

The Silent Contradiction Between Pro-Environmental Attitudes and Purchasing Behavior in Sustainable Consumption

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Abstract

Sustainable consumption is an important approach aimed at safeguarding the well-being of future generations. However, although awareness of environmental issues and positive environmental attitudes have increased, this trend has not been reflected in green purchasing behaviours to the same extent. In the consumer behavior literature, this phenomenon is referred to as the “attitude–behavior gap.”

This chapter examines the concepts of sustainable consumption, green consumers, and green purchasing behavior, and addresses the inconsistency between attitudes and behaviours from both historical and theoretical perspectives. In this context, the attitude–behavior gap is evaluated through LaPiere’s pioneering study, Wicker’s criticisms, the Theory of Reasoned Action, and the Theory of Planned Behavior. Furthermore, the concept of the “silent contradiction” in sustainable consumption is discussed, and the main factors that hinder the transformation of pro-environmental attitudes into sustainable purchasing behavior—such as price, habits, limited accessibility, lack of trust, greenwashing, and social norms—are analyzed.

In summary, the chapter demonstrates that the primary barrier to sustainable consumption is not the absence of environmental concern, but rather the individual, social, and structural constraints that make it difficult to translate such concern into action. Therefore, the development of holistic strategies aimed at bridging the attitude–behavior gap is essential for promoting sustainable consumption. It is emphasized that businesses should make green products more affordable and accessible, rebuild consumer trust by acting transparently in their environmental claims, and that public institutions should implement

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policies and facilitating regulations that encourage green consumption. In addition, civil society organizations, the media, and educational institutions should leverage the power of social norms to promote sustainable lifestyles more widely.

1. Introduction

Although consumers claim that they attempt to make purchasing decisions by considering ethical concerns such as environmental protection and the consumption of healthy products, these concerns are often not reflected in their actual purchasing behavior (Auger & Devinney, 2007). According to the literature, this discrepancy can be attributed to factors such as daily routines, time pressure, habits, price sensitivity, product accessibility, and functional benefits (Carrington et al., 2010; Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006; Auger & Devinney, 2007). In some cases, consumers are even willing to pay 10–15% more than the standard market price when they perceive additional benefits from a product, such as reusable packaging or greater ease of use. In such situations, consumers are not primarily motivated by environmental protection or ethical concerns; rather, they seek to maximize their own individual benefits. Nevertheless, even when consumers' primary motivation is personal utility rather than environmental or ethical concerns, the resulting behavior may still be consistent with sustainable consumption practices (Kuru & Boyraz, 2021; Tüzemen & Kuru, 2018).

The foundation of sustainable consumption lies in the discrepancy between consumers' various concerns and their actual purchasing behaviours. This discrepancy is referred to in the literature as the attitude–behavior gap. The earliest and most influential study underpinning contemporary research on this concept, which has its roots in social psychology, was conducted by Richard T. LaPiere. As a sociologist and social psychology researcher, LaPiere empirically demonstrated that inconsistencies may exist between attitudes and behaviours (LaPiere, 1934). Another important contribution to the theoretical development of the concept came from Wicker (1969), who argued that attitudes have only a limited capacity to predict behavior (Wicker, 1969). Since the 1990s, scholars have increasingly emphasized that the gap between ethical consumption and actual purchasing behavior—the so-called attitude–behavior gap—should be regarded as a major field of inquiry and even a central issue within consumer behavior research (Carrington et al., 2014; Bray et al., 2011).

In recent years, the world has been confronted with global challenges such as climate change, the depletion of natural resources, and environmental degradation. Consequently, sustainability is now viewed as a concept that

extends far beyond environmental concerns alone. Today, sustainability occupies a central position in consumer behavior through its economic, ethical, and sociological dimensions. Addressing these challenges appears to require the continuous evaluation and improvement of consumer behavior from a sustainability perspective (Peattie, 2010; White et al., 2019; ElHaffar et al., 2020). Accordingly, this chapter examines how the concept of sustainability should be understood and evaluated within the context of contemporary global conditions and consumer behavior.

