

Sustainable Food: Reasons for the Attitude Behavioral Intention Gap among Consumers in Sustainable Consumption

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ABSTRACT

Sustainable consumption is a popular trend today. The formal introduction of the term "sustainable consumption" began at the 1994 Oslo Symposium. Sustainable consumption basically refers to the use of natural, environmentally friendly, and recyclable green resources to serve society, protect the environment, improve quality of life, without affecting the lives and needs of future generations, while meeting the basic needs of humanity. The Chinese government is also actively promoting and deploying research and deployment on sustainable consumption. However, the research and practice process of sustainable consumption in China is not synchronized with developed countries. Compared to developed countries that started deploying and implementing the concept of sustainable consumption earlier, China's economic development stage is slightly behind developed countries, so the policy deployment and implementation of sustainable consumption in China was relatively late. The efforts towards sustainable development will benefit all of us. In the context of the development of sustainable consumption, the sustainability of food is a new industrial model of particular concern today. Sustainable food is cultivated and developed in ecological organic agriculture, and its continuous innovation and development help provide market opportunities for traditional agricultural farmers. The sustainability of food is committed to creating a resilient food system, achieving ecological species diversity and harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

KEYWORDS

Sustainable consumption; Sustainable food; Green food; Attitude-behavioral intention gap

1. INTRODUCTION

In the post pandemic era, consumers are gradually returning to a normal state of life. However, compared to before the epidemic, consumers' consumption views have changed. People are beginning to reflect and change their consumption habits, tending towards rational consumption and pursuing a more ecological, green, healthy, and sustainable lifestyle. Consumers believe that sustainability is important for making positive contributions to society, and this trend will persist for a long time. So far, in sustainable consumption, research on attitude behavior gap has been the driving factor, key moderating factor, and analysis of phenomenon explanation techniques. However, most of the research has been one-sided on green fashion products, with a small portion focused on the purchase of sustainable products. This study conducts an in-depth analysis of the reasons for the attitude behavioral intention gap among consumers towards sustainable food in sustainable consumption through the hypothesis method.

1.1. Research Background and Significance

1.1.1. Research background

The emergence of technology as a facilitator of human life has come at a price. At the same time of social development and economic prosperity, the environment is affected by human activities and climate change. Agriculture and the pressure to produce goods faster and cheaper are major contributors to biodiversity loss. Resource-intensive food production relies heavily on inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides, and sophisticated irrigation and energy systems, which means there is constantly less wild space for other creatures we share the natural world with - be they birds, mammals, insects, or microbes. At the same time, political and economic structures make land a burden for farmers. In the current era of development, the global food system still has many drawbacks and is unsustainable. The unsustainable food system has led to the consumption of a large amount of resources and environmental damage, as well as the misuse of arable land and the indiscriminate use of water resources, resulting in ecological damage. People's pursuit of sustainable and healthy living has led to issues of food waste and overnutrition. Many reports point out that encouraging people to have healthier dietary structures is an important foundation for improving the sustainability of food systems, while also improving economic and ecological efficiency to ensure their transformation. Key findings from sustainable consumption research show that although consumer attitudes towards the concept of sustainability are positive, individuals rarely adhere to sustainability rules in their daily lives, a phenomenon known as the attitudinal behaviour gap. So far, the research on the attitudinal behavior gap is its driving factors, key moderating factors, analysis of phenomena and interpretation skills, most one-sided research on green fashion products, a small part of the sustainable food purchase. Therefore, this study focuses on the causes of consumers' attitudinal behavioral intention gap towards sustainable food in sustainable consumption.

1.1.2. Research significance

Sustainable development is not only a popular way of life today, but also an attitude towards life. After the epidemic, people often pursue a more ecological, green, healthy, and sustainable lifestyle, emphasizing rational green consumption. If people can produce and process food more efficiently and with higher quality, it will help reduce costs, save food resources, and solve the global food and clothing problem. The sustainability of food can greatly stimulate people's purchasing desire. While pursuing basic needs, people are willing to pursue greener, healthier, more stylish, and environmentally friendly foods to meet their own needs. Clementine O'Connor, member of UN Environment's Sustainable Food Systems programme, said: "The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed flaws and barriers in the global food system. We now have an opportunity to 'rebuild for the better' and redesign how we grow, harvest, sell and eat the fruits and gifts of nature." Transforming our food systems will not only help restore biodiversity and habitats, but will also lead to more market opportunities for smallholder farmers. The commitment to food sustainability is to create a resilient food system that achieves ecological species diversity and harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. This includes: reducing food waste and loss; Promoting sustainable agriculture and food production practices; Ensuring equitable access to food; Improve nutrition and food security for all.

