sector). **(Fig9)** The graph shows that there is strong support for governments providing financial incentives to consumers who participate in product repair, reuse, or recycling programs. 42.86% of urban residents and 33.33% of rural residents strongly agree with this statement. Only 14.29% of urban residents and 14.29% of rural residents disagree. This suggests that financial incentives could be a powerful tool for encouraging circular economy practices. **(Fig10)** The graph shows that satisfaction with the advancement of the circular economy for sustainable development is highest among secondary school graduates (100%), followed by postgraduates (66.67%). Undergraduates and higher secondary graduates show the lowest satisfaction levels (50%). This suggests that education level may play a role in understanding and appreciating the progress towards a circular economy. **(Fig11)** The results indicate that there is no significant association between Locality and the chosen goal of consumer protection in a circular economy (p-value = 0.644 for Pearson Chi-Square and p-value = 0.537 for Likelihood Ratio). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) cannot be rejected. **(Fig12)** The results indicate that there is no significant association between Gender and the response to this statement (p-value = 0.264 for Pearson Chi-Square and p-value = 0.154 for Likelihood Ratio). Therefore, the null hypothesis (H0) cannot be rejected.

DISCUSSION :

(Fig6) This is likely due to the increasing number of product recalls and safety warnings. Consumers are also becoming more aware of the environmental impact of their consumption choices. **(Fig7)** This could be due to several factors, such as differences in education, exposure to information, and values. Women may be more aware of environmental issues and the importance of sustainability than men **(Fig8)** One possible reason for this result is that consumers

are already aware of the importance of sustainability and are looking for ways to make a difference. However, they may not be aware of the specific actions they can take to promote a circular economy. **(Fig9)** The result is that consumers are more likely to participate in circular economy practices if they are financially rewarded for doing so. This is especially true for urban residents, who may have more access to information about circular economy practices and who may be more likely to be concerned about environmental issues. **(Fig10)** The higher levels of education may lead to a greater understanding of the complex issues surrounding the circular economy. Individuals with higher education may also be more exposed to information and research on the topic, which can lead to a more informed and positive view of the progress being made. **(Fig11)** This suggests that the choice of consumer protection goal is not significantly influenced by whether respondents live in a rural or urban area. **(Fig12)** This suggests that the response to this question is not significantly influenced by the respondent's gender.

LIMITATION :

The study is non-doctrinal and deals with empirical research. The study is unable to collect data through random sampling methods due to the reduced geographical area. Since the study is restricted to the territory within Tamil Nadu and therefore the conclusion derived by average is not perfectly accurate. Since the study collected responses from the general public at large, the findings are mostly based on generalized opinion rather than legal or scientific background.

SUGGESTIONS :

To enhance consumer protection and promote the circular economy, governments should strengthen regulatory frameworks that mandate product durability, reparability, and recyclability. Businesses must be encouraged to adopt circular practices by offering eco-friendly product designs and transparent labeling. Consumer education campaigns are essential to raise awareness about their rights, including the right to repair, recycle, and access sustainable products. Implementing stricter penalties for false environmental claims (greenwashing)

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will deter companies from misleading consumers. Moreover, fostering partnerships between public institutions, private entities, and non-profits can accelerate the adoption of circular principles across industries. Promoting collaborative consumption models, such as sharing and leasing, will also help reduce waste and extend product life cycles.

CONCLUSION :

The **study reveals** that protecting consumers is crucial to successfully implementing a circular economy. Without adequate consumer protection, deceptive practices like greenwashing and poor product design could undermine trust in sustainable products. Ensuring that products meet high standards of durability and reparability encourages responsible

consumption, reduces waste, and fosters innovation. The **study finds** that regulatory measures, corporate accountability, and consumer education are key to creating an ecosystem where circular practices thrive. However, challenges remain, such as the high cost of adopting sustainable business models and a lack of consumer awareness in some regions. **Future efforts** should focus on improving infrastructure for recycling and repair services, enhancing public awareness, and ensuring that marginalized communities have access to circular economy benefits. The **study concludes** that protecting consumers through robust regulations and ethical business practices is essential to promoting sustainability and achieving long-term economic growth.

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