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Research Article / *Araştırma Makalesi*

CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF SUSTAINABILITY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability is a significant research subject within business studies, and consumer responses are crucial for businesses as one of the stakeholders to whom sustainability will be created and communicated. Although consumers are receivers of businesses' sustainability practices, research in this area remains limited. This study aims to provide a thorough assessment of prior behavioral research on the sustainability perceptions of consumers as a receiver of sustainability. 45 papers acquired using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol were examined through the Antecedents, Decisions, and Outcomes (ADO) framework. An initial descriptive summary was provided, encompassing year, field, journal, and methodology distributions to elucidate trends in these studies. Within the parameters of the ADO framework, perceived sustainability was positioned as a Decision, and analyzed through its antecedents and outcomes in the related papers. Based on findings, implications and a future research agenda were provided within the parameters of the ADO framework. The study findings, implications, and future research agenda are expected to enhance future research and practices regarding perceived sustainability.

Keywords: *Perceived Sustainability, Sustainability Perception, Systematic Literature Review, ADO Framework*

JEL Classification Codes: *M31, M1*

TÜKETİCİ SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİRLİK ALGISI: SİSTEMATİK LİTERATÜR İNCELEMESİ VE GELECEK ARAŞTIRMALAR İÇİN ARAŞTIRMA AJANDASI

ÖZET

Sürdürülebilirlik işletme alanı için dikkat çeken bir araştırma konusunu temsil etmektedir ve sürdürülebilirliğin aktarılacağı taraflardan biri olarak tüketicinin yanıtları işletmeler için önem arz etmektedir. Tüketiciler işletmelerin sürdürülebilirlik çabalarının bir alıcısı konumunda olmasına rağmen, bu alandaki araştırmalar sınırlıdır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, sürdürülebilirliğin bir alıcısı olarak tüketicilere odaklanarak sürdürülebilirlik algısı üzerine daha önce yapılmış davranışsal araştırmaların kapsamlı

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bir değerlendirmesini sunmaktır. Bunu yaparken, Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protokolü vasıtasıyla elde edilen 45 makale; Öncüller, Kararlar ve Ardıllar (ADO) çerçevesi kapsamında analiz edilmiştir. İlk olarak, bu çalışmalara dair trendi anlayabilmek adına yıl, alan, dergi ve metodoloji dağılımlarını içeren bir tasvir sunulmuştur. Sonrasında, ADO çerçevesi kapsamında algılanan sürdürülebilirlik bir Karar olarak konumlandırılıp ilgili makalelerde ne şekilde ele alındığı öncül ve ardılları ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular ışığında, ADO çerçevesi kapsamında çıkarımlar ve gelecek araştırmalar için bir ajanda sunulmuştur. Çalışma bulguları, çıkarımlar ve araştırma ajandasının gelecek algılanan sürdürülebilirlik araştırma ve uygulamaları için katkı sağlayacağına inanılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Algılanan Sürdürülebilirlik, Sürdürülebilirlik Algısı, Sistematik Literatür Taraması, ADO Çerçevesi*

JEL Sınıflandırması: *M31, M1*

1. Introduction

The notion of sustainability and the initiatives undertaken for a more sustainable future are gaining significance. Upon examining the concept of sustainability within the marketing domain, one of the first conceptualizations pertains to sustainable marketing as a marketing approach that yields a net positive impact on society regarding environmental, social, and economic advancements (Kim et al., 2015). This definition indicates that sustainability encompasses three dimensions: environmental, social, and economic. Environmental sustainability entails the preservation and stewardship of natural resources and ecosystems, social sustainability involves addressing society and societal issues, and economic sustainability focuses on generating value and enhancing financial performance.

In the consumption literature, the perception of sustainability at both product and service levels has been a focus of study. For instance, Shih et al. (2024) concentrated on sustainable products and analyzed the perception of three distinct elements of sustainability related to these products. Park & Kim (2016) considered the evaluations of fast fashion and sustainable fashion products together and examined the perceptions of three types of sustainability for these categories. As another example, Wang et al. (2024) focused on luxury products and showed the role of perceived sustainability in consumer desire for luxury and willingness to pay more. Chen et al. (2020) examined the perception of product and service sustainability together in the context of e-retailing.

Tourism is another sector profoundly influenced by the emphasis on sustainability. Iniesta-Bonillo (2016) highlighted that tourist destinations frequently depend on tourism as a principal driver of economic development, yet, inadequately planned development can severely impact natural resources and local communities. Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2019) argued that studies on perceived sustainability in the tourism industry are uncommon, and even the definition of perceived sustainability in this field is ambiguous. For this reason, they proposed a definition for perceived sustainability: the tourist's cognitive-affective evaluation of sustainability policies implemented at a particular destination by managers and destination marketing organizations (p. 178). Currently, there remain perspectives that its definition and scope are ambiguous (e.g., Conti et al., 2023). Vidal-Meliá et al. (2025) highlighted that, within the tourism industry's resource dependency, the integration of sustainability-related issues into

destination management is essential for ensuring the longevity of destinations and meeting the growing consumer demand for sustainability, benefiting all stakeholders.