2. Sustainable Consumption and the Green Consumer

2.1. Sustainable Consumption

The concept of sustainability was first systematically addressed under the framework of sustainable development in the report entitled *Our Common Future*, prepared by the World Commission on Environment and Development. The concept is fundamentally based on meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Over time, sustainability has expanded into a broad range of fields and contexts, including consumption practices.

Although it is difficult to establish a definitive definition of sustainable consumption, individuals' choices, behaviours, and lifestyles play a crucial role in sustainability at both the individual and global levels (Jackson, 2005). In general, sustainable consumption refers to a pattern of consumption that supports the needs of future generations in social, environmental, and economic terms throughout all stages of the consumption process, including purchasing, using, aging, and disposing of products (Akdoğan, 2023). Sustainable consumption is often perceived simply as the preference for environmentally friendly products. However, as the definition suggests, it represents a comprehensive approach to living and consuming that aims to avoid jeopardizing the needs of future generations while integrating economic, social, and environmental dimensions. Therefore, it should be regarded as a necessity in addressing global challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation, and the rapid depletion of natural resources (Peattie, 2010).

2.2. Green Consumers

The growing prominence and increasing importance of the concept of sustainable consumption have led to greater interest in and discussion of the concept of the green consumer within the consumer behavior literature. The continuing expansion of industrialization and environmental pollution has

heightened environmental awareness among individuals, as these problems have prompted people to seek solutions. The belief that such solutions can be achieved through changes in consumption habits has given rise to the concept of the green consumer (Roberts, 1996; Kilbourne & Pickett, 2008). Green consumers can be defined as individuals who consider the potential environmental benefits and harms of products when making purchasing decisions. These consumers manage the processes of purchasing, using, and disposing of products with a sense of environmental responsibility (Mostafa, 2007).

Although the concept of the green consumer can be defined in this manner, it should not be overlooked that a wide range of factors influence environmentally responsible purchasing behavior. The profile of a green consumer is shaped not only by demographic variables such as age, gender, and income, but also by numerous psychosocial factors, including lifestyle, attitudes, and moral norms (Straughan & Roberts, 1999; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Stern, 2000; Bamberg & Möser, 2007). Although green consumers often express concern about environmental issues and support environmentally friendly products, these attitudes are not always reflected in their actual purchasing behavior. The literature demonstrates that significant discrepancies may exist between consumers' environmental concerns and their real purchasing choices. In particular, factors such as the higher prices of environmentally friendly products, perceptions that such products may perform less effectively than conventional alternatives, established consumption habits, and difficulties in accessing green products may discourage consumers from acting on their environmental preferences (Young et al., 2010; Bray et al., 2011; Carrington et al., 2010).

2.3. Sustainable Purchasing Behavior

Sustainable purchasing behavior refers to the process by which individuals shape their consumption decisions not only on the basis of economic benefits but also by considering environmental, social, and ethical consequences. Within this approach, consumers evaluate not only traditional product attributes such as price and quality, but also the environmental impacts of production processes, the level of resource utilization, recyclability characteristics, and the social responsibility principles observed throughout the production process (Joshi & Rahman, 2015).

The literature offers various approaches to explaining sustainable purchasing behavior. Among these, the Theory of Planned Behavior has received considerable attention. According to this theory, three key factors

play a determining role in shaping behavioural intentions: social norms, individual attitudes, and perceived behavioural control. When these three factors are favourable, the likelihood of performing the relevant behavior increases. The same logic applies to the formation of intentions to purchase environmentally friendly products. For example, consumers are more likely to purchase such products when they believe that environmentally friendly products are beneficial (individual attitude), when they receive support from people around them (social norms), and when they perceive that they can access these products (perceived behavioural control) (Ajzen, 1991). However, consumers' pro-environmental attitudes toward environmentally friendly products do not always translate into sustainable consumption behavior. Due to factors such as high prices, limited product availability, and established habits, consumers may ultimately choose alternative options (Carrington et al., 2010).

