

Impact Factors for Sustainable Consumption in Today's World

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Abstract: One can define sustainable consumption as the act of procuring services or products that satisfy the requirements of individuals while simultaneously reducing the impact on the environment, which has become increasingly important in addressing global challenges like climate change and resource depletion. The present study explores the factors influencing sustainable consumption, focusing on social, economic, psychological, policy, and business strategy aspects. By reviewing research surveys, results of regression analysis, and case studies, this paper reveals that social norms, income levels, environmental awareness, government policies, and green marketing strategies significantly impact consumers' sustainable consumption behaviors. The findings of the study emphasize that sustainable consumption can only be effectively promoted if multifaceted influences are considered in an integrated manner and several sustainable strategies involving all stakeholders are put in place. Ultimately, this investigation renders useful awareness for the benefit of consumers, companies, and policymakers who are interested in enhancing their practices regarding sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable consumption, social factors, economic factors, policy factors, green marketing

1. Introduction

1.1. Definition of Sustainable Consumption

Sustainable consumption denotes utilizing services and goods that give satisfaction to consumer needs. It further underscores the necessity of reducing utilization of resources, hazardous products, debris, and contaminant emissions during their lifetime to safeguard the needs of future generations [1].

1.2. Importance of Sustainable Consumption

In today's context, solving the urgent problems like climate change, resources shortage, and environmental degeneration is getting more and more important. Besides, sustainable consumption has also gained significant attention among corporations and consumers. This truth promotes the research of sustainable consumption in academic area [2]. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) underscored the importance of sustainable consumption and

production as the foundations of sustainable development, apart from putting forward a decade-long framework encompassing sustainable consumption programs and production configurations [3]. In addition, many current environmental strategies rely solely on increasing resource productivity and do not fully address the environmental impacts of consumption [1]. Therefore, identifying various kinds of factors that influence sustainable consumption and taking a multifaceted strategy to promote sustainable consumption is necessary.

1.3. Research Gap

Despite the growing number of research on sustainable consumption, there are still some research gaps while many studies have explored the factors that influence sustainable consumption, the field still lacks a comprehensive analysis of how these factors interact in different social and economic contexts. Individual thoughts and actions cannot always be aligned with sustainable consumption. For example, prior studies have suggested an "attitude-behaviour gap," in which 30% of consumers articulate environmental trepidation yet cannot translate it as a purchasing approach [2]. However, the potential psychological factors that lead to this phenomenon is not explored clearly.

In addition, while many studies have extensively analysed the sustainable consumption behaviour of individual consumers, research primarily focuses on high-income countries. Variations in laws and policies among different areas could potentially offer special chances and difficulties for sustainable development, which are not enough addressed. This focus has caused an important knowledge gap in sustainable consumption trends in developing countries [1]. Furthermore, few studies stated collective's role in promoting sustainable consumption, which is a very important social factor [4].

Lastly, recent policies mainly concentrated on spreading sustainable information and increasing sustainable awareness, but the fact is that those methods are ineffective in promoting substantial change in sustainable consumption [1]. Therefore, it is necessary to take stronger policy tools, such as prohibiting the use of hazardous substances and promoting the use of sustainable products. Additionally, though there are many researches discussed about the business sustainable strategy understanding the consumer behavior in this field deeply is still incomplete [5]. This is also a vital area that business should concern, like how to make an efficient sustainable strategy.

1.4. Research Objectives

The objective is to examine the numerous variables affecting sustainable consumption in the present day and to offer specific recommendations to bolster it. The specific targets can be divided into five parts: first, to analyze the impact of social factors such as culture, social influence, and family education on sustainable consumption. Second, to examine the effect of economic factors like income levels in shaping sustainable consumption behaviors. Third, investigate the psychological aspects, including environmental awareness and attitudes toward environmental protection, that drive sustainable consumption. Fourth, evaluate the influence of government policies, regulations, and incentives on sustainable consumption practices. Fifth, analyzing the business strategies that are related to sustainable consumption. Lastly, this study will also provide recommendations for marketers, businesses, and governments to promote sustainable consumption effectively.

2. Background Review

Sustainable consumption is, to a large extent, a multifaceted and multilateral concept, which includes striving for higher resource efficiency, minimization of waste, and positive ethics of consumption. This is the transition from material-intensive consumer cultures to those in which the preferences regard sustainability and lower environmental loads [1]. Sustainable consumption arose as a response

to increasing adverse environmental effects with the trend of industrialization and massive consumption towards late twentieth century.