Research regarding stakeholder perceptions of sustainability, particularly among consumers, remains limited. This is related, on the one hand, to the ongoing uncertainty that exists surrounding the definition of perceived sustainability and, consequently, the comprehension of the breadth of its application based on several different contexts (e.g., Conti et al., 2023). On the other hand, concerns regarding sustainability are taken into consideration whenever firms engage in interactions with both prospective and existing customers, but communication within sustainability reports is still insufficient today (Westin et al., 2024). Lee (2020) highlighted that a company's focus on sustainability will yield long-term success and profitability. As another complexity, the impression of sustainability varies across several product and service categories, yielding disparate findings. For instance, certain studies assess perceived sustainability using a unidimensional sustainability scale (e.g., Khan & Fatma, 2023), but some others evaluate three distinct categories of sustainability independently (e.g, Moliner-Tena et al., 2023). Although certain estimated associations had statistical support (e.g, Moliner-Tena et al., 2023), others do not (e.g., Park & Kim, 2016; Shih et al., 2024).

Recent data indicate that consumers are increasingly prioritizing sustainability, which is influencing many of their behavioral responses. McKinsey & NielsenIQ (2023) indicate that consumers are reallocating their expenditures towards products with ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance)-related assertions, brands of varying sizes that make ESG-related claims experienced distinct growth, no single ESG-related product claim surpassed all others; however, less prevalent claims were generally linked to more significant impacts, and a combination of claims may enhance perceived authenticity.

Considering this gap, the aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the previous behavioral research on perceived sustainability by consumers. Here, the Antecedents, Decision, and Outcomes (ADO) framework is utilized to analyze 45 studies. Through this approach, we provide answers to the following questions:

RQ1: What are the emerging perspectives to handle consumer perception regarding sustainability?

RQ2: What are the key antecedents of consumers' perceived sustainability?

RQ3: What are the key outcomes of consumers' perceived sustainability?

RQ4: What are the critical gaps in research on consumers' perceived sustainability, and what future directions can address these gaps?

This approach offers a theoretical framework for conceptualizing and measuring perceived sustainability, as well as a practical direction for businesses to establish sustainability strategies that are centered on the needs of consumers. By demonstrating the impact of different marketing approaches on consumer perception, as well as the impact of this perception of sustainability on a variety of marketing outcomes, it serves as an important reference point for future marketing research and the development of marketing strategies. When seen in this light, the research not only adds to the expansion of theoretical knowledge but also to the comprehension of the organizational aspect of sustainability practices.

2. Methodology

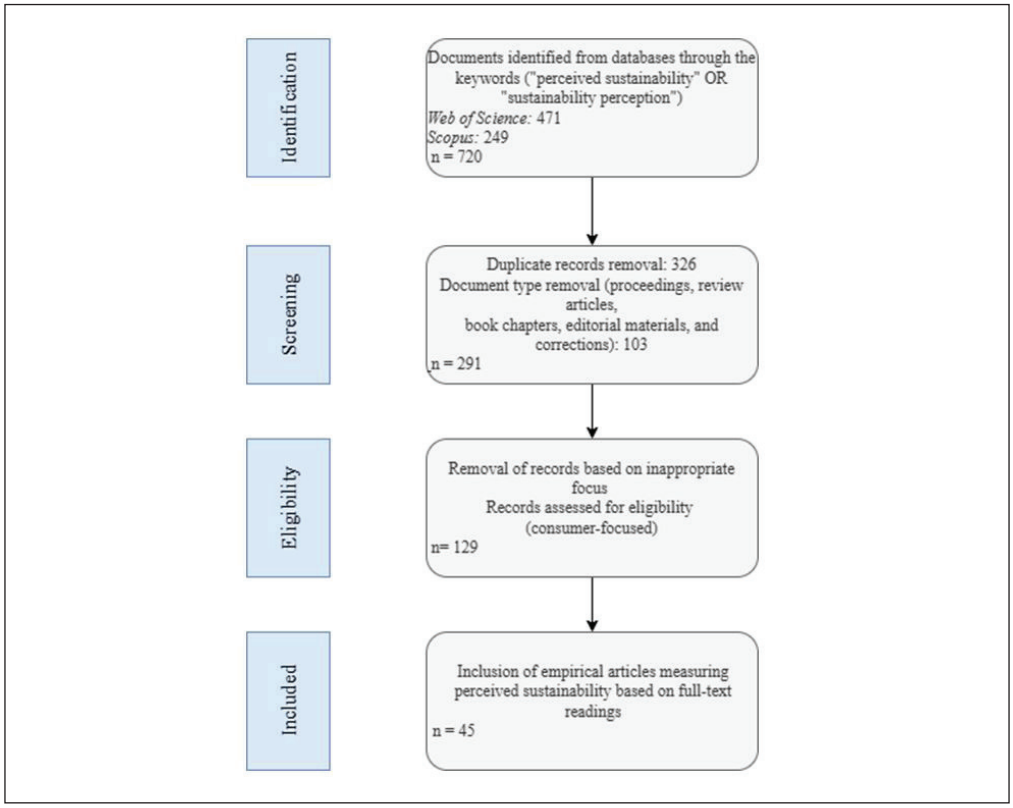
This study employed a systematic review method to investigate literature on perceived sustainability in consumer behavior. This approach necessitates addressing a fundamental question impartially, employing a systematic methodology to collect, describe, synthesize, and report findings pertinent to this inquiry (Khan et al. 2003; Harris et al. 2014). This method elucidates existing knowledge, identifies research gaps, and directs future research endeavors (Paul & Criado, 2020; Khan & Pandey, 2023). This study does a framework-based comprehensive literature review. Per the classification by Paul & Criado (2020), it is a subtype of domain-based review, which is one of the three primary categories: domain-based, theory-based, and method-based reviews. Framework-based reviews enable researchers to examine and categorize emerging themes using established frameworks and are frequently favored for their clearly defined structure, resulting in more effective and informative outcomes (Paul & Criado 2020; Paul et al. 2021a, 2021b; Wolf, 2023). This study specifically delineates the perceived sustainability techniques, antecedents, and outcomes of this construct utilizing the ADO (Antecedents, Decisions, Outcomes) framework (Paul & Benito, 2018). This methodology is recognized for its benefits compared to several other forms of systematic literature reviews (Södergren, 2021; Shah et al., 2025).

