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Cultural and Social influences on sustainable living habits

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Abstract

The true understanding of how such changes in consumer behaviour could be encouraged, and the complex relationship between socio-cultural factors and sustainable consumption will be examined. By paying empirical attention to socio-cultural factors, economic aspects, and ecological imperatives, the ideals behind sustainable consumption are vital in striking a balance between social, economic, and ecological needs. For that reason, the study selects three key socio-cultural dimensions for analysis social norms, cultural values, and social influence. Social norms are the pressures to conform to societal expectations for acceptance and avoid sanctions. The alignment of consumption practices with these social norms ensures people maintain their acceptance in the general society. Values, more so those that align around environmental and social responsibility, drive pro-sustainability consumption behaviour, and materialist values hinder it. This paper is a critical look at how cross-cultural differences shape consumption patterns between societies globally. Peer influence and consumers' need for affiliation sit at the centre of defining consumer choices. For instance, the force of family, friends, and opinion leaders within individual social networks generates diffusion and spreads sustainable behaviours. The book stresses the role of communication and social media, as such outlets can amplify the influences mentioned. Finally, for behavior to be altered permanently, it is important to assess mechanisms through which information diffuses, social learning occurs, and innovation diffuses. It articulates a strategy for the promotion of sustainable lifestyles by synthesizing socio-cultural theories and sustainability agendas while it spells out confronting complexities of consumerism and-overcoming contradictions therefore confounding consumption versus sustainability.

Keywords: Sustainable consumption, socio-cultural influences, behavior change, social norms, cultural values, sustainable lifestyles

1. Introduction

In the fight against all the growing threats from the environment, knowledge of how to promote sustainable consumption is becoming ever more crucial. Sustainable consumption is defined as the use of goods and services in a manner that fulfills the present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It took a look at the factors in the socio-cultural environment that influence consumer behavior and how these influences may be used to improve consumer support for sustainability. This paper reflects on the intricate intertwining that lies between socio-cultural dimensions and sustainable consumption. The three main research areas here are social norms, cultural values, and social influence. Social norms are expectations derived from external sources that guide behavior. Such norms tell what is accepted or not accepted of the community. Most of the consumption practices are normative in nature in many societies, including India. Such alignment maintains social acceptance and prevents sanctions. Where children often develop norms with regards to segregation of waste and energy conservation, as society expects them to adopt these norms. Understanding how these norms come to be and are rendered resilient might be indispensable in the development of strategies to support positive changes in sustainable behaviors.

Cultural values also set the consumption pattern. For example, environmental stewardship, social responsibility, or respect for nature promotes pro-sustainable behavior. Materialistic values are antithetical to the latter they lead to overconsumption and degradation of the environment.

This paper shall look into how cultural values influence sustainability practices and, more so, which differences exist across different societies in various aspects of sustainability. An exploration of cross-cultural differences will even more fully prepare us to understand how to adjust the sustainability strategy for different cultural contexts. Social influence stemming from the impact of family, peers, and opinion leaders also has an effect on consumer behavior. Peer pressure and the need for social belonging have immense influences on choices and practices. Digital media amplifies such effects that make it easier for sustainability messages to reach wider audiences hence making a much larger difference. This paper addresses the role of social networks in the diffusion of sustainable behaviors, again based on communication strategies and social media as tools for integrating behavior change over time. Informed by insights synthesized from these dimensions of social culture, this paper outlines strategies to encourage lifestyles that are more sustainable. Doing so, it will approach the issue of contradiction between consumerism and sustainability and throw light on mechanisms of information diffusion, stimulation of social learning, and innovation generation as a means of contributing towards broader societal change. Understanding these factors is, therefore, very important in developing effective interventions that balance social, economic, and ecological needs that would eventually support a more sustainable future.

2. Socio-cultural dimensions of sustainable consumption

Understanding socio-cultural dimensions relevant for explaining environmentally responsible behavior through changes in consumption patterns is very important. Social norms, cultural values, and social influence all play their part in how people consume things in India. This section extends on how those type of factors operate in terms of influencing sustainable consumption and how they are thought to actually influence behavior.