The concept has over the years evolved to include other strategies responsible for, among others, promoting the sale of products friendly to the environment, ways in which wastes can be reduced, and how business operations can be made sustainable. Trends show an increasing number of consumers desiring products that are sustainable and which enhance social responsibility [2]. A growing consumerism attitude towards eco-friendly goods drives this trend by enhancing environmental knowledge and realizing the long-run benefits of sustainability [6]. Consumers are prepared to expend a premium for products that embody sustainability, as indicated by research, but also actively concern about the products' environmental impact [7]. This trend is supported by the proliferation of eco-labels and certifications, which help consumers make informed choices [8]. In addition, companies are becoming more likely to adopt sustainable approaches in their operations and product offerings, since they realize that being perceived as a reliable and sustainable business can have more competitive advantages [9].

Sustainable consumption has gone through an evolutionary process from history to the present. It has been strengthened over time by increased awareness of consumer and corporate responsibility. As the world evolves, sustainable consumption is sure to become increasingly important in the future.

3. Main Factors Influencing Sustainable Consumption

Previous studies have already determined the factors that influence the sustainable consumption, including social and cultural factors, economic conditions, psychology factor, and policies. For example, social norms and peer pressure can significantly influence consumer choices, while economic constraints may limit the ability to purchase sustainable products [2]. Besides, environmental awareness and attitudes towards sustainable development also play a key role in shaping consumer behavior [4]. Therefore, based on the analysis of research gaps and targets, the five factors are as following.

3.1. Social Factors

3.1.1. Social Culture

For instance, to sustainable consumption, the social culture can be attributed to social customs, values and belief systems. One research was conducted to investigate how cultural values and social norms affect green purchasing tendency among Chinese consumers [4]. Questionnaire measurements were done for environmental attitudes and behavior; therefore, in order to conduct regression analysis, it was necessary to comprehend the correlation between sustainable consumption and cultural values among 549 Chinese consumers [4]. The findings highlight a strong positive relationship between cultural values and sustainable consumption [4]. Besides, consumers in strongly oriented eco-cultures are most likely to practice sustainable consumption compared to others [1]. In this research, scholars ran a sample survey with 301 respondents, and the result supported their supposition [1]. On social norms, it is stated that when one views environmental conservation as part of the mainstream social value, the preponderance in green consumption follows suit [4]. These research findings, in addition, established that the green consumption behavior of one's family and friends greatly influence the decision of purchasing behavior. Also, environmental ethics within a society and the strength of norms affects green consumption characteristics even more [1].

Green purchase behavior has been measured with surveys, behavioral measurements, and archival analysis. In general, research on green consumption measures consumer attitudes towards green products as well as purchase intentions, actual purchasing behaviors, and self-reported environmental actions. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), frequently employed to elucidate green consumption,

posits behavioral intention to be the most accurate behavior predictor, and that it is influenced by attitudes, perceived behavioral control, as well as subjective norms [10]. For instance, in green consumption research, inquiring about the significance of environmental protection, their interest in green products, as well as their prior green purchasing practices is customary.

Furthermore, cultural background is one of the critical factors in determining consumer attitude to sustainability [4]. Authors found out that the probability of going green highly depends on such cultural values as collectivism, man-nature, and relational orientation [4].

However, collectivist values, which are centered on the group rather than the individual, urge people to practice sustainable consumption because now, mostly, people are thinking about the overall effect their action has on an environment. A positive correlation exists between sustainable consumption and collectivism, as evidenced by a P-value below 0.01 [4]. Furthermore, environmental ethics, in its intrinsic respect for nature and ecological system, propagates practices that put or place a premium on ecological preservation, hence fostering green purchase [4]. Long-term orientation, therefore, builds results in the future, with potential sustainability of life, by encouraging consumers to lay a foundation of long-term gains for the next generation through responsible environmental choices [4].