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol was employed in this study (Please see Figure 1). This method encompasses the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, offering a systematic framework to guarantee transparency, rigor, and reproducibility in the review process, hence facilitating effective academic study on the issue (Page et al., 2021a; 2021b).

Initially, during the Identification phase, a search was conducted using appropriate terminology on the correct platform. Web of Science and Scopus were selected to investigate perceived sustainability studies. These two databases were chosen for their attributes, including archival capability, comprehensive worldwide research across several disciplines, reliability, journal reputation, prominent publishers, high-quality literature, and frequent utilization in systematic literature reviews (Małecka et al., 2025; Meng et al., 2025; Vyas et al., 2025). The initial search for "perceived sustainability" OR "sustainability perception" was conducted in the Web of Science database, yielding 720 studies. Paul & Criado's (2020) recommendation to search inside article titles, subject terms, keywords, or abstracts was adhered to avoid a large sweep.

In the second step, the Screening phase, a preliminary exclusion was conducted about the document type. Papers from proceedings, review articles, book chapters, editorial materials, and corrections were excluded, resulting in 617 studies remaining. Duplicate studies were also eliminated, and a total of 291 studies were obtained. While it was feasible to exclude the topic area at this juncture (e.g., Aldlimi et al., 2025), no exclusion was implemented for the study area, since we aimed to capture consumer evaluations across all domains. For instance, the choice of the Business category may have obscured t ourist perceptions in the domains of Hospitality, Leisure, and Tourism.

Figure 1: PRISMA Framework of the Study



During the third step, the Eligibility phase, studies lacking consumer perception were excluded. For instance, research involving retail managers and CEOs was omitted. This phase yielded 129 articles.

In the Inclusion phase, a comprehensive evaluation of all research was conducted through full-text readings. Scale development studies and segmentation investigations that failed to provide any antecedents or outcomes were predominantly discarded. To furnish a broad consumer perspective on perceived sustainability, papers examining more particular constructs (e.g., perceived sustainability benefit, perceived sustainability value, perceived visual sustainability, perceived importance of sustainability, perceived packaging sustainability) were also omitted. Consequently, 45 papers were acquired.

In the concluding two phases, two researchers assessed the papers for eligibility and inclusion. The researchers deliberated on the screening procedure and concluded the articles, achieving consensus. The final pool received approval from another researcher who has expertise both consumer behavior research and practice. Following double independent screening, expert opinion was obtained, a consensus was reached on the articles, and the final article pool (n = 45) was reached by bias assessment to enhance quality of the procedure.

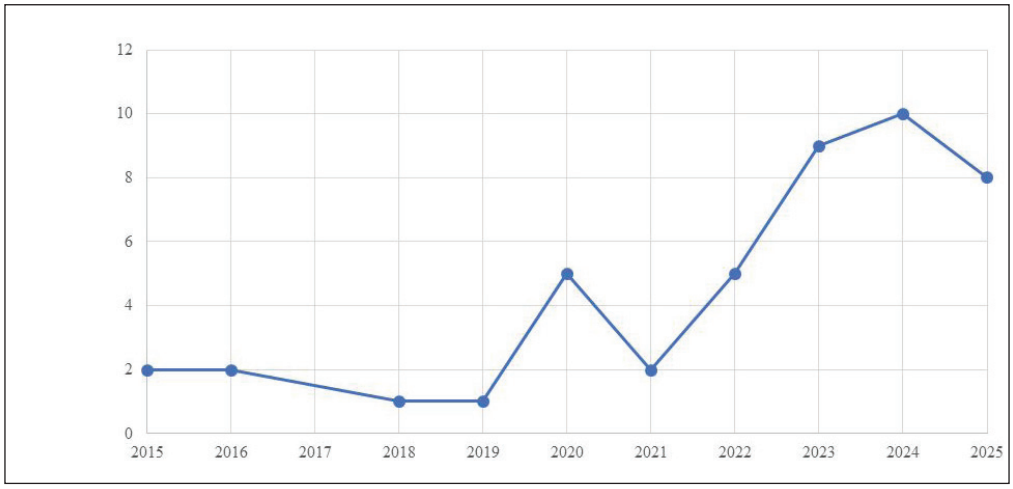
3. Findings

3.1. Descriptive Overview of Current Research

This section summarizes the literature on consumer perceptions of sustainability by examining the annual distribution of relevant studies, the journals of publication, the fields of research, and the methodologies employed.

