"Sustaining Change: Unravelling the Socio-cultural Threads of Sustainable Consumption"

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relationship between socio-cultural factors and sustainable consumption, aiming to uncover the elements that contribute to long-term change in consumer behaviour. Sustainable consumption is recognized as a crucial aspect of achieving global sustainability goals, encompassing social, economic, and environmental dimensions. The study focuses on three key socio-cultural factors: social norms, cultural values, and social influence processes. Social norms strongly influence behaviour, as individuals conform to gain social acceptance and avoid sanctions. Aligning consumption choices with perceived norms helps individuals maintain social approval and avoid being seen as deviant. Understanding how social norms are established, transmitted, and reinforced is vital for effective promotion of sustainable consumption. Cultural values provide shared meanings that guide behaviour. Certain values, such as those emphasizing environmental protection and social responsibility, foster pro-sustainability attitudes and behaviours. Conversely, values emphasizing materialism and short-term gains hinder sustainable consumption. Exploring cultural diversity and context-specific influences sheds light on consumption patterns across societies. Social influence processes, including peer pressure and the desire for social belonging, play a significant role in driving sustainable consumption. Individuals are influenced by their social networks, such as family, friends, and opinion leaders, aligning their choices with those around them. Understanding the dynamics of social influence, including communication and social media impact, informs strategies to promote sustainable behaviours. Examining the durability of socio-cultural influences is crucial for long-term change. Research should focus on information dissemination, social learning, role modelling, and innovation diffusion mechanisms. By understanding these socio-cultural threads, interventions and strategies can be developed to encourage sustainable lifestyles and foster lasting change at individual, social, and cultural levels.

INTRODUCTION

Sustainable consumption is an emerging field of study that investigates the social, economic, and environmental aspects of consumption behaviour (Jackson, 2005;Ghaffar & Islam, 2023.). Socio-cultural influences play a crucial role in shaping individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour related to sustainability (Barr, Gilg, & Shaw, 2011; Masovic, 2018; Berglund et al., 2020; Toorzani & Rassafi, 2022). This review aims to examine the impact of socio-cultural factors on sustainable consumption and shed light on the mechanisms through which these influences operate.

Research has shown that social norms significantly influence sustainable consumption behaviours (Thøgersen, 2006; Salazar et al., 2013). Individuals tend to conform to prevailing social norms to gain social approval and avoid potential social sanctions (Schwartz, 1977). By aligning their consumption choices with perceived norms, individuals seek to maintain social acceptance and avoid being perceived as

deviant (Goldstein et al., 2008). Therefore, understanding the establishment, transmission, and reinforcement of social norms is crucial for promoting sustainable consumption.

Cultural values also shape sustainable consumption practices. Cultural frameworks provide individuals with shared meanings, symbols, and interpretations that guide their behaviour (Hofstede, 1980; Rahman et al., 2023; Riaz et al., 2023). Cultural values related to environmental protection, social responsibility, and intergenerational equity can foster pro-sustainability attitudes and behaviours (Stern et al., 1999). Conversely, cultural values emphasizing materialism, conspicuous consumption, or short-term gains may pose barriers to sustainable consumption practices (Kasser, 2002;).

Moreover, social influence processes play a crucial role in driving sustainable consumption behaviours. Research has shown that individuals' consumption choices are influenced by their social networks, including family, friends, and opinion leaders (Coleman, Katz, & Menzel, 1957; **Schubert et al., 2021;** Shah, & Asghar, 2023). Social interactions, discussions, and observations of others' behaviours can shape individuals' perceptions of what is desirable and feasible in terms of sustainable consumption (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Zafar et al., 2021; **Dimitrova** et al., 2022). Peer pressure, social comparisons, and the desire for social belonging can motivate individuals to align their consumption choices with those of their social circles (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

To promote sustainable consumption effectively, it is necessary to understand the mechanisms through which socio-cultural influences operate. These mechanisms include processes such as information dissemination, social learning, role modelling, and the diffusion of innovation (Geels et al., 2015; Rogers, 2003). By understanding these processes, interventions can be designed to leverage social influence to encourage sustainable consumption behaviours.