1. Social Norms: Impact of Expectations from Society on Behavior

Social norms are the unwritten rules of a society dictating behavior. They impact the way people behave and act by determining what is right and wrong in society. What is going on with the social norms that guide consumption in India is that it has started adopting more sustainable behaviors, with increased environmental awareness and community values. There is, for instance, a marked increase in expectant attention among society members toward recycling wastes and the use of energy-saving appliances, leading to conforming to such norms. Social norms affect many daily activities and behaviors. For example, the notion of saving the environment from plastic use gave rise to the reuse of bags and containers in towns. Just like in the townships, rural area adaptations on saving some resources, including harvesting rainwater, are enriched and evolved according to ecological conditions. Such norms assist individuals in engagement practices toward sustainability and may result in greater green behavior adoption.

1.1 Compliance with social norms in quest for acceptance

Humans comply with social norms for acceptance and to avoid social sanctions. For instance, In India, the word of the community and relatives carries a lot of weight;

compliance with the consumption habits that are expected by society will have one awarded better social position. One would reasonably expect many Indian families to increasingly expect consumers within their homes to compost and reduce use of energy. Individuals who embrace the values create a subculture, more than ensuring sustainability in the environment, ensuring social acceptance in their communities.

1.2 Norms illustrative examples of driving sustainable practices

Many Indian norms are highly encouraging of sustainable consumption. One more strong practice within the environment is that of recycling and waste segregation. Many communities have set community norms for the segregation of bio-degradable and non-biodegradable waste, symbolizing a social principle of keeping the surroundings clean. Another increasing trend of norms is with respect to energy conservation, marked by the adoption of energy-efficient appliances and schemes of solar energy. All these trends support greater values in society and help lessen the fallouts environmentally.

2. Cultural Values: Role of environmental and social responsibility values in promoting sustainability

Cultural values set most of the values in relation to sustainability. In India, maintaining the environment and ensuring social responsibility has been a deeply amalgamated cultural and religious practice. The principles of Hindu philosophies also believe in the sanctity of nature and that all living organisms are strictly interconnected. This sense of responsibility toward environmental conservation creates undertakings such as planting trees, conserving water, and guarding wildlife. The social responsibility aspect of the culture also drives sustainable consumption. Obligations to community well-being and the exploitation of natural resources inspire behavior that would lead to environmental sustainability. The "Ahimsa" (non-violence) tradition even goes further to protect the environment as one should not cause harm and live sustainably. Such values create a sustainable culture and shape individual and group behavior.

2.1 Effects of materialistic values on inhibit sustainability

Although materialistic values are generally challenges to sustainability, values such as environmental and social responsibility can foster sustainability. Fast consumption and consequently pollution threaten the environment in rapidly changing statures of urban areas. The growing trend concerning luxury goods, fast fashion, and disposable items generally testify to cultural drift towards materialism. These are at cross-purposes with traditional virtues of simplicity and frugality. Materialistic values may come into conflict with attempts to promote sustainable consumption through the adoption of a short-term rather than a long-term orientation in terms of the satisfaction of environmental sustainability. For example, in order to increase demand for expensive consumer electronics and commodity fashion products, more resources will inevitably be extracted and waste produced. Thus, materialism and sustainability will need to be reconciled together if a balanced approach to consumption is to be promoted.

2.2 Consumption Patterns and Cultural Differences

Cultural variations in India lead to heterogeneous consumption patterns within regions as well as between other community groups. While there are still some practices that give way towards sustainability in some parts, a little more modern consumerism prevails in other areas. For example, in the southern Indian regions, organic farming and sustainable agriculture are important traditions shrouded within attitudes in culture that celebrate harmony with nature. On the other hand, a metropolitan zone is one which has high rates of consumption and waste because of the high growth rates of its economy as well as of the urban lifestyle. Understanding these cross-cultural differences is critical to the design of effective sustainability strategies. Interventions, therefore, will be more effective when tailored to local cultural values and consumption patterns, thus enhancing the likelihood of adoption of sustainable practices at broader levels.

3. Social Influence

3.1. Family, Peer, and Opinion Leadership Influences on Consumer Choice

There is considerable social influence in buying decisions of products in the Indian market. Family, friends, and opinion leaders exert significant pressure on an individual to follow particular behaviors. In many Indian families, involvement with consumer activity such as using 'green' products or ecologically friendly habits is influenced by expectation from the family members and local community practices. Having a role model and leaders from a community that promotes sustainability can further enhance these attitudes.