Recent studies suggest that sustainable purchasing behavior cannot be explained solely by individual values and attitudes, and that social environments and institutional structures also play a significant role in this process. Examples include corporate sustainability initiatives, government support programs, and environmental awareness campaigns. It is argued that, when sufficient encouragement and guidance are provided, consumers are more likely to prefer sustainable products (White et al., 2019). Despite these developments, consumers who hold favourable attitudes toward environmentally friendly products and express intentions to engage in sustainable purchasing often fail to translate these concerns into actual purchasing behavior. To better understand this discrepancy between attitudes and behaviours, it is essential to examine the concept of the “attitude–behavior gap,” which has become a major subject of discussion within the literature.

3. Historical Evolution of the Attitude–Behavior Gap Concept: From Social Psychology to Sustainable Consumption

The inconsistency between the attitudes individuals hold and the behaviours they exhibit has become one of the most widely discussed issues in the fields of sustainable, ethical, and environmentally responsible consumption. Referred to in the literature as the attitude–behavior gap, this phenomenon describes the inability of individuals to translate their positive attitudes toward environmental, ethical, or social issues into concrete actions. Although the concept is closely associated with sustainable consumption, its origins can be traced back to the early years of social psychology. The concept has acquired its contemporary meaning through the contributions of numerous studies conducted over several decades.

The first empirical conceptualization of the relationship between attitudes and behavior was introduced by Richard T. LaPiere in 1934. During a period when anti-Chinese prejudice was widespread in the United States, LaPiere travelled with a Chinese couple and visited approximately 250 hotels and restaurants. He observed that the vast majority of these establishments provided service to the couple. Subsequently, he sent a questionnaire to the managers of the same establishments, asking whether they would accept Chinese customers. The survey results revealed that a substantial proportion of the respondents stated that they would not be willing to serve Chinese customers. This striking discrepancy between observed behavior and stated attitudes demonstrated that individuals' expressed attitudes do not always correspond to their actual behavior. As a result, LaPiere's findings challenged the traditional assumption that attitudes automatically determine behavior (LaPiere, 1934).

Although LaPiere's findings were initially regarded as an exception, views suggesting that the relationship between attitudes and behavior was far more complex than previously assumed gained increasing support during the 1960s. One of the most influential contributions to this debate came from Allan Wicker's study published in 1969. Wicker conducted a comprehensive review synthesizing numerous studies from different research domains and raised serious concerns regarding the explanatory power of attitudes in predicting behavior. His findings suggested that attitudes often possess only limited predictive power and that factors such as social norms, environmental influences, and situational conditions play important roles in shaping behavior. This development contributed to the emergence of debates that later became known as the "attitude-behavior crisis" in the literature (Wicker, 1969).

The recognition that attitudes alone have limited power to explain and predict behavior encouraged researchers to develop more comprehensive theoretical models of behavioural decision-making. One of the most influential frameworks developed to explain the gap between attitudes and behavior is the Theory of Reasoned Action proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen. According to this theory, behavior is not determined directly by attitudes but rather by behavioural intentions. Behavioural intentions, in turn, are shaped by attitudes and by individuals' perceptions of the expectations of significant others, referred to as subjective norms. This framework demonstrated that the relationship between attitudes and behavior is not linear but is influenced by social factors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

The Theory of Reasoned Action has made significant contributions, particularly in studies examining sustainable and environmentally responsible consumption behaviours. It has been widely used in the literature to explain

the roles of attitudes and subjective norms in shaping consumers' purchase intentions. Nevertheless, the theory has been criticized for assuming that behavior is entirely under an individual's volitional control. In reality, individuals do not always possess complete control over their actions. Factors such as financial constraints, lack of information, and economic difficulties may lead people to behave differently from their intentions. To address these limitations, Ajzen revised the model in 1991 by introducing the construct of perceived behavioural control and developing the Theory of Planned Behavior. Perceived behavioural control refers to the extent to which individuals perceive themselves as capable of performing a particular behavior. The Theory of Planned Behavior has subsequently served as the theoretical foundation for numerous studies on environmentally responsible purchasing, recycling, energy conservation, and green consumption.

