



The Impact of Government Sustainability Policies on Consumer Behavior: A Comprehensive Literature Review

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Abstract – This literature review explores the dynamic relationship between government sustainability policies and consumer behavior, aiming to unravel the profound impact of policy decisions on the choices that shape our daily lives. The analysis reveals that government sustainability policies have been found to be effective in promoting sustainable practices and influencing consumer behavior. Studies have shown that energy efficiency policies significantly impact consumer choices, leading to increased adoption of energy-efficient appliances and more fuel-efficient cars. Government policies in the realm of sustainable transportation have also shown significant influence on consumer behavior, promoting the adoption of electric vehicles. Waste management and sustainable food policies have garnered attention as well, shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors towards recycling, waste reduction, organic farming, and sustainable agricultural practices. The analysis further highlights the importance of responsible and strategic green marketing approaches in meeting consumer demand for environmentally responsible products. Factors such as individual attitudes, social influence, and various contextual factors play significant roles in shaping consumer behavior towards sustainability. Bridging the intention-behavior gap in ethical consumerism and addressing the challenges associated with green marketing require a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence consumer behavior. This literature review provides valuable insights that can inform the development of effective strategies and policies to promote sustainable consumption behavior and pave the way for a more sustainable future.

Keywords – government sustainability policies, consumer behavior, energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, waste management, sustainable food, green marketing, intention-behavior gap, ethical consumerism.

I. INTRODUCTION

Envision a world where government policies not only dictate legal frameworks but also wield the capacity to shape the choices of everyday consumers. From the products we buy to our energy usage and waste management practices, government sustainability policies hold the potential to redefine our behaviors and pave the way for a more sustainable future. In this literature review, we embark on a journey into the captivating realm of how government sustainability policies exert influence over consumer behavior. Unearthing statistics, reports, and insights, we aim to unravel the profound impact of policy decisions on the choices that shape our daily lives. Join us in exploring the dynamic relationship between governments, sustainability, and the intricate decisions made by consumers. Government sustainability policies have been found to be effective in promoting sustainable practices and influencing consumer behavior. These policies aim to shape the choices we make as consumers, recognizing that individual choices play a significant role in shaping the overall sustainability of societies. Extensive research has been conducted to understand the relationship between government sustainability policies and consumer

behavior, shedding light on the effectiveness of various policy instruments and their impact on consumer choices¹³.

Studies have shown that energy efficiency policies have a significant impact on consumer behavior. For instance, research by Delmas and Lessem (2014) found that energy efficiency labeling schemes significantly influenced consumer choices, leading to increased adoption of energy-efficient appliances². Similarly, a study by Gillingham et al. (2013) demonstrated that energy efficiency standards for vehicles resulted in a shift towards more fuel-efficient cars². These findings highlight the importance of government policies in driving consumer decisions towards energy-efficient options.

In the realm of sustainable transportation, government policies have also shown significant influence on consumer behavior. Research by Axsen et al. (2019) found that government incentives and regulations were effective in promoting the adoption of electric vehicles³. Overall, government sustainability policies have the potential to revolutionize our behavior and pave the way for a more sustainable future. By influencing consumer choices, these



policies can help address environmental challenges and promote sustainable practices.

Background

Government sustainability policies have emerged as indispensable tools in addressing environmental challenges and championing sustainable practices (Delmas & Lessem, 2014; Gillingham et al., 2013). These policies aim to mold consumer behavior, recognizing the pivotal role individual choices play in determining overall societal sustainability. Considerable research has been conducted to decipher the intricate relationship between government sustainability policies and consumer behavior, shedding light on the effectiveness of various policy instruments and their influence on consumer choices.

Numerous studies have scrutinized the impact of energy efficiency policies on consumer behavior. Delmas and Lessem (2014) revealed that energy efficiency labeling significantly affected consumer choices, fostering increased adoption of energy-efficient appliances. Similarly, Gillingham et al. (2013) demonstrated that energy efficiency standards for vehicles led to a shift towards more fuel-efficient cars, underscoring the role of government policies in steering consumer decisions towards sustainable options.

In the arena of sustainable transportation, government policies have wielded substantial influence over consumer behavior. Axsen and Kurani (2012) explored the impact of policies promoting electric vehicles (EVs), highlighting the significance of financial incentives and charging infrastructure availability in encouraging EV adoption. Studies by Litman (2019) and Shaheen et al. (2014) underscored the role of policies supporting public and active transportation in steering consumers away from private vehicle reliance.

