

Evaluation of Consumerism on Sustainability

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Abstract

The following article sheds light on consumerism and its effects on sustainability within global businesses. The concept of consumerism refers to the socio-economic force that encourages the acquisition of goods and services which are eventually beneficial for business companies. Consumerism is highly influential towards the sustainable development of organisations as consumerism leads to more production. Hence, higher resource consumption reduces the rate of production and waste as well. Therefore, consumerism brings waste management which leads to sustainable development. Secondary methods such as articles, journals, news reports, and others are used for data collection in this study. A large number of articles are identified which provide relevant data about consumerism and its effects. All the results and findings are thematically presented as well as briefly discussed for a better understanding. A total of four themes are created based on the findings in which the results are elaborated where the researcher has achieved the objectives. As a result, it is identified that psychological factors, economic factors, social factors, personal factors, and cultural factors are the specific factors that influence consumerism. Further, consumerism has some positive and some negative impacts on sustainability. The demand of customers enhances organisational sustainability as well as higher sustainability leads to the depletion of natural resources. A brief discussion about this aspect is presented in this particular article.

Keywords

Consumerism, Economic Stimulation, Expensiveness, Profit, Sustainability

INTRODUCTION

Background

Consumerism refers to a specific model for promoting the acquisition and purchase of goods and services in order to enhance personal satisfaction and economic stimulation. This is one of the most significant processes for making businesses more responsible and honest towards their customers by protecting their interests. Rising prices of goods, duplication, adulteration of products, artificial product demand, sub-standard products, consumer exploitation, misleading advertisements, and others are some of the main reasons that consumerism is increasing [1]. The study discusses the potential effects of consumerism on sustainability. It is identified that organisational sustainability is focused on approaches associated with ethics and morale whereas consumerism is focused on solely profit which includes planned obsolescence. The study includes particular methods of data collection and a brief discussion about consumerism and its impacts on the sustainability of business companies.

Aim and objectives

The following article is aiming to evaluate the effects of consumerism on sustainability. Therefore, particular objectives for achieving this aim are,

- To identify the specific factors that have been influencing consumerism
- To understand the connection between consumerism and sustainability
- To elaborate on the positive and negative impacts of consumerism on sustainability

Scope of the study

The study will be able to provide relevant information about the evolution of consumerism as well as the factors that impact business companies. There is a scope that the specific article will be used by other researchers for gaining knowledge about consumerism and its potential effects on sustainability. Apart from that, the study will not only provide knowledge about the positive impacts of consumerism but also the negative effects of consumerism on the sustainable development of companies. Further, the study provides information about the factors that influence consumerism.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Research design

There are two types of research designs used in research studies such as quantitative design and qualitative design. The quantitative design includes "correlational research", "descriptive research", "experimental research" and "causal-comparative research". In contrast, the qualitative design includes "phenomenological research", thematic research, case study, "ethnographic research" and others [2]. The particular article is based on *qualitative design* because the quantitative design is more time-consuming and expensive than the qualitative design. Apart from that, creating themes and evaluating findings makes an article understandable and significant which is another reason for choosing the qualitative design.

Research type

It is mentioned in the previous section that the research will follow the qualitative design for these articles therefore

the researcher needs to choose methods that support qualitative data. Primary and secondary are the two types of research methods which include several types of sources for collecting relevant and topic-related data. Surveys and interviews are the two particular sources of the primary method whereas articles, journals, news reports and others are some of the sources of the secondary method [3]. Both of the methods are capable of collecting relevant data but primary methods are highly time-consuming. Regarding this, surveying people and observing different types of reports leads to the collection of quantitative data as well as interviewing people and observing articles and journals leads to the collection of qualitative data.

Considering this aspect, there are many articles based on consumerism, and reviewing them and gathering information will be relevant yet less time-consuming. In addition to that, the qualitative design is adopted which requires collecting some qualitative data [4]. Therefore, the *secondary methods* are used for gathering some qualitative data related to the following research topic. Secondary methods are easier and simpler than the primary methods which not only enhances the understanding of the researcher but also the readers.

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

The researcher has followed some criteria while selecting articles for data collection. Articles and journals that are published between 2018-2022 as well as based on the topic of consumerism and its potential effects were included. On the other hand, doctoral dissertations and articles published before 218 were excluded from the selected articles. The researcher aimed at collecting only relevant information regarding the research topic and the thesis criteria helped to achieve the aim.