From a sustainable consumption perspective, consumers may develop favourable attitudes toward environmentally friendly products and may perceive support from their social environment for choosing such products. However, these positive attitudes and social influences do not always translate into actual purchasing behavior. High product prices, limited availability, and insufficient consumer knowledge often act as barriers to action. Consequently, the Theory of Planned Behavior provides a useful theoretical framework for explaining the discrepancy between pro-environmental attitudes and sustainable purchasing behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Paul et al., 2016).

Beginning in the 1990s and accelerating with the growth of ethical and green consumption research, scholars increasingly focused on understanding why positive attitudes and intentions fail to translate into actual behavior. Among these scholars, Carrington and colleagues demonstrated that consumers' sensitivity to ethical and environmental issues does not necessarily lead to purchasing decisions that reflect those concerns. Their findings suggested that the attitude-behavior gap arises not only from weaknesses in individual attitudes but also from contextual factors that influence the decision-making process. These factors include budget constraints, habits, time pressure, and the routines of everyday life that shape consumer choices at the point of purchase (Carrington et al., 2010).

Similarly, Bray and colleagues examined the ethical consumption literature and systematically classified the major causes of the attitude-behavior gap. According to their findings, barriers to sustainable purchasing behavior include perceptions of high prices, difficulties in accessing environmentally friendly products, insufficient information, and low levels of consumer involvement. In addition, many consumers believe that their individual purchasing decisions

are unlikely to make a meaningful contribution to solving environmental problems (Bray et al., 2011).

More recent research has approached the attitude–behavior gap through broader frameworks that extend beyond individual attitudes alone. White and colleagues introduced the SHIFT model in 2019, demonstrating that sustainable consumption behavior is shaped by the combined influence of social factors, habits, self-identity, emotions, and cognitive evaluations. This perspective suggests that environmental awareness and positive attitudes explain only part of consumer behavior and that actual consumption decisions are influenced by a far more complex set of dynamics (White et al., 2019). Likewise, ElHaffar and colleagues, in their review of green consumption research, argued that the inconsistency between attitudes and actual behavior remains one of the central challenges of sustainable consumption research and emphasized the need for further studies aimed at explaining this gap (ElHaffar et al., 2020).

The attitude–behavior gap has therefore remained one of the most enduring topics in the consumer behavior literature. Beginning with LaPiere’s pioneering work, this field has evolved considerably through Wicker’s critique of the predictive power of attitudes and the behavioural models developed by Fishbein and Ajzen. The accumulated evidence indicates that consumer behavior is not solely the outcome of individual attitudes; it is also shaped by social norms, perceived behavioural control, habits, and various situational factors. Consequently, contemporary sustainable consumption research focuses on explaining the discrepancy between pro-environmental attitudes and actual purchasing behavior and on identifying mechanisms that may help reduce this inconsistency.

4. The Silent Contradiction in Sustainable Consumption

Up to this point, the inconsistency between sustainable consumption, pro-environmental attitudes, and purchasing behavior has been examined through a historical perspective supported by findings from the literature. The prevailing view suggests that consumers who hold pro-environmental attitudes often express intentions to engage in environmentally responsible purchasing and are willing to articulate these intentions; however, they frequently fail to translate such attitudes into actual purchasing behavior. This discrepancy is attributed to a wide range of economic, social, psychological, and situational factors. In fact, these factors have long been recognized as core elements of traditional consumer behavior models. Therefore, it is evident that sustainable

consumption behavior cannot be evaluated independently of these well-established determinants (Ajzen, 1991; Bettman et al., 1998).