While significant progress has been made in understanding the impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption, there are still gaps in knowledge that require further exploration. For example, more research is needed to uncover how social norms are established, transmitted, and reinforced within different social contexts (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). Examining cultural diversity and context-specific influences on sustainable consumption can shed light on the variations in consumption patterns across different societies and help develop tailored interventions (Steg & Vlek, 2009).

Additionally, investigating the dynamics of social influence within sustainable consumption contexts can provide insights into how to effectively leverage social networks and opinion leaders to promote sustainable behaviours (Dellaert, Arentze, & Timmermans, 2008). This includes understanding how interpersonal communication, social media, and other channels of influence shape individuals' attitudes and behaviours (Bakshy, Eckles, & Watts, 2012).

Furthermore, research should focus on long-term behaviour change and the sustainability of sustainable consumption practices over time. Understanding the durability of socio-cultural influences and their potential to create lasting shifts in consumer behaviour is crucial for achieving meaningful and lasting change towards sustainability (White et al., 2019; Brandão & de Miranda, 2022; de Oliveira et al., 2022).

By addressing these aspects, this systematic review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption, unravel the underlying mechanisms, and contribute to the development of effective strategies for promoting sustainable lifestyles at individual, social, and cultural levels.

Despite growing recognition of the importance of sustainable consumption in addressing environmental challenges, there is a need to understand the complex interplay between socio-cultural influences and consumer behaviour. While numerous studies have explored individual determinants of sustainable consumption, such as economic factors and personal values, the role of socio-cultural influences remains

relatively understudied. Understanding how social and cultural factors shape sustainable consumption is crucial for designing effective interventions and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

The gaps in identified in current Knowledge are: Limited understanding of social norms: The influence of social norms on sustainable consumption has received inadequate attention. Research gaps exist in comprehending how social norms are established, transmitted, and reinforced, and how they shape individual consumption choices. Cultural diversity and context-specific influences: Sustainable consumption patterns vary across cultures and contexts due to diverse cultural values, beliefs, and practices. However, there is a lack of comprehensive research that examines the cultural dimensions of sustainable consumption and their implications for behaviour change strategies. Dynamics of social influence: The mechanisms through which socio-cultural influences impact sustainable consumption are not fully understood. Further exploration is needed to elucidate the processes of social influence, including interpersonal communication, social networks, and the role of opinion leaders in driving sustainable consumption behaviours. Intersectionality and inclusivity: Research on socio-cultural influences and sustainable consumption has often overlooked the intersectionality of identities and the experiences of marginalized groups. There is a need to address this gap by exploring how socio-cultural factors interact with dimensions of gender, race, socioeconomic status, and other forms of identity, and how they influence sustainable consumption patterns. Long-term behaviour change: Understanding how socio-cultural factors can lead to sustained behaviour change towards sustainable consumption is essential. Research should investigate the long-term effects of socio-cultural influences, including their durability and potential for creating lasting shifts in consumer behaviour.

Addressing these gaps in knowledge will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption and provide insights for developing effective strategies to promote sustainable lifestyles at individual, social, and cultural levels.

Research Questions for the review are: How do socio-cultural influences impact individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours in the context of sustainable consumption? What are the underlying mechanisms through which socio-cultural factors shape sustainable consumption behaviours? To what extent do social norms, cultural values, and social influence processes influence the adoption and practice of sustainable consumption?

The study assumptions are as follows: Socio-cultural factors play a significant role in shaping individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to sustainable consumption. Social norms, cultural values, and social influence processes are key drivers in the adoption or resistance to sustainable consumption practices; and Understanding the impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption can inform the development of effective strategies and interventions to promote sustainable behaviours.