Effects from this study are consistent with previous findings, indicating that culture-targeted methods are needed in promoting sustainable consumption. Specific leverage for these cultural values will enable policymakers and marketers to encourage effectively more sustainable consumer behaviors

3.1.2. Social Influence

Social influences, for example, through social media and peer pressure, make the perfect driver for sustainable consumption. As studied in bootstrapping the sustainable eating behaviors of Victorian adults in Australia, social influence was at the core of this qualitative research among 24 subjects who were all interviewed as individuals [11]. Thirteen of the participants were female, and 11 were males. They were aged between 19 and 69 years, with the mean age being 40 years old [11]. Participants were recruited through online advertisements, flyers mounted on community advertisement boards, and drop-off mail [11]. On another front, the diversity in participants based on the education level criterion indicated that five of them had low-level education (no more than year 10), nine with a medium level of education (high or technical/trade school), and ten with a high level of education (university or tertiary) [11]. These questionnaire results illustrated that social networks and influencers are significantly interrelated with sustainable consumption behaviors. Sustainable behaviors in social networks also have a further implication that triggers others to act similarly [11]. In other words, if their social networks also implement sustainable consumption, consumers are more inclined to do so.

3.2. Economic Factors

Economic factors, especially the income levels have profound influences on consumers' sustainable consumption. A research paper has investigated how income levels affect people's ability to purchase sustainable products [1]. Through analyzing the collected data and regression analysis, scholars found that the higher the income, the greater the possibility for them to buy sustainable products, since they can afford these higher priced products generally.

In addition, because of the economic gap, developed and developing countries also have differences in sustainable consumption. For example, in developed economies, advanced production technologies allowed for a radical reduction in environmental burdens; whereas developing economies are more inclined to develop their economies rather than consider the environment [3].

3.3. Psychological Factors

3.3.1. Environmental Awareness

Environmental awareness and knowledge are essential aspects of sustainable consumption. By analyzing the collected data from the Swiss consumers' responses, environmental knowledge's effect on green purchasing behavior was subsequently estimated by the researchers [12]. Environmental knowledge was operationalized using a rich questionnaire that captures the relative knowledge of participants regarding ecological phenomena—concepts relating to climate change, pollution, and resource degradation, among others [12]. The obtained positive correlation in the research demonstrated that a high level of environmental awareness increases current sustainable consumption since both purchase intention and actual purchasing behavior for green products are reinforced [12].

Environmental attitudes are also determinants of sustainable consumption. A person's psychological inclination to prioritize environmental sustainability and preservation is referred to as their environmental attitude. Chan's research used a survey method, after which such attitudes' influence on consumer behavior was examined through correlation analysis [4]. From the results, it was observed that green-attitude consumers are likely to be practicing sustainable consumption, illustrating that attitudes have a substantial influence on intended and eventual sustainable product purchase. Studies have shown that educational programs and campaigns have played an essential role in increasing environmental knowledge relating to sustainable behavior.

3.3.2. Attitudes and Beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs towards environmental protection can also influence sustainable consumption. A sustainable consumption research investigated how consumer beliefs influence purchasing decisions about sustainable products [2]. The study analyzed interview data and showed that positive attitudes towards environmental protection significantly increased the likelihood of choosing sustainable products [2].

A correlation analysis on survey data was also conducted and proved that personal behavior is significantly correlated to the possibility of taking on sustainable consumption [4]. The results are such that those people who believe their actions would make a difference toward saving the environment show more significant tendencies to consume sustainably [4]. These results imply that a positive attitude and environmental solid beliefs lead to better promotion of sustainable consumption.

3.4. Government Policy and Incentive Factors

Government policies, regulations, and incentives are the basis of encouraging sustainable consumption. As a paper mentioned, many governments have been actively involved in promotion of sustainable consumption through commissioning international projects and sponsoring activities of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) [1]. Besides, the study examined the efficacy of a variety of policy interventions in fostering sustainable consumption. These “policy measures” within the paper refer to “Administrative or regulatory measures, Tax reform and product charges, Awareness campaigns, education and eco-labelling.” The conclusions of the article illustrate that policies can promote sustainable consumer behavior through the design of consumer-oriented policy instruments, such as bans on hazardous substances, green tax reforms [1].

Besides, a survey conducted a questionnaire survey and corresponding regression analysis on the purchasing behavior of 745 Swiss consumers, in which respondents' mean age was 47 years, 45% had higher education, and the female population in the sample amounted to 68% [12]. In this research,

the rates of sustainable consumption were measured by the adoption rates of eco-friendly products, reduction in waste production, and increase in recycling activities [12]. The results of this study illustrate that many sustainable consumption behaviors are influenced by policies such as fair trade, support for local products, and environmental protection policies. And the sample size shows a good match with the census data in Swiss, which further strengthens the persuasiveness of the study.