The contemporary literature indicates that numerous factors hinder the translation of pro-environmental attitudes into sustainable purchasing behavior, including financial constraints, consumption habits, product accessibility, brand trust, social influences, and perceived consumer effectiveness (Joshi & Rahman, 2015; Hassan et al., 2016; Testa et al., 2021). Consequently, understanding the attitude–behavior gap requires a holistic examination of all factors that constrain the purchasing decisions of consumers who possess pro-environmental intentions. In light of the existing literature, price, habits, accessibility, distrust, and social norms emerge as the most prominent social and environmental factors limiting sustainable consumption.

4.1. Price

Price is one of the most significant barriers to sustainable purchasing behavior. Although consumers may intend to purchase environmentally friendly products, organic foods, energy-efficient technologies, and environmentally certified products are generally offered at higher prices than their conventional alternatives. This price differential often places consumers in a dilemma, forcing them to balance their environmental concerns against their economic considerations. When economic interests become the dominant consideration, consumers may act inconsistently with their environmental concerns, thereby widening the attitude–behavior gap (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006).

According to the consumer behavior literature, consumers make decisions by evaluating the balance between the costs they incur and the benefits they expect to receive. In this context, a high price does not constitute a barrier in itself; rather, what matters is the extent to which consumers perceive the benefits obtained in return for that price as valuable (Zeithaml, 1988). Consequently, economic considerations often generate immediate and tangible outcomes, whereas purchasing decisions based on environmental concerns tend to produce long-term benefits that are less direct and less perceptible to consumers.

A review of the sustainable consumption literature from a pricing perspective indicates that consumers' willingness to purchase sustainable products decreases as price sensitivity increases, particularly among lower-income groups. Although consumers are generally willing to pay a premium for sustainable products, this willingness is often limited. Research suggests that consumers may be willing to pay approximately 10–15% more for sustainable alternatives; however, the level of willingness to pay tends to increase in proportion to

consumers' income levels (Aschemann-Witzel & Niebuhr Aagaard, 2014; Bray et al., 2011; Kuru & Boyraz, 2020; Tüzemen & Kuru, 2018).

Recent studies emphasize that increasing the perceived value of sustainable products and making their benefits more visible are critical for encouraging sustainable consumption. Therefore, businesses should position sustainable products not only in terms of their environmental attributes but also in terms of the concrete and personal benefits they provide to consumers (Joshi & Rahman, 2015).

4.2 Habits

Consumers' purchasing behaviours are often shaped not by conscious decision-making processes but by routinized and automated choices. Over time, consumers tend to minimize cognitive effort and reduce decision-making burdens, preferring to purchase familiar products rather than evaluate new alternatives. These routinized and automatic patterns of behavior are commonly referred to as habits. When considered within the context of sustainable consumption, habits become a significant barrier to the adoption of environmentally friendly products. Habitual purchasing behavior is particularly prevalent in low-involvement product categories, such as grocery shopping and frequently purchased consumer goods. Even when environmentally friendly alternatives are available, consumers often prefer to remain within their established consumption patterns. Consequently, positive attitudes toward sustainable products are frequently insufficient on their own to change existing consumption habits (Wood & Neal, 2009).

Behavioural research suggests that habits are not merely the result of repeated past actions but are also influenced by a variety of environmental cues. Factors such as shopping at the same stores, familiar shelf arrangements, and routine shopping lists can trigger automatic purchasing behavior, thereby discouraging environmentally responsible purchasing even when sustainable alternatives are available. For this reason, raising awareness alone is often insufficient to encourage sustainable purchasing behavior. Businesses seeking to promote environmentally friendly products must develop strategies and interventions capable of disrupting consumers' established purchasing habits and facilitating the adoption of new behaviours (Verplanken et al., 1997).

The sustainable consumption literature emphasizes that achieving meaningful behavioural change requires the formation of new habits. As environmentally responsible and sustainable consumption behaviours are repeated over time, they become increasingly automatic and integrated into consumers' daily routines. Once pro-environmental attitudes become

embedded within everyday practices, the transition toward a more routine and sustainable pattern of consumption becomes possible (Lally et al., 2010).