Data analysis technique

Qualitative and quantitative are the two types of methods used for data analysis in research studies. Quantitative methods include statistical analysis and graphical analysis whereas qualitative methods include systematic analysis and thematic analysis [5]. As qualitative data are collected using different secondary sources therefore the findings will be evaluated thematically. *Thematic analysis* of findings is one of the simplest methods of data analysis which requires creating a few themes based on the results and evaluating them [6]. Four topic-related and relevant themes are generated for analysing all the findings regarding consumerism and its effects on sustainability.

RESULTS

Theme 1: Factors influencing consumerism

Consumerism promotes the acquisition of goods or the purchase of goods and services for personal satisfaction. Sometimes consumerism is often confused with capitalism but in economics, consumerism refers to economic policies which promote consumption. Consumerism is criticised widely by individuals who choose different ways of

participating in the economy. Different factors that influence consumerism in an individual are: psychological factors, cultural factors, economic factors, social factors, and personal factors.

Psychological factors affect consumerism the most for increasing consumerism. Human psychology is a major determinant of consumer behaviour and these factors are very difficult to measure. Psychological factors are the most significant factor in increasing consumerism and the factors include motivation, perception, learning, attitude and beliefs [7]. Motivation plays a significant role in consumerism, when a person is motivated enough it affects the buying behaviour of a person and influences consumerism.



Figure 1: Psychological factors of consumerism (Source : influenced by [7])

Perception is the process when a person collects information about a product and interprets information and makes a meaningful image of the particular product and this perception influences the buying attitude. Learning, attitude and beliefs about the product also increase buying attitudes and it is also increasing consumerism in the society. Humans are social beings and they live around the many peoples who influence their buying behaviour of goods and services. Family, reference group, role and status are the most crucial *social factors* which influence the buying attitude and consequently increase consumerism in the society. Cultural factors are also significant to increase consumerism among the individuals [8]. Different cultures, subcultures, and social class are affecting most in influencing buying behaviour of consumers which leads to consumerism.

Personal factors are also important in influencing consumerism in society. Age, income, occupation and lifestyle are the deciding factors of influencing consumerism. Buying habits and consumerism are interrelated and the buying habits of an individual are depending on the *economic factors* of the consumers. An economically strong individual can buy whatever they want to buy [9]. Their psychological,

social and cultural factors are also influenced by the economic factors. Personal income, family income, liquid assets and consumer credits and savings of an individual are the most decisive factors in all economic factors. People with high personal and family income are more capable of buying goods and services and the people with more liquid assets and savings are also spending more on the luxuries.

Theme 2: Connection between consumerism and sustainability

Consumerism promotes the buying of goods and services and it helps to improve GDP growth of country sustainability means meeting the basic needs of people without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs [10]. Consumerism helps the economy to grow faster and improves the development of the country. Consumerism is considered as the fuel of modern economics and it is a socio-economic phenomenon. It is very important for economic growth but it has a huge negative impact on the environment which affects sustainability. Due to the massive usage of goods and services the carbon emission increases which affects sustainability. With increasing consumerism, the companies and brands need to manufacture more goods to meet consumer requirements. It enhances the pollutants and also impacts negatively on the power sources which affects sustainability more.

Consumerism decreases disposal and recycling tendencies among people consequently brands and companies are making their products without considering the repair or maintenance opportunities. Therefore, the usage of environmental resources and power sources is increased due to the high amount of production of goods and consequently it affects sustainability negatively. The solution to overcome the sustainability issues in increased consumerism is developing sustainable consumerism [11]. Sustainable consumerism promotes consumerism but it also tries to reduce the environmental effect of consumerism. Different companies worldwide are using artificial intelligence technologies, and automation technologies to produce a large number of products in a small time frame to meet the consumer needs.

The use of artificial intelligence helps brands and companies analyse the market demand. It also helps them to reduce the demand and supply mismatch which is important to support sustainability. Introducing sustainable consumerism the brands and companies are trying to make more repairable, recyclable and durable products. It helps companies and brands with their waste management and it improves sustainability. Sustainable consumerism will force companies to change strategies of creating goods; the companies are adopting strategies to make goods with longer life cycles. Therefore, it can be stated that consumerism affects sustainability negatively but implementing sustainable consumerism is helpful to improve sustainability. Sustainable consumerism is helpful to take part in the sustainable development of the country's economic growth.