Figure 2 displays the annual distribution of research about consumers' perceptions of sustainability.

Figure 2: Distribution of Articles by Publication Year



As can be seen in Figure 2, there has been a rise in the amount of consumer research conducted on the topic of perceived sustainability in recent years. When the first quarter of 2025 is taken into consideration, it is anticipated that the upward trend will continue. The year 2022 saw the publication of five consumer perception studies on sustainability, followed by nine in 2023 and ten in 2024.

The journals of the published studies were analyzed to offer a descriptive summary of the existing research endeavors. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of journals concerning studies on consumer sustainability perception. The table is a listing of journals that contained more than one study that was pertinent to the topic.

Table 1 indicates that Sustainability, which published 11 research papers, has shown significant interest in the subject due to its domain. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, Cogent Business & Management, and Food Quality and Preference were noted to have published two research. All remaining research was published in distinct journals. In this regard, it can be asserted that several journals are engaged with the topic.

Table 1: Distribution of Articles by Journals

Journal	Number of publications	Studies
Sustainability	11	Kim et al., 2017; Jürkenbeck et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2020; Kim & Oh, 2020; Polenzani et al., 2020; Klein & Popp, 2022; Lang et al., 2022; Khan & Fatma, 2023; Zhao & An, 2023; Yadav et al., 2024; Perret et al., 2025
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	2	Guizzardi et al., 2022; Estrada et al., 2024
Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management	2	Lee, 2020; Moliner-Tena et al., 2023
Cogent Business & Management	2	Shih et al., 2024; Westin et al., 2024
Food Quality and Preference	2	Kossmann et al., 2023; Carneiro et al., 2025

Table 2 delineates the specific areas of attention in studies regarding consumers' perceptions of sustainability.

Table 2: Distributions of Articles by Fields

Field	Number of publications	Studies
Destination	12	Iniesta-Bonillo et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Guizzardi et al., 2022; Conti et al., 2023; Lee at al., 2023; Moliner-Tena et al., 2023; Sancho-Esper et al., 2023; Estrada et al., 2024; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024; Dash, 2025; Gong et al., 2025; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025
Food and beverages	11	Polenzani et al., 2020; Granato et al., 2022; Stremmel et al., 2022; Burkert et al., 2023; Kossmann et al., 2023; Steenis et al., 2023; Zhao & An, 2023; Mladenovic et al., 2024; Carneiro et al., 2025; Hallez et al., 2025; Rodrigues Romano et al., 2025
General or multiple categories	8	Stolz & Bautista, 2015; Lee, 2020; Chaisuwan, 2021; Liang et al., 2022; Khan & Fatma, 2023; Duong et al., 2024; Utgård & Gaustad, 2024; Westin et al., 2024
Fashion	7	Kim et al., 2015; Park & Kim, 2016; Ek Styvén et al., 2020; Kim & Oh, 2020; Wang et al., 2024; Yadav et al., 2024; Akasreku et al., 2025
Cosmetics, cleaning and caring	2	Vinitha et al., 2021; Perret et al., 2025
E-commerce/Online shopping	2	Chen et al., 2020; Klei & Popp, 2022
Farming	1	Jürkenbeck et al., 2019
Crowdfunding	1	Liang et al., 2023
Sustainable products	1	Shih et al., 2024

Table 2 indicates that studies investigating consumer perceptions of sustainability predominantly concentrated on destinations, followed by food and beverages. In the subsequent eight studies, either a general assessment was conducted without concentrating on a specific product/service category or many categories were examined together (e.g., banking and energy or fashion, food and electronics). The fashion category is, then, represented by seven studies. Two articles were then located, one from the cosmetics, cleaning and caring sector, as well as one from the e-commerce/online shopping domain.

Table 3 presents the research methodologies employed in pertinent studies, concluding the descriptive review of current research.