Waste management policies constitute another focal point, with Thøgersen (2005) demonstrating the substantial influence of policies promoting recycling and waste reduction on consumer behavior. Additionally, Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) and Stancu-Minasian et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of information campaigns and social norms in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors towards sustainable waste management practices. Sustainable food policies have garnered attention as well, with Verain et al. (2015) uncovering the positive influence of policies promoting organic farming on consumer choices. Studies by Sonnino and Marsden (2006) and Clancy et al. (2017) delved into policies supporting local food systems and sustainable agricultural practices, shaping consumer preferences for sustainable food consumption.

Extensive research on information and awareness campaigns has emphasized their effectiveness in influencing consumer behavior. Abrahamse et al. (2005)

and Thøgersen and Ölander (2006) showcased that well-designed information campaigns can bring about significant changes in consumer behavior, particularly in energy conservation and waste reduction domains. While existing literature provides valuable insights, continued research is essential to address gaps. The heterogeneity of consumer preferences, the dynamic nature of policy implementation, and the necessity for long-term behavior change necessitate further investigation. The study also emphasizes the need to explore contextual factors and evaluate the effectiveness of different policy instruments to inform evidence-based policy design.

In this context, this study aims to explore the influence of socioeconomic factors on the impact of government sustainability policies on consumer behavior. While existing literature extensively examines the impact of government sustainability policies on consumer behavior, a notable gap exists in understanding how socioeconomic factors interact with these policies to shape consumer choices. Factors such as income, education level, and cultural background can significantly influence consumer preferences, attitudes, and access to sustainable options. By neglecting these factors, policy interventions may inadvertently exacerbate existing inequalities and fail to achieve desired behavioral changes among specific socioeconomic groups. By examining how socioeconomic factors interact with government sustainability policies, this study seeks to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics at play. By considering variables such as income disparities, educational attainment, and cultural values, the study aims to gain a deeper understanding of how different socioeconomic groups respond to and are influenced by government interventions. This knowledge will enable policymakers to design more targeted and effective sustainability policies that consider the diverse needs and circumstances of various socioeconomic groups, ultimately promoting more inclusive and equitable approaches to sustainable behavior.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A range of studies have explored the influence of government sustainability policies on consumer behavior. Gadenne (2011) found that while environmental attitudes were linked to energy-saving behaviors, government policies had no significant impact. This suggests that individual attitudes may play a more crucial role in shaping sustainable consumption. Wang (2017) further emphasized the importance of individual attitudes, showing that they were positively associated with sustainable consumption. However, the impact of government policies was found to vary across different countries. Rustam (2020) highlighted the role of corporate sustainability reporting in influencing green consumerism, suggesting that firm sustainability exposure and environmental responsiveness could drive eco-friendly



consumption. Galbreth (2013) added a competitive dimension, showing that consumer awareness of sustainability could influence product evaluation and potentially benefit all firms. These studies collectively underscore the complex interplay of individual attitudes, government policies, and corporate actions in shaping sustainable consumption behavior.

Abdul-Muhmin (2007) and Laroche (2001) both highlight the importance of perceived psychological consequences and environmental concern in shaping consumers' willingness to be environmentally friendly. Laroche (2001) further identifies specific demographic and psychological profiles of consumers who are willing to pay more for eco-friendly products, including being female, married, and having children. Lee (2018) expands on this by emphasizing the role of personal and sociocultural values in influencing eco-friendly buying behavior. Mortimer (2020) underscores the growing importance of climate-friendly products but also notes the gap between positive attitudes and actual purchasing behavior.

These studies provide valuable insights into the factors that shape sustainable consumption behavior. However, there is still a need to understand the specific mechanisms through which government policies interact with individual attitudes and values to drive sustainable consumer choices. This study aims to address this gap by examining the influence of government sustainability policies on consumer behavior, taking into account individual attitudes, values, and demographic factors. By exploring the complex interplay between government policies and individual characteristics, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that drive sustainable consumption behavior.