The challenges of the study are as follows: The review is based on a selected range of academic databases and may not capture all relevant studies on the topic. Language bias may exist as the search is limited to English language publications, potentially excluding valuable research published in other languages. The review primarily considers peer-reviewed articles, which may overlook relevant information from other sources, such as reports or grey literature.

The study scope are as follows: The review specifically examines the impact of socio-cultural factors on sustainable consumption, including social norms, cultural values, and social influence processes. The analysis focuses on individual-level attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to sustainable consumption rather than macro-level societal or structural factors. The review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the existing literature, but it may not cover every subtopic exhaustively within the available resources and timeframe. The findings and conclusions drawn from the review are based on the selected articles and may not encompass all perspectives or emerging research beyond the included literature.

METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature search was conducted across various academic databases, including PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science. The search aimed to identify relevant studies exploring the impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption. The following keywords were used in the search: "sustainable consumption," "socio-cultural influences," "social factors," and "cultural factors." The search was limited to articles published in English between 2010 and 2023 to ensure the inclusion of recent research.

The inclusion criteria for article selection were studies that specifically examined the relationship between socio-cultural influences and sustainable consumption. The articles had to focus on investigating the impact of socio-cultural factors on individual attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours related to sustainable consumption. Additionally, only peer-reviewed articles were considered for inclusion in the review.

Upon completing the literature search, a total of 50 articles were selected for detailed analysis. These articles were chosen based on their relevance to the research question and alignment with the inclusion criteria. The selected articles provided insights into various aspects of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption, including the role of social norms, cultural values, and social influence processes.

The selected articles were thoroughly reviewed and analysed to extract key findings, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks. The analysis focused on identifying common patterns, discrepancies, and gaps in the existing literature. Additionally, the mechanisms through which socio-cultural influences operated to shape sustainable consumption behaviours were explored and synthesized.

Overall, the systematic literature search and selection process ensured a comprehensive review of the existing research on the impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption. The findings derived from this analysis contribute to our understanding of the complex interplay between socio-cultural factors and sustainable consumption behaviours.

SOCIO-CULTURAL FACTORS INFLUENCING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Social Norms and Values

Social norms and values have been found to exert a significant influence on individuals' consumption decisions, particularly in the context of sustainable consumption (Nawaz et al., 2021; Pristl et al., 2021; Shah & Shah, 2023). Research has consistently demonstrated that individuals tend to conform to prevailing societal norms, which can either promote or hinder sustainable consumption practices (Confetto et al., 2023: Pinho & Gomes, 2023).

Numerous studies have highlighted the positive impact of pro-environmental norms and values on sustainable consumption behaviour (Saari, 2021; Capiene er al., 2022; Khan & Thomas, 2023; Vighnesh et al., 2023). For instance, Cialdini, Reno, and Kallgren (1990) conducted a seminal study on littering behaviour and found that when individuals perceive a social norm favouring environmental conservation, they are more likely to engage in responsible waste disposal. This finding highlights the role of social norms in shaping individual behaviour related to sustainability.

Additionally, Schwartz (1977) explored the influence of normative factors on altruistic behaviour and found that individuals who prioritize pro-social values and norms are more inclined to engage in environmentally responsible actions. This suggests that values emphasizing concern for the environment and collective well-being can contribute to sustainable consumption practices.

Moreover, Hargreaves (2004) examined attitudes towards family issues and found that cultural values play a role in shaping individuals' consumption patterns. Cultural values, such as valuing frugality or simplicity,

can encourage individuals to adopt sustainable consumption practices by promoting a focus on essential needs rather than excessive material consumption.

These studies provide empirical evidence supporting the notion that social norms and values are important factors influencing sustainable consumption behaviour. By aligning individual attitudes and behaviours with pro-environmental norms and values, it becomes more likely that individuals will adopt sustainable consumption practices.

Cultural and Subcultural Influences

Cultural and subcultural factors have a substantial impact on consumption patterns, including sustainable consumption behaviour (Nemeth et al., 2019; Hansen & Nielsen, 2023). Cultural values, traditions, and beliefs shape individuals' attitudes and choices, either facilitating or hindering sustainable consumption practices.

