

Consumer Power

Student A: Ethical shopping

Shoppers in the UK are spending more than ever on ethical products, and the demand for plant-based foods, second-hand clothes and furniture, and greener gadgets grows. This trend reflects consumers' growing concerns about the environment, animal welfare and social justice. Some supermarkets and stores now provide an ethical label on goods such as bananas, coffee, tea, sugar, clothing and beauty products. The labels guarantee fairer pricing for producers and workers, reduced environmental impact and more equality. They also offer greater choice to shoppers.

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Student B: How can you be sure you are buying ethical products?

These days there are many websites which give concerned consumers information about products and about the companies behind the brand names. Some sites review all kinds of products – from pet food to paint - and give scores for criteria such as impact on the climate or the environment, the treatment of people and animals, tax credentials and the company ethos. Other websites compare companies in one industry, such as the beauty or clothes industry. The sites help consumers to make decisions, and they also persuade companies to behave more ethically.

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Student C: Other ways to do your bit

It is easier nowadays for consumers to make ethical choices about the goods they buy. They can also make ethical decisions about the services they use. For example, people can choose to use green energy or internet service providers. They can pay for goods and services using credit cards from banks with ethical policies. They can invest in community schemes or lend money to entrepreneurs with business ideas that will help them escape poverty. Although there is still a long way to go before ethical consumption dominates the way we shop, it is a trend that looks set to continue. You too could shop and spend money with a guilt-free conscience.