4.3. Accessibility

Market structure and distribution systems directly influence consumers' access to environmentally friendly products. Even when consumers are inclined to purchase green products, they may be compelled to choose conventional alternatives if environmentally friendly options are not sufficiently available in the marketplace or are difficult to obtain. This situation demonstrates that sustainable consumption behavior cannot be explained solely by individual preferences and highlights the important role played by market conditions and distribution systems (Young et al., 2010).

Product accessibility can be examined from two dimensions: physical accessibility and digital accessibility. Physical accessibility refers to the ease with which products can be found in local markets, whereas digital accessibility relates to product visibility in online environments, the availability of information about products, and the ease of purchasing them through digital channels (Joshi & Rahman, 2015). Research indicates that many consumers who are motivated to engage in environmentally responsible purchasing encounter supply-related challenges and limited product variety. Restricted distribution and difficulties in obtaining sustainable products often lead consumers to rely on conventional alternatives instead (Tanner & Kast, 2003).

Accessibility is not limited to the mere availability of products in the marketplace. Easy access to sufficient and transparent product information is also an important component of accessibility. Consumers may become skeptical of products for which adequate information is unavailable and may consequently revert to their habitual purchasing patterns and conventional product choices. Therefore, firms offering environmentally friendly products should provide clear, reliable, and easily accessible information about their products to consumers (Gleim et al., 2013).

Although online shopping platforms have improved access to environmentally friendly products, sustainable products continue to appeal to a relatively limited segment of consumers in many markets. To promote the wider adoption of sustainable consumption, the literature recommends expanding the distribution networks of environmentally friendly alternatives, increasing product variety, and minimizing the financial and physical costs associated with consumer access to these products.

4.4. Trust and Greenwashing

Environmentally friendly, or sustainable, products are defined as products designed to minimize environmental harm throughout their production, use, and disposal processes. These products aim to reduce energy consumption, minimize resource use, and promote the utilization of recyclable materials whenever possible (Peattie, 1995; Dangelico & Pontrandolfo, 2010). However, the environmental and sustainability claims made by firms regarding such products are often insufficient to encourage consumers to purchase them. Uncertainty and information asymmetry frequently lead consumers to choose conventional products, even when they possess strong motivations to purchase environmentally friendly alternatives. Trust is one of the most fundamental determinants of sustainable purchasing decisions because the environmental attributes of products are often difficult to assess through their physical characteristics alone. Consequently, consumers must rely on and trust the environmental claims made by brands and manufacturers (Chen & Chang, 2013; Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Testa et al., 2015).

The growing environmental awareness of consumers has encouraged firms to adopt various environmental marketing communication practices. Through their marketing communication efforts, firms increasingly emphasize environmental claims and sustainability-related information. This trend has also contributed to the emergence of the concept of greenwashing. Greenwashing refers to the practice whereby firms exaggerate or misrepresent their environmental responsibility and the environmental attributes of their products in order to appear more environmentally responsible than they actually are (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). The erosion of trust in environmental claims can undermine consumers' confidence not only in specific products but also in broader environmental messages and the firms that promote them. Research indicates that perceptions of greenwashing damage consumer trust, increase scepticism, and reduce the likelihood of green purchasing behavior (Nyilasy et al., 2014).

To build consumer trust, firms increasingly rely on independent certifications, transparent production processes, and verifiable environmental information. In particular, environmental certifications issued by third-party organizations help reduce consumer scepticism toward green products and contribute positively to trust perceptions. In addition, firms are expected to report their environmental practices regularly and support their claims with concrete and measurable evidence (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). As these findings suggest, the widespread availability of environmentally friendly products alone is insufficient; trust in such products must also be continuously maintained and

reinforced. As consumer trust increases, the likelihood that pro-environmental attitudes will be translated into actual purchasing behavior also rises.