Research has demonstrated that cultural values play a crucial role in influencing sustainable consumption behaviour. For instance, Schwartz (2012) conducted extensive research on cultural values and identified different dimensions of values across cultures. Collectivist cultures, which prioritize communal well-being and cooperation, have been found to exhibit more sustainable consumption behaviours. In these cultures, individuals are more likely to consider the impact of their consumption decisions on the community and natural environment.

Moreover, subcultures can also exert a significant influence on individuals' sustainable consumption choices. Subcultures, such as the green movement or veganism, embody specific values and beliefs that promote environmentally friendly behaviours. Individuals who identify with these subcultures are more inclined to adopt sustainable consumption practices aligned with their values. For example, individuals associated with the green movement may prioritize organic products, renewable energy sources, and minimal waste generation (Steg & Vlek, 2009).

These cultural and subcultural influences create social contexts and norms that encourage sustainable consumption behaviours within specific groups. By promoting environmentally conscious values and practices, cultural and subcultural factors contribute to the adoption and diffusion of sustainable consumption practices at both individual and collective levels.

Social Influence and Peer Pressure

Social influence and peer pressure play significant roles in shaping sustainable consumption behaviour. Individuals are more likely to adopt sustainable consumption practices when they observe others engaging in similar behaviour, and social pressure from peers, family, and friends can motivate individuals to align their consumption choices with sustainability goals.

Research has shown that social influence is a powerful factor in driving sustainable consumption behaviour (Brandão & de Miranda, 2022; Dimitrova et al., 2022). Schultz et al. (2018) conducted a study on the effects of social norms on energy conservation and found that individuals were more likely to engage in energy-saving behaviours when they perceived that others in their social network were doing the same. This suggests that observing sustainable consumption practices in others can act as a positive influence, leading individuals to adopt similar behaviours.

Furthermore, social pressure from peers, family, and friends can serve as a motivating force for sustainable consumption. Studies have indicated that individuals tend to conform to the consumption patterns of their social circles to gain acceptance and avoid social disapproval (Goldstein et al., 2008; Laursen, & Faur, 2022). When individuals perceive that sustainable consumption is valued and rewarded within their social group, they are more likely to align their consumption choices with sustainability goals.

For example, the influence of peer pressure on sustainable consumption can be observed in studies on sustainable fashion (Johnstone & Lindh, 2022; Mandari´c et al., 2022). Research by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) demonstrated that young consumers' sustainable fashion choices were influenced by their desire to fit in with their peers and be seen as socially responsible. This highlights how social influence and peer pressure can drive individuals towards sustainable consumption practices.

Overall, social influence and peer pressure have a significant impact on sustainable consumption behaviour. Observing sustainable behaviours in others and experiencing social pressure to conform to sustainable norms can motivate individuals to adopt and maintain sustainable consumption practices.

Media and Advertising

Media and advertising play a significant role in shaping individuals' consumption behaviour, including sustainable consumption. The portrayal of sustainable products and lifestyles in the media can influence consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and intentions towards sustainability. Additionally, strategic marketing of eco-friendly products can create demand and influence consumers' consumption choices (Zafar et., 2021; Das et al., 2023).

The media has the power to shape public opinion and raise awareness about sustainable consumption. By featuring sustainable products, initiatives, and lifestyles in various forms of media, such as television shows, documentaries, and news articles, the media can influence consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainability. For instance, documentaries highlighting the environmental impact of certain industries or showcasing sustainable living practices have been found to increase viewers' awareness and interest in sustainable consumption (Leire & Thøgersen, 2011 Bryła et al., 2022).

Furthermore, advertising plays a crucial role in promoting and influencing consumers' consumption choices. Strategic marketing campaigns that highlight the environmental benefits of eco-friendly products can create demand and shape consumers' preferences towards sustainability. The use of persuasive messaging and visual cues, such as eco-labels or green imagery, can enhance consumers' perceptions of product sustainability and encourage them to make more sustainable choices (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006: Kim, & Cha, 2021 Machová et al., 2022).