3.2 Peer pressure and need for social belonging as behavior drivers

A. Need for social belonging and peer pressure

Need for social belonging is one of the strongest drivers of adopting sustainable behaviors, whereas peer pressure can also be an influential factor in this regard. In India, social networks are necessary to achieve validation and knowledge related to consumption choices. When social behaviors to sustainability are adopted in groups, newcomers to such groups are more likely to adopt those behaviors to assimilate with the group standards and be accepted. For example, when the class action of a community is for waste reduction and more recycling, individuals are likely to participate in it in order to raise their situational fit and avoid exclusion from the group.

B. Role of Digital Media in Amplifying Social Influence on Sustainability

Digital media provides a core source for social influence and sustainable consumption because of social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, which allow information dissemination as well as environmental issues awareness. Through their influencers, bloggers, and campaigns on the internet, public perception as well as attitudes toward environmentally friendly behaviors are shaped. Directly, through their digital media, India has made it easier for the sustainability message to reach very large audiences and popularize the culture of environmental consciousness. Social media campaigns about reducing plastic waste, consumption of energy, and sustainable fashion have brought popularity, hence increasing public engagement and action. Sustainability advocates can only

reach out more widely and create wider impact through digital media—the positive change cascading across the most diverse social networks.

3. Mechanisms for Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles

Promotion of sustainable lifestyles calls for a multi-faceted approach utilizing several mechanisms of behavior change. This part explores some of the key mechanisms that boost sustainable consumption by using communication and information diffusion, social learning and role modeling, and innovation diffusion.

1. Communication and Information Diffusion: Media and social forums for the promotion of sustainability awareness

It is through the dissemination of knowledge about sustainability issues that the masses can be informed and motivated for behavior change. Different types of media from broadcasting to social platforms, can be used in disseminating information on sustainable practices and environmental issues. Today, just as much as ever before, traditional mediums like television, radio, and print are complemented by newer digital mediums, like social media platforms and blogs, as effective tools for spreading messages for sustainability. In India, there are several channels that have been used for awareness building. This includes public service campaigns and advertisements to raise public consciousness on issues such as proper waste disposal, conservancy of water, and energy efficiency. The slogans and picture content are often extremely powerful and leave a strong message with the people, resulting in all-around consciousness and efforts.

Social media, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, offers audiences a dynamic and interactive mode of communication. Such platforms can share information rapidly; thus, social media engagement facilitates easy conversations between organizations and individuals. Social media campaigns can employ hashtags, challenges, and influencers for amplification. For example, the social media campaign "Beat Plastic Pollution" has received huge attention to promote awareness about plastic waste and motivate people to lessen the use of plastic. Further, social media can facilitate grassroots movements and community-based initiatives. Grassroots and local initiatives of people and groups can air their experiences, successes, and challenges through their vehicles in adopting sustainable practices. This approach creates a sense of community and collective responsibility, encouraging others to emulate the said practices.

2. Social Learning and Role Modeling: Learning sustainable behaviors by observing role models

Consequently, social learning is an important element in the foundation of a sustainable way of life. Humans learn and act in response to observation and imitation. People observe, imitate, and have new behaviors from role models whom they believe are capable of demonstrating such behaviors. It includes celebrities, community leaders, or peers who appear good achievers at doing things more sustainably. In India, role models have much to do with doing the right thing to sustain. The best example is celebrities talking about issues with the environment around their communities, such as Priyanka Chopra, who talks about global environmental campaigns. They get their followers as

well as others who have aspects of influence on them to be like them in such behavior. Role models actually use their arena to sensitize their audiences on sustainability issues and encourage them to do the right thing.

Role modeling also takes place in the community. The Indian village and neighborhood have experienced leaders living sustainably through agriculture or water conservation as role models for others. Their behavior demonstrates them spreading sustainable practices, making their fellows emulate the action. Community-led initiatives include organic farming cooperatives and waste segregation programs operating as examples of how to bring sustainability into daily life. Social learning via role models is further motivated by the desirable outcomes attached to sustainability. Thereby, from this perspective, if individuals who serve as role models are perceived to have obtained some form of outcome or reward, an individual's intention to be aligned with similar sustainable trends is most likely to rise. Imitation and reinforcement through such processes create an avenue for sinking in sustainability into society.