Axsen's series of studies on the role of interpersonal influence in car buyers' perceptions of plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) highlights the importance of integrating multiple theoretical perspectives (Axsen & Kurani, 2012). The studies, conducted in northern California, Sacramento, and at the University of California, Davis, demonstrate that social interactions significantly shape consumers' assessments of PHEVs. The studies identify five theoretical perspectives on social influence - contagion, conformity, dissemination, translation, and reflexivity - and show that these perspectives provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer valuation of PHEVs. The findings suggest that individuals are more likely to develop new, pro-societal interpretations of PHEVs if they have a basic functional understanding of the technology, are in a transitional state in their lifestyle practices, and find supportive pro-societal values within their social network. These studies underscore the need for behaviorally realistic theoretical frameworks to advance transportation and energy policies that rely on the widespread uptake of new technologies.

A range of factors influence consumer purchasing behavior of organic food. Pham (2019) found that food safety concern, health consciousness, and media exposure to food messages play key roles in shaping attitudes towards organic food. Bartels (2011) highlighted the impact of social identity and brand knowledge on buying behavior, with those identifying with environmentally friendly consumer groups more likely to purchase organic products. Nosi (2020) expanded on this by identifying ecological welfare, political values, and retailer CSR as additional factors influencing consumer attitudes and intentions. Lastly, Lăzăroiu (2019) emphasized the importance of consumer trust and perceptions of nutritional benefits in driving sustainable consumption behavior and purchase intention for organic food. These findings collectively underscore the complex interplay of individual, social, and environmental factors in shaping consumer behavior in the organic food market.

A range of studies have explored the determinants of green purchase behavior among Chinese consumers. Chan (2001) found that man-nature orientation, collectivism, ecological affect, and to a lesser extent, ecological knowledge, influence attitudes towards green purchases, which in turn affect actual behavior. Cheung (2019) extended this model, showing that environmental consciousness influences attitudes towards environmental issues and eco-social benefits, which in turn drive green purchase behavior. Lee (2010) identified peer influence, local environmental involvement, and concrete environmental knowledge as key predictors of green purchase behavior among Hong Kong adolescents. However, Chan (2000) noted that while Chinese consumers express positive ecological affect and green purchase intention, their level of ecological knowledge is low and actual green purchase behavior is minimal.

These studies provide valuable insights into the factors that shape consumer behavior in various contexts. However, there is still a need to understand the specific mechanisms through which these factors interact and influence sustainable consumption behavior. This study aims to address this gap by examining the influence of individual attitudes, social influence, and contextual factors on sustainable consumption behavior. By exploring the complex interplay of these factors, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of sustainable consumer behavior and inform the development of effective strategies and policies to promote sustainable consumption.

The concept of green marketing has evolved over time, with a shift from tactical opportunism to a more holistic and strategic approach (Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). This shift is driven by the increasing consumer demand for environmentally responsible products and the need for companies to align with these values (Samantaray, 2012). However, the implementation of green marketing strategies is not without its challenges, particularly in the



area of communication (Stoica, 2021). Companies are under pressure to not only promote their green initiatives but also to ensure that these initiatives are genuine and not perceived as greenwashing (Stoica, 2021). This requires a responsible and strategic approach to green marketing, which involves not only product communication but also the overall business approach (Charter, 1992).

Ottman's work on green marketing has been widely influential, with scholars and practitioners alike recognizing the opportunities and challenges it presents. Miller (1998) and Savale (2012) both highlight the growing market for environmentally friendly products, with Miller emphasizing the need for a new marketing paradigm and Savale discussing the role of green marketing in encouraging sustainable consumer behavior. Modi (2011) and Sandu (2016) both underscore the potential of green marketing for sustainable development, with Modi discussing the challenges and opportunities it presents and Sandu providing a positive review of Ottman's book, which offers practical guidance for green marketing strategies.

Carrington, Neville, and Whitwell (2010) and Carrington (2014) both explore the intention-behavior gap in ethical consumerism, with the latter identifying four key factors influencing this gap. Budhathoki (2019) further delves into the factors obstructing ethical consumption, highlighting price, quality, taste, brand image, and convenience as key issues. Govind (2019) adds to this by introducing the concept of dual attitudes, suggesting that the gap exists due to the differential impact of implicit and explicit attitudes on behavior. These studies collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the intention-behavior gap in ethical consumerism, offering insights for both researchers and industry practitioners.