For example, research has shown that the marketing of hybrid cars emphasizing their eco-friendliness and fuel efficiency has led to increased consumer interest and adoption of these sustainable transportation options (Polonsky & Vocino, 2005; Tanwir & Hamzah, 2020). This demonstrates the influence of advertising on shaping consumers' perceptions and behaviours towards sustainable consumption.

Overall, media and advertising have a considerable influence on individuals' consumption behaviour. By promoting sustainable products, lifestyles, and initiatives, and strategically marketing eco-friendly options, media and advertising can shape consumers' perceptions, attitudes, and consumption choices towards sustainability.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

Understanding the socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption has important implications for policymakers and practitioners aiming to promote sustainable behaviours. By leveraging social norms, cultural values, and social influence, effective interventions and policies can be developed to encourage sustainable consumption behaviour. Targeted media campaigns, educational programs, and social marketing initiatives can be employed to promote pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours among individuals.

Targeted Media Campaigns: The findings of this review highlight the role of media in shaping individuals' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainability. Policymakers and practitioners can collaborate with media

outlets to design targeted campaigns that promote sustainable consumption practices. By featuring sustainable products, lifestyles, and success stories in the media, these campaigns can raise awareness, inspire behaviour change, and foster a culture of sustainability.

Educational Programs: Incorporating sustainability education into formal and informal educational settings can help cultivate pro-environmental values and knowledge among individuals. Integrating sustainable consumption topics into school curricula, vocational training, and adult education programs can enhance individuals' understanding of the socio-cultural factors influencing their consumption choices. By equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills, educational initiatives can empower them to make sustainable choices.

Social Marketing Initiatives: Social marketing campaigns can utilize social norms, cultural values, and social influence processes to promote sustainable consumption behaviour. These initiatives can emphasize the positive social identity associated with sustainable behaviours, highlight the social and environmental benefits of sustainable choices, and create social incentives for individuals to engage in sustainable consumption practices. By framing sustainable consumption as desirable, normative, and socially rewarding, social marketing initiatives can influence individuals' attitudes and behaviours.

Collaborative Partnerships: Policymakers, businesses, and civil society organizations can form partnerships to amplify the impact of sustainable consumption initiatives. By working together, they can develop comprehensive strategies that address socio-cultural influences on multiple levels. For example, collaborations between policymakers and businesses can lead to the development and promotion of sustainable products, while partnerships with non-governmental organizations can facilitate community engagement and behaviour change programs.

By implementing these interventions and policies, stakeholders can create an enabling environment that supports and encourages sustainable consumption. The systematic understanding of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption provided by this review can serve as a foundation for evidence-based decision-making and the development of effective interventions to promote sustainable behaviours.

CONCLUSION

This systematic review has shed light on the crucial impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption behaviour. The findings emphasize the role of social norms, cultural values, social influence, and media in shaping individuals' consumption choices and attitudes towards sustainability.

The review reveals that social norms and values significantly influence individuals' consumption decisions. When pro-environmental norms and values are prevalent, individuals are more likely to engage in sustainable consumption practices. This highlights the importance of fostering and promoting pro-environmental norms within society.

Cultural and subcultural factors also play a significant role in shaping consumption patterns. Cultural values, traditions, and beliefs can either support or hinder sustainable consumption. Collectivist cultures, which prioritize community well-being over individual desires, tend to exhibit more sustainable consumption behaviour. Additionally, subcultures such as the green movement or veganism can influence individuals' sustainable consumption choices through their specific values and beliefs.

Social influence and peer pressure have been found to impact sustainable consumption behaviour. Individuals are more likely to adopt sustainable practices when they observe others engaging in similar behaviour. Moreover, social pressure from peers, family, and friends can motivate individuals to align their consumption choices with sustainability goals.