3.5. Green Marketing and Business Strategy Factors

Green marketing strategies are the powerful tools for marketing sustainable consumption. There is a relationship between green marketing and sustainable consumption [12]. According to the regression analysis in this research that involved the survey data, the customers bought more products from companies that practiced green marketing [12]. A green campaign, like that of Patagonia, which led to consumers buying only what they necessarily need and repairing things or recycling them instead of disposing of them, significantly improved the company's brand in the minds of their customers [13]. The campaign accelerated the rate of growth of the customer behavior of purchasing environmentally friendly products, which is a pointer that green marketing can help in sustainable consumption behaviors.

Besides, green marketing strategies that emphasize the environmental benefits of products and transparency of business practices can greatly influence consumer behavior. It has been found that effective green marketing can narrow the gap between consumer attitudes and actual purchasing behavior [4]. This study also utilizes correlation analysis to show that consumers have positive feedback to those products that clearly and honestly express their impact on the environment.

4. Managerial Implications

For businesses, governments and individuals to better integrate sustainable consumption into the life of human beings, the following sections provide recommendations in terms of policy support, business strategies and consumer insights, respectively.

First is the policy recommendation. Governments should implement and strengthen policies that support sustainable consumption. These policies include tax incentives and subsidies for sustainable products and stricter regulation to those unsustainable practices. Besides, it is necessary for governments and educational institutions to develop complete sustainable educational programs to raise environmental awareness. These initiatives should attempt to increase consumers' knowledge of how consumption affects the environment and the importance of living in a sustainable way [14].

From business side, corporations should adopt green marketing strategies, which focus on pointing out the products' sustainable effect [15]. Moreover, the advertisements related to sustainable and eco-friendly could strongly influence consumers' attitude and purchase behavior, which means narrowing the gap between awareness and action [15].

Finally, from a consumer perspective, the social network can significantly influence consumer purchase behavior. Through promoting social influencers' advertisements of sustainable consumption, consumers will be more willing to do the similar sustainable consumption methods [14]. Furthermore, community-based initiatives and collective action can help to foster a sustainable social culture. Also, developing local sustainability programs for consumers to join will increase their sustainable awareness a lot [2].

5. Limitations

This study has some limitations. Firstly, it may not fully reflect the dynamics of emerging economies as the data from studies of those economies are not very comprehensive and full. Future research should explore sustainable consumption patterns in different economic contexts to provide a more

global perspective. Second, the study relies on existing literatures and may not be able to explain all emerging trends in sustainable consumption, especially in the rapidly developing digital environment. Further research should investigate the impact of digital marketing and social media on sustainable consumer behavior [14]. Finally, the interactions between the various factors influencing sustainable consumption are still complex and not yet fully understood. Future research should explore these interactions in more detail using advanced analytical methods to gain a deeper understanding of how different factors work together to promote or hinder sustainable consumption.

6. Future Research Directions

About the factors affecting sustainable consumption, this article suggests four areas where future research could expand. To begin with, broaden the research scope. Research should focus on emerging economies' sustainable consumption, examining how different economic conditions affect consumer behavior and the effectiveness of various policies. Secondly, future research should explore how digital marketing like e-commerce, and social media affect sustainable consumption. Since it can help business to make diverse strategies. Moreover, future research can focus on how sustainable consumption behaviors change over time and the long-term impacts of various interventions. Finally, future research could adopt cross-disciplinary research to discover new factors and interactions that affect sustainable consumption, also provide more innovative insights.

7. Conclusion

This study reveals five influence factors of sustainable consumption, which are social, economic, psychological, policy and business factors. Firstly, social factors, including social culture and social influences, positively affect the sustainable consumption. Collectivist social culture and sustainable consumption behavior of people around will lead to sustainable consumption of consumers. Economic factors, especially income levels, will promote or limit sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption is more prevalent among consumers with greater incomes. Then, psychological factors, including environmental awareness and attitudes, have an impact on sustainable consumption. Individuals who maintain an optimistic perspective regarding environmental preservation are considerably more inclined to consume responsibly. In addition, since sustainable consumption can be promoted by government policies and financial subsidies, this policy factor plays a crucial role. Finally, business strategy and green marketing are also important factors, since companies with green and sustainable marketing strategies are more likely to be supported by consumers.

In conclusion, the above analysis shows that sustainable consumption is not just an individual choice, but is related to human society, economy, and policy. In order for more people to adopt sustainable consumption, all relevant factors must be carefully considered. In addition, these factors should be strategically combined and applied in real-life practice to help sustainable consumption flourish.

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