Theme 3: Major causes of consumerism worldwide

Consumerism is a socio-economic force that makes businesses more honest and responsible towards consumers. Consumerism refers to the frequent purchase of goods and services for consumer's satisfaction. The major causes for the evolution of consumerism have been the price rise, adulteration, duplication, artificial demands, substandard products, product risks and misleading advertisements about the products [12]. **Price rise** is the major cause of consumerism among people. Presently the world is facing a price rise among basic consumer goods such as toothpaste, soaps and basic requirements. Brands and companies are increasing their price of goods and services day by day and it creates artificial demand among the people. Occasionally companies give discounts and sales which influence buyers to buy large amounts of products and increase consumerism among the people.

Adulteration is also a major cause of increasing consumerism. Manufacturers are using cheap ingredients mixed with the product for increasing profit. In order to meet the requirements buyers need to buy more products and it increases consumerism in the society. **Product duplication** is also significant for increasing consumerism. Sellers are selling duplicate products to maximise profits. The duplicate product cannot meet the requirements of the consumers and the consumer needs to buy more products that increase the consumerism. Unethical business means are creating **artificial demands** by buying in bulk and hoarding them. It influences consumers' demand for the product and also influences them to buy more products when the stock is available. **Substandard products** are made using low-quality raw materials that influence the buyers to more products to meet their requirements and it increases consumerism in the society.

Misleading advertisements about the product are also a cause for increasing consumerism in society. Different brands are promoting their product with misleading advertisements. They promote the substandard product by misleading advertisements and influence the buying attitude of the consumers [13]. It increases the sales of a product and that is the main reason behind the increasing consumerism in society. **Poor warranty and services** are also a major cause of increasing consumerism. At the time of sale, brands guarantee a good performance of a product but when products become defective they are not giving good warranty services which leads the buyer to buy more products. Different brands are providing very less warranty periods and that is the main cause of the increasing sales of a product. Buyers need to buy more products as the brand is not giving proper warranty services and it increases the consumerism in the society. Hence, it can be stated that the buying attitude of buyers are depending on product quality-related issues. It can affect the economy positively but it has the major sustainability-related issues. Consumerism also depends on the demand and supply of the product and as consumerism has negative effects on the sustainability the companies and

brands all over the world have to introduce sustainable consumerism into the system to improve the sustainability.

Theme 4: Positive and negative effects of consumerism on sustainability

Consumerism is increasing in developed countries rapidly and it also has major effects in the developing countries. Consumerism has positive and negative impacts on the community which is associated with sustainability. The primary positive impacts of consumerism are more industrial production, a higher growth rate in the economy and the availability of more goods and services [14]. Consumerism is related to the frequent buying of goods and services to meet the requirements of the consumers. When consumers are buying more products then the brands and companies have to produce more products and it helps the organisation to improve their revenue and businesses. The development of businesses helps to increase the growth rate of the economy and it improves the development of the country.

Consumerism helps organisations in their business improvement and the business development leads the organisation to focus on sustainability. Consumerism boosts creativity and innovations among businesses. Due to high demand, the revenue of the organisations is increasing and for that reason, the companies are focusing on creativity and innovation which improves customer satisfaction towards any product. Consumerism refers to the buying more products and services by individual buyers and it increases the sales for any company. The high demand of the products encourages the brands to reduce product pricing and introduce discount offers for the people and that is beneficial for the people. Consumerism is very important for the economic growth of a country [15]. Consumerism improves freelancing, entrepreneurship and self-employment. High demand for goods and services in the market encourages people for freelancing and entrepreneurs which improves self-employment and also helps to reduce the unemployment in a country. High demand in goods and services encourages companies to introduce new products. It gives consumers more choices and improves the customer satisfaction with a particular product.

Consumerism has negative impacts on sustainability and it is also a cause of failure in sustainable development programmes. Due to the high demand for the product companies and brands are focusing on the huge production of the products in a small time frame. The increased production in the manufacturing units is also a cause of pollutant emission which increases the pollution rate and affects the sustainability. It negatively affects the sustainable development goals of the organisation and also fails the sustainable development of the country [16]. The high demand of the product due to consumerism leads the companies to make more products in a small time frame to meet the customer requirements. In order to do that companies are not focusing on the product quality and that is the main cause of substandard products. Due to consumerism people are buying more products which include consumer

daily products, electronics items and many more. Therefore, the total wastage on the earth increases and affects the sustainable development negatively. The different organisation fails to manage their manufacturing waste and it increases the pollution and that is the cause of failed sustainable development.