4.5 Social Norms

Consumer behavior is not shaped solely by personal needs and economic rationality. Consumers are also strongly influenced by the values, expectations, and behaviours of the social environments in which they are embedded. For this reason, social norms represent a critical variable in understanding consumer habits and purchasing behavior. Social norms refer to individuals' perceptions regarding the extent to which a particular behavior is socially approved or accepted (Cialdini et al., 1990). Because sustainable consumption behavior has broader societal consequences, the influence of social norms is particularly evident in environmental decision-making. When choosing environmentally friendly products, consumers rely not only on their own evaluations but also on the opinions and behaviours of those around them. Consequently, family members, friends, colleagues, and digital communities can directly or indirectly influence environmentally responsible consumption choices (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013).

The literature generally distinguishes between two types of social norms: descriptive norms and injunctive norms. Descriptive norms refer to perceptions of what other people do. For example, an individual may be influenced by observing others engage in environmentally responsible purchasing behavior. Injunctive norms, in contrast, relate to perceptions of which behaviours are socially approved or disapproved. For instance, when sustainable consumption is socially valued and admired, individuals may be encouraged to adopt similar behaviours themselves (Schultz et al., 2007). When members of a community place importance on recycling, renewable products, reusable products, or energy conservation, these priorities can influence the behavior of other individuals within the same social environment. As a result, the likelihood of environmentally responsible purchasing behavior increases within that community. In particular, individuals are considerably more likely to adopt sustainable products when their reference groups prioritize environmental responsibility (Goldstein et al., 2008).

Recent research provides substantial evidence that social norms are highly effective in promoting behavioural change. Therefore, social norms should be utilized as a strategic tool in sustainability initiatives undertaken by businesses, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

5. Conclusion

Sustainable consumption is one of the most powerful tools for addressing global environmental challenges. However, the widespread adoption of sustainable consumption depends not only on the production of environmentally friendly products but also on consumers' willingness to prioritize such products in their purchasing decisions. At this point, one of the most important challenges in sustainable consumption research emerges: the attitude–behavior gap. Research consistently shows that although consumers express environmental concerns and develop favourable attitudes toward environmental issues, they often fail to translate these attitudes into actual purchasing behavior. The debate initiated by scholars such as LaPiere and Wicker was subsequently given a more systematic theoretical foundation through the models developed by Fishbein and Ajzen. More recent studies further demonstrate that consumer choices cannot be explained solely by individual attitudes; rather, they are influenced by a wide range of factors, including social norms, habits, and environmental conditions.

The literature reviewed in this chapter suggests that the primary barriers preventing the conversion of pro-environmental attitudes into sustainable purchasing behavior include high prices, established consumption habits, limited access to green products, lack of trust in environmental claims, and social influences. Therefore, the issue extends beyond a simple lack of environmental awareness. Even when consumers wish to make environmentally responsible choices, a variety of factors may influence their decisions and lead them to behave inconsistently with their stated attitudes.

For this reason, responsibility for sustainability cannot be placed solely on individual consumers and their level of environmental awareness. Businesses should make environmentally friendly products more affordable and accessible while strengthening consumer trust through transparent and credible environmental claims. Public institutions should implement policies and regulatory measures that facilitate and encourage green consumption. Likewise, civil society organizations, the media, and educational institutions should leverage the power of social norms to promote more sustainable lifestyles.

In conclusion, the central challenge within the context of sustainable consumption is not the lack of environmental concern among consumers, but rather the existence of individual, social, and structural barriers that hinder the translation of such concern into actual purchasing behavior. Future research should therefore focus on identifying the conditions under which pro-environmental attitudes are more likely to be transformed into sustainable purchasing behavior and on examining the mechanisms that

facilitate this transition. Developing effective strategies to reduce the attitude–behavior gap will not only contribute to the theoretical advancement of the sustainable consumption literature but will also support the wider adoption of sustainable production and consumption patterns and the development of a more sustainable society.

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