

Investigating How Sustainable Practices Influence Consumer Purchasing Decisions

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ABSTRACT

The continued focus on the environmental conservation across the globe makes the populace including the businesses and consumers change their behavior towards the environment. This research aims at determining the degree to which sustainable business practices affect the consumers' buying behaviour. Combining quantitative online questionnaire with 500 participants and qualitative interviews the study aims to examine consumer knowledge, attitude, and practices concerning sustainable products. This paper establishes that sustainability affects consumer behavior and the factors include pricing sensitivity, perceived product quality, and brand credibility. Drawing on the literature, the study establishes various challenges, which include higher prices and a limited stock of sustainable products, that influence consumers' actions. This study enriches the knowledge of consumer behaviour in the context of sustainability and provides recommendations to organisations interested in the issue. As a consequence, the conclusions of these analyses outline the importance of the increased availability of products with sustainable characteristics and call for better clarity with sustainability features, claiming that companies that carefully explain their sustainable practices have a stronger customer base and a better reception in the market.

KEYWORDS: Sustainable, Consumer, Purchasing, Decision, Awareness

INTRODUCTION

The change in consumer awareness can be attributed to the emergent environmental concerns namely; climate change and resource scarcity. This transformation is observable in the food industry and in fashion and technology industries which are already witnessing customers' willingness to be associated with quality products that are also friendly to the environment. Sustainability in the consumer products industry is a broad idea that may include socially responsible and green business practices such as obtaining goods through socially responsible means while minimizing the carbon emissions amidst environmentally friendly packaging and utilization of energy conserving production procedures. However, the impact of these sustainable practices that firms have adopted plays a different level in consumers' buying behavior.

Therefore, this research sets out to find out the extent of the relationship between green products and consumer behaviors; the reasons that make consumers

shift to green products from the traditional products. The implication of this insight is that the study can inform the creation of strategies that will resonate with the customers, and at the same time maintain environmental sustainability for firms. Thus, this study aims at identifying consumer antecedents and post-purchase behaviors with the aim of coming up with recommendations that will help different organizations and their stakeholders in the communication and the implementation of sustainability in the products and services they offer in their organizations, in a market that is considerate of the ethical standards that it demands in the region.

Literature Review

1. Consumer Awareness and Sustainability

Studies have shown a significant increase in consumer awareness of environmental issues, with many individuals expressing a preference for sustainable products (Ottman, 2011). However, the gap between stated preferences and actual purchasing

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behavior, known as the "attitude-behavior gap," remains a critical area of investigation (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

2. The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR initiatives have been linked to enhanced brand image and consumer trust. McWilliams and Siegel (2001) argue that CSR activities, particularly those focused on environmental sustainability, can differentiate brands in a crowded marketplace, thereby influencing consumer loyalty and purchasing decisions.

3. Barriers to Sustainable Consumption

Despite positive attitudes toward sustainability, consumers often encounter barriers such as higher prices, limited availability, and skepticism about the actual environmental benefits of products (Peattie, 2001). These barriers can significantly affect the adoption of sustainable goods.

4. Impact of Eco-Labels and Certifications

Eco-labels and certifications serve as critical tools for informing consumers about the environmental impact of their purchases (Thøgersen, 2000). Research indicates that such labels can enhance consumer trust and encourage the purchase of sustainable products, provided they are perceived as credible and transparent (D'Souza et al., 2006).

5. Price Sensitivity and Willingness to Pay

Price remains a significant determinant of consumer behavior. While a subset of consumers is willing to pay a premium for sustainable products, this willingness often depends on factors such as income level, perceived value, and personal commitment to environmental issues (Gleim et al., 2013).

6. The Influence of Demographics

Demographic factors, including age, gender, and education level, influence consumer attitudes and behaviors towards sustainability (Straughan & Roberts, 1999). Younger consumers and those with higher education levels tend to exhibit greater concern for environmental issues and are more likely to purchase sustainable products.

7. Psychological and Social Influences

Psychological factors, such as perceived consumer effectiveness and moral obligation, significantly impact sustainable purchasing decisions (Ellen et al., 1991). Social influences, including norms and peer behaviors, also play a crucial role (White et al., 2019).

8. Digital Media and Information Accessibility

The proliferation of digital media has increased consumer access to information about sustainability,

thereby influencing purchasing decisions (Parguel et al., 2011). The role of social media and online reviews in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors towards sustainable products is a growing area of research.

Methodology

This research is a mixed method research that assimilates both quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures. A questionnaire of 500 respondents with different characteristics was given to analyse the consumers' interest, perceptions, and behaviours towards green products. A set of questions on product preferences, perceived barriers and, decision-making factors was also incorporated in the survey. Therefore, the study used the survey questionnaire that was complemented by 20 face-to-face interviews to obtain more detailed perceptions of the participants regarding sustainability and the consumption of products. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of statistical method in order to check for correlation and association, while the qualitative data was analyzed thematically so as to confirm on the intentions and orientation of the participants.

Results

Using the survey results, the level of awareness of the participants to sustainable practices and its portrayal in their choices is 70%. Yet, only about two in five consumers actively buy sustainable goods; they give a wide range of reasons which include higher prices for such items and their deficiency. In the interviews, participants expressed a general caution regarding the authenticity of CSR commitments and therefore stressed the aspects of trust and credibility. Similarly, there was a readiness to pay for sustainable products with younger consumers being more willing than older ones, 60% of the young consumers (18-35) were willing to pay for green products while only 30% of the old consumers (36 and above). The findings also reflected the impact of eco-labels since 55% of the respondents argued that certifications raised their propensity to buy the products.

Discussion

The analysis highlights consumers' multi-faceted and choice constructs related to sustainable products. Even though there is an appreciable enhancement of consumer concern for the environment, there is a persistent problem of use, particularly concerning cost. This ever-growing disbelief in corporate narratives entails the urgent requirement of being more truthful in marketing and public relations. Companies can capitalize on this knowledge by making their sustainable activities more well-known and trustworthy; the latter might be achieved through

external accreditation and clear descriptions of their products. However, as shall be discussed later on, catering to the younger generation, who show increased sensitivity and are willing to spend more for sustainable products, may prove to be more advantageous. The opportunities that the use of digital media avails who in the coverage of information and the creation of the perception that the consumers have in the business also offer another platform that can be exploited.

Conclusion

Due to the results of this study, it is clear that many factors point to a greater emphasis on sustainability as a determining factor for a consumer's decision to purchase a product. Although consumers recognise and are interested in sustainability, there are some major hurdles included cost and availability of products. Thus, the authors believe that it is high time companies provide more and better information about sustainability, concentrate on the problem of consumers' trust, and make sustainable products cost less. Perhaps, subsequent research could extend the analysis of the effectiveness of various types of sustainability practices or the best ways to overcome the formulated barriers. The significance of sustainability is gradually shifting towards consumers' demand, thus, organizations which incorporate sustainable activities and publicize them are likely to reaping a competitive advantage.

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