1.2. Research Ideas and Methods

1.2.1. Research thought

This paper aims to explore the causes of consumers' attitudinal behavior gap in sustainable food through the method of hypothesis research. The objectives of this paper are: (1) To understand consumers' awareness of sustainable food. (2) Understand consumer demand for sustainable food. (3) Analyze the factors that affect consumers' attitude toward sustainable food (4) Analyze the reasons for consumers' attitudinal and behavioral gap toward sustainable food.

1.2.2. Research method

The analysis in this paper is mainly obtained through literature research and fake methods, which provides an effective basis for understanding the current research on consumers' cognition status and purchasing ability of sustainable food.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

2.1. The Concept of Sustainable Consumption

The concept of sustainable consumption originated from the theory of sustainable development, which was put forward in a report of the World Union for Nature and Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1980. Subsequently, the United Nations Programme further explained the concept of sustainable consumption in its seventh Cleaner Production Conference: In other words, in the whole life cycle of products or services, the use of natural resources and toxic materials and the generation of waste and pollutants should be minimized to meet the basic needs of consumers for services and products, and bring high quality of life without endangering the needs of future generations. Based on its definition, the concept of sustainable consumption can be seen that should include the following connotations: First, highlight the theme of development and emphasize the sustainability of development. The sustainable consumption concept is characterized by thriftiness and environment-friendly consumption concept. On the one hand, thrift should be advocated in production and living consumption so as to mitigate the unnecessary consumption of resources in production and life and improve the utilization efficiency of resources to the maximum extent. On the other hand, it is required to minimize the generation of waste and the discharge of harmful substances in the process of production and life, in order to minimize the pollution caused by waste and waste to the ecological environment, and achieve the purpose of protecting the ecological environment. The characteristics of sustainable consumption indicate that in the process of human social development, the maximum limit of development is not to exceed the carrying capacity of the earth's own resources and natural environment, and development cannot be used as a reason to disturb the order of the dynamic balance of regional and even the entire earth ecosystem, and its characteristics emphasize that development must be sustainable. Second, the fairness of interpersonal relations, including intergenerational and intra-generational content. Intergenerational equity means that the current and future generations have the same development opportunities in terms of development and consumption in social development, while intra-generational equity means that the development and consumption of one part of the current generation should not cause damage to the interests of another part. Third, according to the definition of sustainable development, the sustainable consumption concept can be seen that should be a "moderate" consumption concept and rational consumption concept. The so-called moderate consumption concept refers to the consumption with the basic limit of satisfying people's survival needs and development needs, while rational consumption refers to the consumption with the goal of satisfying people's rational consumption needs. The various needs of human beings are multi-level and multi-type needs, and the consumption needs of human beings can be divided into perceptual needs and rational needs from the perspective of philosophy. Perceptual demand generally refers to the consumption needs formed by the influence of different social cultures, customs and preferences. Among these emotional needs, some are the real and reasonable needs of human beings, while others are false and unreasonable needs, and some are even harmful needs. And these false, unreasonable and even harmful emotional needs are what we should avoid. Generally speaking, rational needs refer to the basic needs to satisfy people's own survival and development, which are real, reasonable and limited needs. The research of some foreign scholars shows that the pursuit of infinite emotional needs is one of the most important reasons for ecological destruction. Therefore, the sustainable consumption concept must also be a moderate and rational consumption concept [1].