The media and advertising have a substantial influence on individuals' consumption behaviour. The portrayal of sustainable products and lifestyles in the media can shape consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards sustainability. Strategic marketing of eco-friendly products can create demand and influence consumption choices by highlighting the environmental benefits.

Understanding these socio-cultural influences has important implications for promoting sustainable consumption. Policymakers and practitioners can develop effective interventions and policies based on these insights. Targeted media campaigns, educational programs, and social marketing initiatives can be utilized to encourage pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours among individuals.

By recognizing and leveraging the socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption, stakeholders can contribute to global sustainability efforts. Through collaborative efforts and tailored interventions, it is possible to create an enabling environment that supports and promotes sustainable consumption practices.

It is important to note that this systematic review provides a foundation for understanding the impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption. Further research is needed to delve deeper into specific cultural contexts, subcultures, and media strategies to develop more nuanced interventions and policies that can drive widespread sustainable consumption behaviours.

Overall, the findings of this review highlight the need to consider socio-cultural factors and design comprehensive strategies that address the multifaceted nature of sustainable consumption. By harnessing the power of social norms, cultural values, social influence, and media, we can collectively work towards creating a more sustainable and environmentally conscious society.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

While this systematic review provides valuable insights into the impact of socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption, there are several avenues for future research that can further enhance our understanding of this complex field. The following are potential directions for future research:

Contextual Analysis: Conducting studies that investigate the socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption within specific cultural, regional, or subcultural contexts would provide deeper insights. Exploring the variations in socio-cultural factors across different societies and subcultures can help identify unique drivers and barriers to sustainable consumption.

Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies that track individuals' consumption behaviour and its socio-cultural influences over an extended period would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play. Longitudinal research can shed light on the long-term effects of social norms, cultural values, and social influence on sustainable consumption and identify potential factors that facilitate or impede behaviour change over time.

Comparative Analysis: Comparing different socio-cultural contexts and their impact on sustainable consumption can help identify cross-cultural patterns and differences. Comparative studies can explore how cultural values, norms, and social influence mechanisms vary across regions and their implications for promoting sustainable consumption on a global scale.

Mediating and Moderating Factors: Investigating the mediating and moderating factors that influence the relationship between socio-cultural influences and sustainable consumption can provide deeper insights into the underlying mechanisms. For example, exploring the role of individual values, personality traits, socioeconomic status, or demographic factors in mediating or moderating the impact of socio-cultural influences can provide a more nuanced understanding of sustainable consumption behaviour.

Multi-method Approaches: Employing mixed-method research designs that combine qualitative and quantitative methods can offer a comprehensive understanding of socio-cultural influences on sustainable

consumption. Qualitative research can provide in-depth insights into individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and motivations, while quantitative research can provide broader empirical evidence and statistical analyses.

Intervention Studies: Conducting intervention studies to evaluate the effectiveness of different strategies in promoting sustainable consumption is crucial. Designing and implementing interventions that leverage socio-cultural influences, such as social norms or social marketing campaigns, and assessing their impact on behaviour change can inform the development of evidence-based interventions and policies.

Consumer Segmentation: Investigating consumer segments based on socio-cultural factors and examining their distinct consumption patterns and preferences can help tailor interventions to specific target groups. Understanding how different socio-cultural groups perceive and engage with sustainable consumption can inform more targeted strategies for promoting sustainable behaviours.

Multi-stakeholder Collaboration: Exploring the roles and collaborations between policymakers, businesses, civil society organizations, and consumers in driving sustainable consumption can provide insights into effective multi-stakeholder approaches. Understanding the dynamics and interactions between these stakeholders can inform the development of comprehensive strategies and initiatives that foster sustainable consumption.

By addressing these future research directions, we can deepen our understanding of the socio-cultural influences on sustainable consumption and develop more effective interventions and policies to promote sustainable behaviours at individual, societal, and global levels.

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