Table 3: Distribution of Articles by Methods

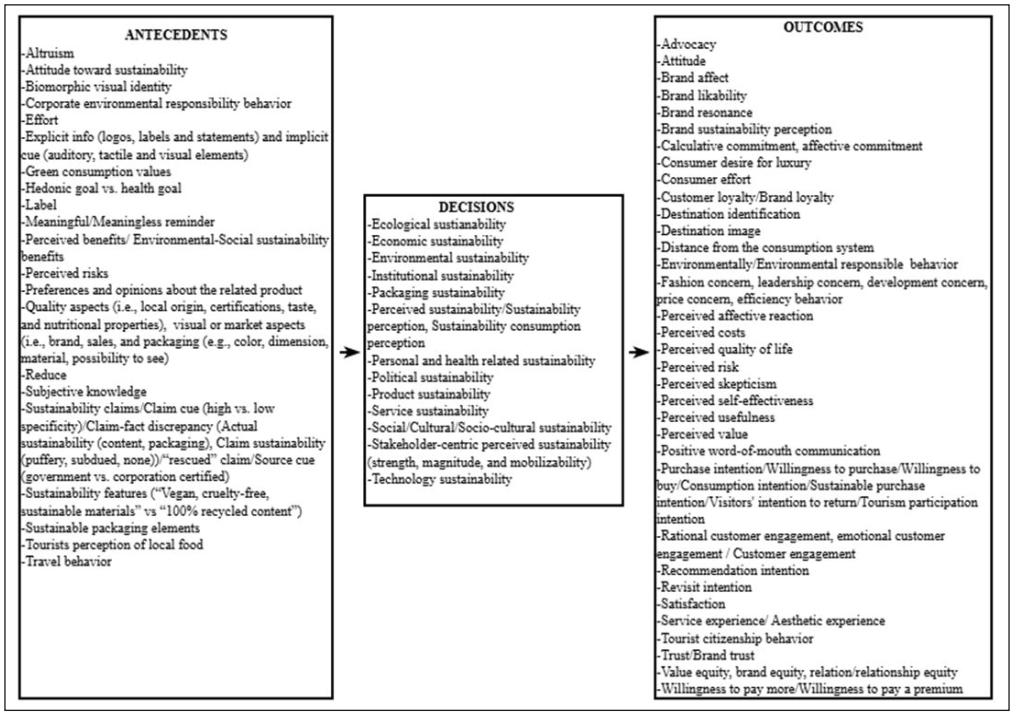
Method	Number of publications	Studies
Survey research	29	Kim et al., 2015; Stolz & Bautista, 2015; Iniesta-Bonillo et al., 2016; Park & Kim, 2016; Kim et al., 2017; Jürkenbeck et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2020; Ek Styvén et al., 2020; Kim & Oh, 2020; Lee, 2020; Polenzani et al., 2020; Guizzardi et al., 2022; Klei & Popp, 2022; Kossmann et al., 2023; Liang et al., 2022; Burkert et al., 2023; Conti et al., 2023; Khan & Fatma, 2023; Lee et al., 2023; Moliner-Tena et al., 2023; Sancho-Esper et al., 2023; Duong et al., 2024; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024; Shih et al., 2024; Westin et al., 2024; Akasreku et al., 2025; Dash, 2025; Gong et al., 2025; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2025
Experimental design	11	Vinitha et al., 2021; Granato et al., 2022; Stremmel et al., 2022; Steenis et al., 2023 ; Zhao & An, 2023; Mladenovic et al., 2024; Utgård & Gaustad, 2024; Yadav et al., 2024; Carneiro et al., 2025; Hallez et al., 2025; Rodrigues Romano et al., 2025
Mixed	5	Chaisuwan, 2021; Liang et al., 2023; Estrada et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024; Perret et al., 2025

Table 3 indicates that survey research is the predominant method in the descriptive research category. This research employed both online and traditional methodologies at different times. Subsequent to these 29 examinations, there are 11 papers pertaining to experimental design. In these investigations, both laboratory and online experiments were employed at various times. Ultimately, mixed-method research was infrequently observed.

3.2. The ADO Framework

Within the scope of the ADO framework, 45 consumer sustainability perception articles were analyzed based on antecedents and outcomes. The article models were analyzed, and the assessment of perceived sustainability was framed as a Decision. All unidimensional and multidimensional constructs of perceived sustainability were evaluated. Variables identified in the articles as drivers of the perceived sustainability construct or its sub-dimensions were classified as Antecedents. Each antecedent or group of antecedents was evaluated. Each variable affected by perceived sustainability or its sub-dimensions was designated as an Outcome, encompassing both individual variables and clusters of variables. The pertinent framework is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: ADO Framework of the Study



3.2.1. Antecedents

Numerous studies have regarded perceived sustainability as a foundational concept, whereas the driving forces of this notion have hardly been examined. Antecedent examinations have frequently been observed in studies within the domain of food and beverages. Polenzani et al. (2020) analyzed various factors concerning preferences and opinions regarding the product, as well as quality attributes (such as local origin, certifications, taste, and nutritional proper-

ties), visual or market elements (including brand, sales, and packaging characteristics like color, dimensions, material, and visibility), and assessed the impact of each on environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Burkert et al. (2023) also examined the effect of sustainability material on packaging, product, and brand sustainability. Besides, goals (hedonic goal, health goal) (Romano et al., 2025), corporate environmental responsibility behavior (Zhao & An, 2023), claim specificity (high vs. low)/Claim-fact incongruence (Actual sustainability (content, packaging), claim sustainability/sustainability claim (puffery, subdued, none))/"rescued" assertion/Source credibility (government vs. corporate certification) (Burkert et al., 2023; Steenis et al., 2023; Mladenovic et al., 2024; Carneiro et al., 2025), explicit information (logos, labels, and statements) and implicit cues (auditory, tactile, and visual elements) (Granato et al., 2022), label (Stremmel et al., 2023), green consumption values, environmental/social sustainability benefits (Hallez et al., 2025), and perceived risks, subjective knowledge on alternative cheese and perceived benefits (Kossmann et al. (2023) have been analyzed and the related studies investigated the impact of these various antecedents on the perception of sustainability in food and beverage products. All research, with the exception of Polenzani et al. (2020) and Burkert et al. (2023), regarded perceived sustainability as a unidimensional construct. Polenzani et al. (2020) handled perceived sustainability through environmental, economic, and social sustainability dimensions, whereas Burkert et al. (2023) examined the perceptions of product, packaging, and brand sustainability in a multidimensional manner. Alongside research in the food and beverages sector, certain tourism studies have concentrated on the antecedents of perceived sustainability. Estrada et al. (2024) examined the influence of tourists' perceptions of local cuisine on perceived sustainability, encompassing environmental, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. The study by Conti et al. (2023) on city sustainability posits that travel behavior influences perceived sustainability, which is also examined across three dimensions.