2.2. Factors Influencing Sustainable Consumption

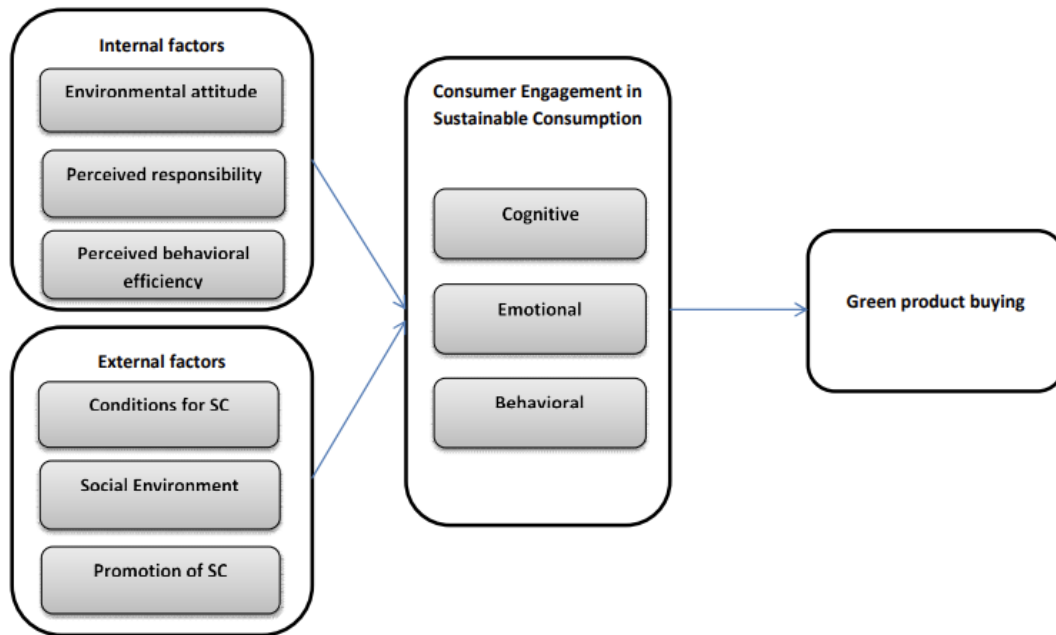


Figure 1. Research frame

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In the study of Louis Lundblad and Ian A. Davis, the influence of internal factors and external factors on green product purchase fully mediates consumer participation in sustainable consumption, and external factors are shown to have a significant positive impact on consumer participation in sustainable consumption. Internal factors have a stronger direct influence on consumer engagement than external factors [2].

2.3. The Relationship Between Behavioral Intention and Attitude

Implicit attitude and explicit attitude have great influence on sustainable consumption behavior intention. Implicit attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative cognition or response to something, unconsciously attributed to a certain past experience, and characterized by spontaneity and uncertainty. Explicit attitudes are defined as those that can be consciously distorted through self-reporting; People can report conscious control and conscious evaluative responses. Specifically, for convenience purchases, explicit attitudes are more effective in predicting behavioral intentions. For purchasing products, implicit attitude is more effective in predicting consumers' purchase intention. Gender and other background variables affect the preference of implicit attitude and explicit attitude towards environmentally friendly products and the level of sustainable consumption behavior intention. This study found that women, highly educated people, high income people and married people had higher preference for both implicit attitude and explicit attitude towards environmentally friendly products and their intention of sustainable consumption behavior than men, low educated people, low income people and single people [3]. Vermeer, Ellis, and Wim Viebeck note in their research that as a fast-selling, low-intervention commodity, the product has several attributes that consumers care about: price, brand, convenience, packaging, ingredients, taste, and perhaps the presence of credible attributes such as sustainability. We investigated the impact of individual and contextual characteristics (i.e., engagement, perceived availability, perceived certainty, PCE, values, social norms) on consumer attitudes and intentions towards sustainable products [4].