DISCUSSION

The majority of the world's economy is significantly associated with consumerism and its factors. Consumerism can be illustrated as the theory that an individual consumes goods and services in huge quantities. Different economists believe that the spending of consumers stimulates the production of factories and economic growth. On this note, consumerism promotes the product and service consumption of people and it is identified as the major cause of increasing demand in economics. Increasing the revenue of an organisation along with the GDP and GNP of the country are crucial aspects of consumerism [17]. On the other hand, consumerism specifically regulates the sustainable development of the country. Different factors are there that can influence the product and service consumption of individuals and affect sustainable development. Psychological, personal, social, cultural and economic factors as well as different personal factors such as age, income, occupation and lifestyle influence consumerism in the society. People with higher income and luxurious lifestyles tend to spend more on goods and services that in turn increases consumerism. High disposable income of an individual is also regarded as an important factor in increasing consumerism [18].

Beyond these influential factors, there are different causes of consumerism in society. The major causes of consumerism are price rise, adulteration, product duplication and increasing artificial demands. Product quality is the most influential for increasing consumerism. Unethical business owners sell duplicate and low quality products for high profit and these low quality products influence the product consumption of an individual which is considered as the main cause of increasing consumerism. Misleading advertisements of products are also a significant cause for increasing consumerism in the society. Different brands and companies are misleading people with different advertisements which is also a cause for changing buyer's attitudes and that influences the product consumption of people. Consumerism is good for the economy as it helps to increase entrepreneurship and also helps to boost innovation but consumerism affects the environment negatively [19].

In the contemporary days, different factors such as greenhouse gas emissions, household consumption and mass production of goods have placed unprecedented stress on earth and that affects negatively the sustainable development. Green consumer behaviour models are important to improve sustainability. General pro-social attitudes in consumers and green consumption values influence the buying attitude that helps to increase the sustainable consumerism in society [20].

Environment friendly attitudes of buyers influence brands to introduce sustainable raw materials and packing materials and that improves the sustainable development. Therefore, different brands can focus on making recyclable products to improve sustainable development goals. Globalisation and capitalism is increasing worldwide and consumerism is also increasing in society and it influences the environment. Therefore, sustainable consumer behaviour is the only way for overcoming this issue. Sustainable consumer behaviour includes different attitudes of buyers that can improve the sustainable development along with the economic growth of the country.

Balancing the relationship between consumption, widespread environmental awareness, pricing of eco-friendly products and stable living standards are the most decisive factors in changing the sustainable consumer behaviour [21]. Consumerism is important for the economic growth for a country but it can control sustainable development. Therefore, sustainable consumerism is the most effective way to improve sustainable development along with economic growth. Consumerism increases the product consumption which increases the waste production around the world. The domestic waste and manufacturing waste are the most problematic for the planet. The balanced consumption helps to reduce the domestic waste along with the manufacturing waste of manufacturers. By introducing advanced technologies manufacturers can improve their waste management which helps to improve sustainability. Therefore, it can be stated that consumerism has a positive effect on the economy but it also affects sustainable development and that can be mitigated by introducing sustainable consumerism. Sustainable consumerism is dependent on the green consumer behaviour and consumer attitude towards sustainable consumption. Sustainable consumption and consumerism are helpful to improve sustainable development along with the GDP and GNP growth of the country. Consumerism is important for the economy but it affects the environment. Hence, in order to overcome the environmental issues of consumerism the only way is introducing sustainable consumer behaviour among the consumers.

CONCLUSION

Consumerism is related to the excessive consumption of goods and services. It promotes the economic growth of the country but it has a different negative impact on sustainable development. From the discussion it can be stated that consumerism is dependent on the different psychological, social, cultural and economic factors of an individual and these factors help to increase consumerism. High consumerism in the society is harmful to the environment as it increases the product consumption along with the manufacturing of the manufacturer. Increased consumption and production of goods increased the waste production. Therefore, it can be concluded that consumerism cannot be controlled easily. It needs some modification according to the

requirement. By introducing sustainable consumerism, the negative effect of consumerism can be mitigated as well as controlled. Sustainable consumerism helps to reduce waste production on earth and it also helps to improve the sustainable development of the country. Green consumer behaviour models are also important to reduce greenhouse gas production. Green consumer behaviour and awareness about the environment are important for reducing the pollution that can improve the sustainable development. Consumer attitude towards balanced consumption, widespread environmental awareness and price of green and sustainable products are also important for promoting the green consumer behaviour.

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