Research in the fashion industry also examined some antecedents of perceived sustainability. Yadav et al. (2024) investigated the impact of sustainability attributes, namely "Vegan, cruelty-free, sustainable materials" versus "100% recycled content," on perceived sustainability, which they recognized as a unidimensional approach. Utgård & Gaustad (2024) investigated the impact of antecedents such as reduce, effort, and altruism solely concerning environmental sustainability across many categories, including fashion, food, and electronics. This analysis concentrated on three sub-dimensions: communication, placement, and price/quality, to assess environmental sustainability. The research on cosmetics, cleaning, and caring concentrated on sustainable packaging components and biomorphic visual identity as antecedents. Perret et al. (2025) and Vinitha et al. (2021) investigated the impacts on a unidimensional perceived sustainability measure. Perret et al. (2025) concentrated on the antecedents of sustainable packaging elements in cosmetic items, whereas Vinitha et al. (2021) examined the premise of biomorphic visual identity for cleaning and caring products.

3.2.2. Decisions

Three prevalent methodologies exist in perceived sustainability research from a consumer standpoint. One approach consists of research that treats perceived sustainability as a singular construct (e.g., Guizzardi et al., 2022; Khan & Fatma, 2023). These unidimensional methodologies are identified in 26 of the 45 scholarly articles analyzed. While perceived sustainability is regarded as unidimensional in certain studies, the expressions that comprise the

variable encompass three dimensions of sustainability (e.g., Westin et al., 2024). The predominantly unidimensional assessment of perceived sustainability encompasses expressions that address multiple environmental factors (e.g., Khan & Fatma, 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Certain studies concentrate specifically on variables termed environmental sustainability (e.g., Stolz & Bautista, 2015; Utgård & Gaustad, 2024).

A prevalent method in consumer-oriented sustainability perception research involves examining all three elements of sustainability: environmental, economic, and social/socio-cultural. This methodology was identified in 13 investigations. A number of these studies, predominantly survey-based, concentrated on the impacts of antecedents (e.g., Conti et al., 2023; Estrada et al., 2024), whereas the majority investigated the effects of each sustainability dimension on pertinent outcomes (e.g., Kim et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2021; Klein & Popp, 2022; Shih et al., 2024).

The topic of sustainability perception is seldom handled in a divergent manner. Chen et al. (2020) concentrated on product sustainability and service sustainability within the domain of online shopping. Besides, Lee (2020) concentrated on the stakeholder-centric perceived sustainability variable rather than a single category, which comprises three sub-dimensions: strength, magnitude, and mobilizability. A recent study by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2025) in tourism studied not just three elements of sustainability but also incorporated additional dimensions: economic, environmental, socio-cultural, political, and technological sustainability. In a similar manner, Gong et al. (2025) focused on the economic, sociological, ecological, and institutional factors of tourism. Chaisuwan (2021) investigated personal and health-related sustainability as well as economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

3.2.3. Outcomes

The initial Outcomes group comprises studies investigating the impact of sustainability perception on several other perceptions. Outcomes such as perceived affective reaction (e.g., Kim et al., 2017), perceived costs (e.g., Klein & Popp, 2022), perceived risk (e.g., Kim et al., 2017), perceived skepticism (e.g., Kim & Oh, 2020), perceived self-effectiveness (e.g., Kim et al., 2017), perceived usefulness (e.g., Jürkenbeck et al., 2019), brand sustainability perception (Burkert et al., 2023), and perceived value (e.g., Shih et al., 2024) warrant consideration in this context. Certain brand-related factors may also be observed. These pertain to brand resonance (e.g., Lee, 2020), brand equity and brand affect (Chaisuwan, 2021), and brand likability (e.g., Vinitha et al., 2021). The outcome of trust is regarded as either brand trust (e.g., Park & Kim, 2016) or consumer trust (Khan & Fatma, 2023). Loyalty is occasionally referred to as brand loyalty (e.g., Park & Kim, 2016) and at other times as customer loyalty (Khan & Fatma, 2023) and commitment is categorized as calculative commitment and affective commitment (e.g., Chen et al., 2020).

Consumer behavior is often studies on consumer sustainability perception. Examples include environmentally responsible behavior (e.g., Kim et al., 2017), positive word-of-mouth communication (e.g., Kim et al., 2017), engagement (e.g., Chen et al., 2020), citizenship behavior (e.g., Sancho-Esper et al., 2023), and advocacy behavior (e.g., Estrada et al., 2024). Research indicates that variables associated with intention, such as revisit intention (Kim et

al., 2017), recommendation intention (Guizzardi et al., 2022), purchase intention (Lee, 2020), visitors' intention to sustainability (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2024), tourism participation intention (Gong et al., 2025), and attitude (e.g., Klein & Popp, 2022) have been identified as significant drivers for these behavioral reactions. The moment of experience and satisfaction assessments, which significantly influence the development of pertinent outcomes, are also prominent outcomes in the field (e.g., Moliner-Tena et al., 2023).