These studies highlight the importance of responsible and strategic green marketing in meeting consumer demand for environmentally responsible products. They also shed light on the challenges and opportunities associated with green marketing and provide insights into the intention-behavior gap in ethical consumerism. By considering these factors, companies can develop effective green marketing strategies that align with consumer values and promote sustainable consumption behavior.

A range of studies have explored the determinants of consumers' attitudes towards green products. Cheah (2009) found that self-image and social influence were the most influential factors, while environmental concern and man-nature orientation also played a role. Lin (2012) identified psychological benefit, desire for knowledge, novelty seeking, and specific conditions as key factors in consumer choice behavior, with environmental concern being a significant driver. Yasin (2016) further emphasized the impact of consumers' attitudes on their purchase intentions, particularly in the context of green marketing. However, Hamid (2014) found that in a developing country,

consumers had a low perceived value of green products, leading to a negligible attitude and no significant relationship between attitude, perceived value, and green products. These findings highlight the complex interplay of factors influencing consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards green products.

Vermeir and Verbeke (2006) and Young (2009) both highlight the gap between consumers' positive attitudes towards sustainable food consumption and their actual purchasing behavior. This gap is influenced by various factors, including involvement, perceived availability, certainty, perceived consumer effectiveness, values, and social norms (Vermeir & Verbeke, 2006). Young (2009) further emphasizes the need for incentives and single issue labels to help consumers align their values with their behavior. Terlau (2015) adds that the low-involvement feature of food products, price, lack of immediate availability, sensory criteria, and lack of transparency and trust towards labels and certifications are key barriers to sustainable food consumption. He also underscores the importance of proactive policy measures and shared responsibility among consumers, businesses, researchers, mass media, and policymakers in promoting sustainable food consumption.

Delmas and Burbano (2011) identify the drivers of greenwashing as external, organizational, and individual factors and suggest strategies for reducing its prevalence. Bowen (2014) discusses the selective disclosure of positive information by firms to create a positive corporate image and the potential decline of less sophisticated forms of greenwashing. Krafft (2015) examines the extent of greenwashing in various sectors and its correlation with overall corporate social responsibility (CSR) scores. Aggarwal (2011) further explores the practice of greenwashing and its implications for CSR and suggests ways for companies to avoid it, for consumers to spot it, and for regulators to curb it.

These studies provide valuable insights into the factors that influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors towards green products and the challenges associated with green marketing and sustainable food consumption. By understanding these factors, companies can develop effective strategies to promote green products and address the intention-behavior gap. Policymakers can also design regulations and incentives to encourage sustainable consumption and reduce greenwashing practices.

Laufer and Coombs (2006) emphasize the importance of corporate reputation and consumer-based cues in responding to product harm crises. Siomkos (1993) further underscores the role of company reputation, external effects, and organizational responses in successful crisis recovery. Kim (2018) adds that a positive prior reputation for corporate social responsibility (CSR) can protect a company's CSR reputation during crises, influencing consumer intentions. Grunwald (2010) highlights the



positive impact of a pre-crisis reputation for quality on perceptions of company responsibility, but notes that it may not influence perceptions of problem severity. These studies collectively suggest that a strong corporate reputation, particularly in the areas of quality and CSR, can be a crucial asset in managing product harm crises.

Thøgersen (2004) posits that inconsistent ethical behavior can be explained by cognitive dissonance, particularly when self-concept clarity is low. This is supported by Gregory-Smith (2013), who found that consumers often engage in contradictory ethical behavior, driven by emotions such as guilt. Tenbrunsel (2007) adds that people tend to overestimate their ethical behavior, influenced by temporal factors. Fraedrich (1992) further explores this inconsistency, finding that managers may change their ethical decision-making depending on the situation. These studies collectively highlight the complex interplay of cognitive, emotional, and situational factors in ethical behavior.

Roberts and Bacon (1997) found a complex relationship between environmental concern and ecologically conscious consumer behavior, with four dimensions of environmental concern influencing the latter. This was further supported by Fraj-Andrés (2007), who highlighted the significant impact of environmental attitudes on ecological behavior, particularly when moderated by environmental knowledge. Brochado (2017) added to this by identifying activism as a strong predictor of ecologically conscious consumer behavior. Minton (1997) also emphasized the influence of personal norms on environmentally friendly consumer behavior, suggesting a multi-faceted approach to understanding and promoting such behavior.