3. Innovation Diffusion: Diffusion of Sustainable practice and products toward lasting change

Innovation diffusion is a process whereby new ideas, practices, or products are disseminated through a society. Regarding sustainable lifestyles, innovation diffusion means the acceptance and spread of sustainable practices and technologies. This process will ensure long-term change as sustainable behaviors are institutionally incorporated into the everyday of every individual.

This diffusion of sustainable innovations has been evidenced, particularly in various Indian sectors. For example, renewable energy technologies such as solar panels and wind turbines have seen accelerated adoption in the last few years. Initiatives from the Govt, subsidies, and a change in culture through campaign awareness have prompted these technologies and increased their usage across the globe. More benefits will be seen with their increased adoption and further innovation. Market dynamics and demand from the end consumers also facilitate the diffusion of sustainable products. This is because awareness of environmental issues increases with time, hence most end consumers will ask for eco-friendly products such as biodegradable packaging, organic foods, and energy-efficient appliances. Companies then perceive an opportunity to create or market these sustainable products. This creates a snowball effect where companies, in turn, encourage more uptake of sustainable products through further innovation and development.

Innovation diffusion is encouraged by a variety of mechanisms, such as policy interventions, financial incentives, and education. It is significant in that it calls upon the contributions of governments and other organizational bodies in promoting sustainable practices, such as incentives for adoption, financing research and development, and creating education programs. That make people aware of new innovations. Additionally, cooperative actions by businesses, governments, and NGOs often facilitate dissemination through pooled resources and expertise.

4. Managing the Complexity of Consumerism

Conflict between consumerism and sustainability accounts for one of the most challenging conflicts in promoting

responsible, ecologically sound lifestyles. This chapter explores further complexities involved in consumerism, including models on alternative consumption and approaches towards both social, economic, and ecological balance.

1. Consumerism vs. Sustainability: Conflict between consumerist values and sustainability

Consumerism, or the amassing and consuming of goods and services, usually conflicts with sustainability. The pursuit of material wealth and economic growth tends to generate overconsumption that leads to resource depletion and degradation of the environment. A consumerist society primarily craves instant satisfaction, easy-access convenience, and status, sometimes at the expense of sustainability efforts. In India, on the other hand, rapid economic growth and rapid urbanization have heightened consumerist behaviors. Expanding middle classes with increased disposable income have driven up consumer demand for everything from electronic goods to luxury items. Increases in consumption always produce waste and excessive use of resources, which are negative offsets against attempts to make the world a more sustainable place. The main challenge lies in the conflict between consumerism values and sustainability needs. Consumerism drives economic growth and improves living standards, but it also fuels other more significant environmental issues, such as pollution, climate change, and resource depletion. This is when there needs to be a shift in value and attitude towards consumption from short-term gains toward long-term sustainability.

1.1. Alternative Consumption Models Strategies

There are alternative consumption models, and what has to be done is to highlight environmental and social responsibility, hence inculcating it, and this will address the conflict between consumerism and sustainability. And some of these can be brought about through. Circularity economy is based on the quantification of waste reduction and resource maximization through the means of reuse, recycling, and upcycling. In product design, this circular economy model works by trying to limit the waste and extract fewer natural resources since its concept in designing products for longevity and repair ability and for being recyclable ensures efficiency in regeneration, reuse, and recovery. Initiatives in India, such as recycling e-waste and sustainable fashion, drive into the application of circular economy principles.

1.2 Minimalism

Minimalism is the simplification of lifestyle with minimal stuff and maximum need products. It helps one to stop buying, buy quality over quantity, and make wise consumption decisions. Minimalism can dampen consumerist quests for endless acquisition in a more sustainable living way.

1.3 Shared Economy

The shared economy or collaborative consumption refers to sharing, not owning. The best examples of this model are car-sharing, home-sharing, and other stuff-such as tool libraries-which should increase the production efficiency because it reduces the individual requirements for

ownership, decreases resource consumption, and is more likely to achieve a better, more efficient use of goods.

1.4 Sustainable Product Design

Innovation in sustainable product development, for instance, products that utilize green materials or have low environmental impacts may be a source of change. Sustainable business operations where there is an emphasis on the principles of sustainable design shall ensure operations of business and also determine consumer preferences, thus creating market demand for environmentally sensitive products.