4. Discussion

This study provides a comprehensive framework by meticulously examining 45 research articles to better understand consumer perceptions of sustainability. The existing literature has several systematic evaluations of sustainability; nevertheless, the majority of these studies focus on overarching frameworks and fail to adequately investigate the consumer perspective specifically. Although some study focuses on marketing field, it is limited in number (e.g., Lunde, 2018; Emon & Khan, 2024). Furthermore, consumer-focused research is uncommon and usually limited to specific situations (e.g., Alwani & Bhukya, 2025).

The lack of systematic literature reviews focusing on consumer perceptions toward sustainability reveals a research gap. This study explores consumer perceptions, specifically those of ultimate purchasers who evaluate organizations' products and services, providing a contribution to systematic literature reviews area (Alwani & Bhukya, 2025; Zhang et al., 2025).

This study also contributes to literature by conducting a systematic assessment of empirical studies in the present literature and reporting comprehensive findings on sustainability perception. This approach clarifies the methodological diversity and extensive findings in research on consumer perceptions of sustainability, so improving both the theoretical and practical elements of the field (Iniesta-Bonillo et al., 2016; Liang et al., 2023).

Building on these findings, the analysis was structured using the Antecedents-Decisions-Outcomes (ADO) framework to identify the theoretical mechanisms and paradigmatic shifts that influence how consumers view sustainability.

Antecedents

The antecedent dimension demonstrates that consumer sustainability perception is influenced by a wide range of motivational, cognitive, and environmental factors. Intrinsic and moral antecedents such as altruism, attitudes toward sustainability, and corporate environmental responsibility are consistent with theories emphasizing ethical consumerism, moral identity, and value-belief-norm frameworks, implying that sustainable conduct is rooted in profoundly internalized social principles.

Contextual and sensory antecedents such as explicit and implicit indications (logos, labels, claims), biomorphic visual identity, and sustainable packaging aspects point to a paradigmatic shift toward experiential and perceptual paradigms, in which visual and material design influences sustainability perception via aesthetic, tactile, and emotional involvement rather than social principles alone. Similarly, perceived risk, perceived benefits, and subjective knowledge focus on the informational and evaluative aspects of sustainability perception, stressing how consumers balance ambiguity and reliability in sustainability promises.

Antecedents such as tourists' perceptions of local food and travel behavior add a contextual and situational element, illustrating how sustainability perceptions differ across consuming domains and contexts. These findings represent a paradigm shift away from universal, social interpretations of sustainability and toward context-sensitive, experience-driven, information-contingent judgments in a context/domain-specific way.

Decisions

The framework's decision layer explains how consumers convert perceptions into evaluations and behaviors regarding ecological, economic, environmental, institutional, political, social/sociocultural sustainability, etc. While previous research frequently reduced sustainable decision-making to a unidimensional approach, the examined literature broadens this understanding to multidimensional decision contexts. This study underscores and broadens the current literature by asserting that sustainability perception must be regarded as a construct encompassing economic, social, and environmental components.

On the other hand, whereas certain study initiatives in literature persist in progressing within economic, environmental, and social/sociocultural domains, context-specific studies have remained active, fostering the emergence of new sustainability dimensions and thereby broadening research endeavors. This study underscores the significance of these novel features. Institutional sustainability, ecological sustainability and personal and health-related sustainability are among these new dimensions and represent customers' growing understanding of corporate systems, ecology-related issues, and health-related concerns, indicating a theoretical move towards institutional, relational and personal choice paradigms.

Outcomes

The outcome dimension encompasses a wide range of outcomes, including attitude, advocacy, and brand likability, as well as trust, brand resonance, satisfaction, and environmental responsibility. Traditional models focused on attitudinal or behavioral objectives including purchase intention, willingness to pay, and word-of-mouth. However, current research indicates transformative consequences such as reported quality of life, perceived usefulness, self-effectiveness, and value equity.

This transformation demonstrates a major paradigm shift from transactional to relational and transformative perspectives on consumer sustainability outcomes. Consumers no longer just react to sustainability programs; they actively create meaning, interact emotionally, and participate in sustainability discourses through activities like advocacy, brand loyalty, and tourism citizenship. Perceived skepticism, perceived risk and perceived costs reflect a critical consumer orientation, in which sustainability perception requires reflexivity and negotiation rather than acceptance without consideration of related factors.

The growth of outcomes relating to brand equity, resonance, and trust indicates that long-term consumer-brand relationships are increasingly centered on sustainability. The research thus advances beyond behavioral prediction to explain how sustainability perception encourages long-term personal and social linkages between consumers and brands.

5. Implications

5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study makes several contributions, both conceptually and within the industry. The study lends significant theoretical support to the conception and operationalization of perceived sustainability. It provides a new perspective for expanding marketing knowledge by underlining the limitations and disconnected nature of present literature. The conceptual definitions of sustainability perception remain vague in the literature (Conti et al., 2023), and the numerous sustainability approaches investigated in this study serve as decision-support tools for researchers and practitioners.