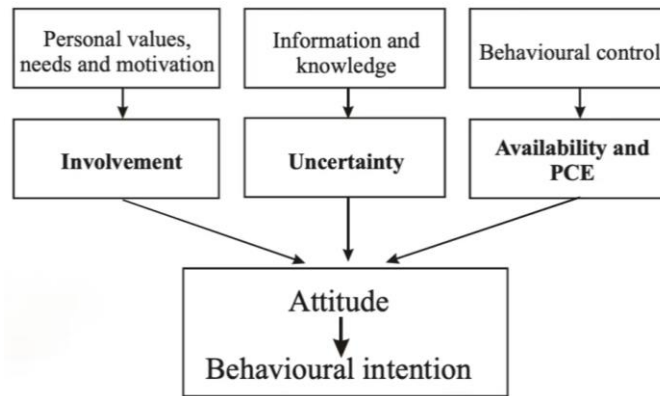


Figure 2. Behavioural intention frame

2.4. Difference Analysis of Sustainable Consumption Attitude and Behavior

In terms of the differences in attitudes and behaviors of sustainable consumption, there are few domestic studies, which are mainly in the stage of theoretical discussion. Regarding the phenomenon of differences in attitudes and behaviors towards sustainable consumption, some researchers believe that consumers may exaggerate their positive attitudes towards sustainable consumption in order to cater to social norms and establish a good personal image. In self-report surveys, consumers' enthusiasm for sustainable consumption is over-reported, leading to a larger gap in subsequent sustainable consumption behavior [5, 6]. Some scholars believe that consumers' wrong estimation of the actual consumption environment will also expand the differences in sustainable consumption attitudes and behaviors [7]. Another type of explanation focuses on the limitations of behavioral models commonly used in research: Many studies use behavioral models and quantitative methods to conduct experiments on environmentally friendly clothing or slow fashion to study sustainable clothing consumption behavior, and find out the factors that affect the transformation of ethical attitudes into behaviors through model building [8]. However, in fact, researchers often use "attitude - behavioral willingness" instead of "attitude - behavior", which obviously cannot fully cover the complex process of sustainable consumption attitude - behavior. Research shows that becoming a sustainable consumer is a slow process of change. When consumers are interested in ethical issues, they do not act immediately but change their behavior at a certain stage, and the conditions and obstacles for the transformation of sustainable consumption behavior are different at each stage [9, 10].

3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Combined with the purpose of this study, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Consumers' perceived responsibility has a significant impact on attitudinal and behavioral differences;

H2: Social environment has significant influence on individual attitudinal and behavioral differences;

H3: SC condition has significant influence on attitudinal behavior difference;

H4: Perceived availability has a significant impact on attitudinal and behavioral differences;

4. EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH DESIGN

After literature review, the scale is developed by means of hypothesis reasoning.

Table 1. The research food sustainable consumption attitude behavior

Food sustainable consumption attitude behavior		
No.	variate	Project
1	attitude	It is necessary to implement sustainable food consumption behavior
2	behavioral intention	Want to participate in sustainable food consumption behavior
		Have engaged in sustainable food consumption behavior
		Have family/friends around you to engage in sustainable food consumption behaviors
3	Perceived responsibility	Will be conscious of sustainable food consumption behavior
		Will regularly carry out sustainable food consumption behavior
		Implementing sustainable food consumption behavior is desirable and popular
4	social environment	Have family/friends around to promote sustainable food consumption
		The local government has promoted the sustainable consumption of food
		Whether people around them value sustainable food consumption
		Sustainable consumption of food is a civilized trend in society
		Social media will actively promote sustainable food consumption behavior
5	SC condition	Will focus on legalizing its sustainable food production conditions
		Will be concerned about the environmental hygiene of its sustainable food
		Will look at its sustainable food business license
6	Perceived availability	Have a good feeling about sustainable food consumption behavior
		We believe that sustainable food has its shortcomings
		What are the improvement aspects of sustainable food

The scale reads as follows: attitude, behavioral intention, Perceived responsibility, social environment, SC condition, Perceived availability, which in turn has an impact on food sustainable consumption attitude behavior.

5. RESULT

Consumers' willingness to purchase sustainable food is influenced by various factors, and most of them are in a state of low motivation. Consumers do not have a clearer understanding of sustainable food and will not spontaneously engage in sustainable food consumption. They will screen their hygiene, safety, standards, and other SC conditions more strictly. However, at different levels of development in different countries, the policies towards sustainable consumption vary, resulting in differences in consumer attitudes and behaviors, which require further research. Analyzing the reasons for the attitude behavioral intention gap among consumers in sustainable consumption from multiple factors, with a focus on food, is of great significance for the sustainable development of enterprises, society, and even the world today.

6. CONCLUSION

Clarifying the reasons for the attitude behavioral intention gap among consumers in sustainable food can help the country better implement policies, implement sustainable living in the future, and achieve harmonious coexistence between humans and nature. The improvement of enterprise value and social environment quality has positive significance. So far, most of the research on attitude behavior gap has been one-sided in green fashion products, with a small portion focused on the purchase of sustainable products. This article mainly focuses on innovative research in sustainable food. However,

a comprehensive analysis has not been conducted on the impact of various factors on the willingness to purchase sustainable food, including factors related to price sensitivity, which still need to be studied. Relevant improvement measures can be proposed for enterprises, countries, etc. based on the reasons, to supplement and improve.

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