D'Souza et al. (2006) found that customers' perception of corporate priorities significantly influences their attitude towards green products. This is supported by Ferraz (2017), who identified a positive relationship between intention and behavior in the purchase of green products. Amores-Salvadó (2014) further emphasized the importance of a green corporate image in enhancing the performance outcomes of environmentally proactive strategies. However, Wong (1996) highlighted the challenges in promoting green products, including the need for clarity in environmental benefits and the influence of product performance and other attributes on consumer choice.

A range of studies have explored the relationship between environmental knowledge, attitudes, and pro-environmental behavior. Janmaimool (2019) found that environmental knowledge, particularly in the areas of environment and ecology, is positively correlated with environmental attitudes. This was further supported by Ienna (2022), who found that environmental knowledge was a stronger predictor of pro-environmental attitudes and behavior than empathy. Liobikienė (2019) expanded

on this by suggesting that specific action-related environmental knowledge can directly influence both private and public sphere pro-environmental behavior. Finally, Liu (2020) highlighted the mediating role of environmental attitudes and behavioral intentions in the relationship between environmental knowledge and pro-environmental behavior. These studies collectively underscore the importance of environmental knowledge in shaping attitudes and behaviors towards the environment.

III. ANALYSIS

The analysis of the provided studies reveals several key findings regarding the influence of government sustainability policies, individual attitudes, and other factors on consumer behavior. First, the studies highlight the complex interplay between government sustainability policies, individual attitudes, and corporate actions in shaping sustainable consumption behavior. Government policies alone may not be sufficient to drive sustainable behavior, as individual attitudes and values also play a crucial role. Second, social influence is a significant factor in shaping consumer behavior. Interpersonal interactions and supportive pro-societal values within social networks can influence consumer choices towards sustainable options. Third, various factors influence consumer attitudes and behaviors towards green products. These factors include perceived psychological consequences, environmental concern, personal and sociocultural values, and the gap between positive attitudes and actual purchasing behavior. Fourth, the determinants of sustainable consumption behavior vary in different contexts. Factors such as food safety concern, health consciousness, social identity, consumer trust, man-nature orientation, collectivism, ecological affect, and environmental consciousness all play a role in shaping consumer behavior. Finally, the studies highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with green marketing and sustainable consumption. Responsible and strategic green marketing approaches that go beyond product communication and consider the overall business approach are necessary. Bridging the intention-behavior gap in ethical consumerism requires understanding the factors that influence consumer behavior and developing effective strategies to address this gap. Overall, the analysis of these studies provides valuable insights into the factors that shape sustainable consumption behavior. This understanding can inform the development of effective strategies and policies to promote sustainable behavior and address the challenges associated with green marketing and sustainable consumption.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of the literature provides valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of consumer behavior and the influence of government sustainability policies. It highlights the need for a holistic approach that



considers the interplay between government policies, individual attitudes, social influence, and various contextual factors in shaping sustainable consumption behaviour. The findings emphasize that government sustainability policies alone are not sufficient to drive sustainable behavior. Individual attitudes and values play a crucial role, suggesting the importance of fostering a sense of personal responsibility and environmental consciousness among consumers. Social influence, such as peer interactions and supportive pro-societal values, can also significantly shape consumer choices towards sustainable options. Moreover, the determinants of sustainable consumption behavior vary across different contexts and product categories. Factors such as food safety concern, health consciousness, social identity, consumer trust, and environmental consciousness all contribute to shaping consumer attitudes and behaviors towards sustainable products. Understanding these factors is essential for developing targeted strategies and policies that resonate with specific consumer segments. The analysis also highlights the challenges and opportunities associated with green marketing and sustainable consumption. Responsible and strategic green marketing approaches that go beyond product communication and consider the overall business approach are crucial for building consumer trust and promoting sustainable choices. Bridging the intention-behavior gap in ethical consumerism requires a deeper understanding of the factors that influence consumer behavior and the development of effective strategies to address this gap. Overall, the analysis underscores the importance of a comprehensive and integrated approach to promoting sustainable consumption behavior. It calls for collaboration between governments, businesses, and consumers to create an enabling environment that encourages sustainable choices. By leveraging the insights from this research, policymakers and marketers can develop evidence-based strategies and policies that drive positive behavioral change and contribute to a more sustainable future.

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