2. Needs Balance

A. Social, Economic and Ecological Priorities Alignment

Social, economic, and ecological priorities should be balanced together for achieving sustainability. This balance is going to provide a sustainable future for the present and the next generations when they will meet their requirements. This balance is particularly crucial in India, where rapid development and economic growth go with significant environmental challenges.

2.1 Social Priorities

The social dimension of sustainability includes social equity and wellbeing. The provision of resources, opportunities, and a healthy environment for all people is the basis of social sustainability. Reduction of social inequality, involvement of the community, and care for all marginalized groups are considered essential toward a common goal of equity and sustainability in society.

2.2 Economic Priorities

Economic growth and development are necessary in the pursuit of improving living standards and bringing prosperity. However, this needs to be achieved in such a way that environmental health and social equity do not suffer. Sustainable economic practices include investment in green technologies, support for sustainable industries, and responsible consumption patterns that assist in harmonizing economic growth with its environmental and social aspirations.

Ecological Priorities. In the long run, ecological priorities would therefore remain long-term protection of the environment and natural resource conservation. Ecological priorities, in fact, include carbon emission reduction, proper waste disposal, biodiversity preservation, and sustainable use of resources. Policies or practices may include activities on renewable energy consumption, conservation programs, and agricultural sustainability, among others.

B. Integrative Approaches

What stands out, though, is the need for integrative approaches in effectively balancing these priorities. Sustainability efforts should not be unrelated to social and economic conditions, for instance. Community-based green programmes which are more cutting-edge across nature at the same time as imprint economies can help solve this simultaneously. Public-private partnerships and inter-sectorial collaboration between governments, businesses and civil society can yield synergies that support sustainable development.

2.3. Policy Frameworks

A government may be instrumental in making policies in such a way that all the agendas that are socially and

economically driven merge with ecologically driven agendas. Long lines of policies that support sustainable practices, embracing green technology, and education for the environment can stimulate systemic changes. Initiatives taken by the Indian Government through Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Mission) and the National Solar Mission are aimed at bringing into balance development agendas with sustainable development needs.

2.4 Consumer Engagement

Consumer involvement in sustainable initiatives is also essential. Educating consumers through choice impact and opportunities for sustainable consumption can create a responsible culture. Consumer awareness programs, sustainability labeling, and green product choice have even empowered consumers to move towards choices that are in line with the larger objectives of sustainability.

5. Conclusion

1. Socio-Cultural Influence on Sustainable consumption executive summary

Socio-cultural factors are complex and very relevant to sustainable consumption. Consumers have been found to be significantly influenced by social norms, which impose expectations on the appropriate practice, for example, recycling and energy saving. The social norms enforce conformity to the societal standards in order to gain social acceptability and avoid sanctions. Cultural values have an impact on sustainability by facilitating or undermining pro-sustainability behaviors. Such values as stewardship for the environment and responsibility toward society promote sustainable practice, while materialistic values may provoke a consumption level that goes beyond what is reasonable limits, which discourages sustainability. Social influence influences the impact in that it works through family and friends to opinion leaders and digital media. They propagate the sustainable practice through personal and public channels. Incorporating these socio-cultural dimensions into strategies would help in effectuating behavior change because they give a detailed view of how individuals and communities can be motivated to adopt and sustain such practices.

2. Recommendations for Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles and Anti-Consumerism

In this regard, some targeted strategies are needed to promote sustainable lifestyles and reduce the intricacies involved in consumerism. First, the social norms and cultural values concerning sustainability need to be strengthened. This can be achieved through campaigns and education that make sustainable practices align with societal expectations and cultural values and thus make them more acceptable and desirable. Second, the proper use of social influence is very crucial. Engage role models, influencers, and community leaders in convincing on sustainability, which will increase the reach and influence for diffusion on sustainability messages. Social media should be embraced as one of the channels in maximizing the diffusion of the messages to society, which would, in turn, stimulate collective responsibility and widespread adoption in sustainable behavior and alternative consumption models like circular economy, minimalism, and shared economy. These models thus offer potential mechanisms for minimizing resource use and waste, hence contributing

towards sustainable development. Social, economic, and ecological balance in policymaking and implementation ensures that efforts placed toward sustainability are comprehensive and efficient to move forward towards a more sustainable future.

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