The sustainability measuring system and decision mechanisms presented here greatly improve consumer-based sustainability assessments. By carefully addressing the fragmented and dispersed approaches in previous research, this work allows for their integration across varied contexts and a more comprehensive understanding of each approach's significance. The methodology also enables context-specific analyses of how various sustainability methods influence customer evaluations, behavioral intentions, and actual behavior.

Furthermore, the proposed measures and analytical structures allow for the simultaneous incorporation of antecedent and outcome variables. The study contributes to the cumulative advancement of sustainability knowledge, as well as the refinement of knowledge-generation processes in each antecedent and outcome area. As a result, the study contributes to theory development efforts in sustainability while also serving as a useful reference for marketing and consumer research.

Antecedent-level implications

This study enhances the understanding of sustainability perception as a multifaceted and hybrid construct by identifying and categorizing numerous antecedents, including inherent values and moral duty, as well as contextual cues, sensory design, and perception of risk. It indicates that sustainability perception is influenced not just by moral norms but also by aesthetic, sensory, and informational factors, thus linking the value-belief-norm and experiential paradigms. This theoretical integration provides insight into the mechanisms that link environmental concern, subjective knowledge, and sensory cues to perceived sustainability credibility.

This study incorporates contextual antecedents (e.g., local food perception, tourism behavior, product design) into sustainability perception research, emphasizing the importance of domain-specific theorization rather than broad models. The framework thus facilitates theory-building attempts that link micro-level cognitive mechanisms to macro environmental, social and cultural elements.

Decision-level implications

At the decision stage, the framework demonstrates that sustainability evaluations go beyond consumer intentions or preferences to include institutional, social, and economic sustainability considerations. This broadens standard choice-making theories by including systemic and collective decision paradigms, in which consumers consider not just product features but also governance, supply chain ethics, and ecological responsibility.

This highlights the shift from individualistic consumer logic to networked, stakeholder-oriented decision models, opening the door for further developments into how social norms, institutional approaches, and environmental and ecological issues influence sustainability evaluation.

Outcome-level implications

At the outcome level, the framework considers attitudinal, relational, and transformative implications such as trust, brand resonance, and satisfaction, as well as perceived self-effectiveness and advocacy. This advances theory by demonstrating how sustainability perception leads to both individual and societal results, redefining consumer reaction as a transformative engagement process rather than a transactional conclusion.

Such integration creates a theoretical bridge between sustainability marketing and transformative consumer research, opening up new avenues for explaining long-term consumer-brand interactions based on sustainability meaning-sustainability implementations.

5.2. Managerial Implications

From a managerial aspect, the study contributes to the business world by focusing on the consumer, who is the ultimate beneficiary of corporate sustainability programs. It identifies the factors that firms must consider when dealing with consumers and explains how sustainability policies influence perception and behavior. The decision-making frameworks described in this study give a framework for determining consumer groups based on various sustainability methods, allowing businesses to determine which sustainability strategies are most beneficial and credible in their markets.

Furthermore, understanding the antecedents linked with each sustainability strategy aids in the development of initiatives that foster positive attitudes, whilst outcome variables highlight the possible benefits that organizations might obtain through sustainability efforts. Segmenting markets based on sustainability perception enables businesses to better manage resources and develop accurate targeting and positioning strategies. Integrating corporate actions with consumer sustainability perceptions promotes competitive advantage and improves the effectiveness of sustainability communication. The framework serves as a strategic resource for businesses looking to develop their sustainability strategies through a consumer-centric lens.

Antecedent-level implications

Managers can use identified antecedents to develop more effective sustainability plans. Recognizing that sustainability perception is influenced by both moral conviction and experiential clues recommends that businesses should integrate real ethical communication with aesthetic and sensory design aspects (such as packaging, labeling, and symbolic cues). Firms can also reduce perceived risk and skepticism by increasing openness and consumer education, which boosts the credibility of sustainability claims.

Decision-level implications

The multi-domain structure of sustainability decisions enables firms to better connect their initiatives with consumers' institutional and social expectations. Firms can use the decision framework to determine which sustainability dimension—economic, ecological, tech-

nological, social, etc.—is most important to their target audience. This facilitates the creation of decision-based segmentation techniques in which sustainability approaches are adapted to customers' evaluative priorities across markets and cultural boundaries.

Outcome-level implications

By mapping outcome variables such as trust, satisfaction, and brand resonance, the framework enables businesses to assess the impact of sustainability activities on long-term consumer relationships. Understanding how diverse sustainability combinations produce specific results allows for more effective design of communication, product development, and customer experience initiatives.

Firms can also quantify intangible benefits resulting from credible sustainability performance, such as increased brand equity, advocacy, and emotional attachment, transforming perception research into strategic brand management insights.

6. Limitations and Future Research Agenda

This research has several limitations. The research primarily investigates consumer perception, specifically analyzing sustainability perspectives from this viewpoint. The study's conclusions are confined to the consumer perspective. Future research may concentrate on the perceptions of various stakeholders concerning sustainability; for instance, a comprehensive evaluation of sustainability perception might be undertaken by analyzing the viewpoints of employees, senior management, suppliers, and other stakeholders.

This study exclusively incorporated publications in English, with the analysis concentrating on the Web of Science and Scopus databases. This indicates that certain aspects of the literature may have been neglected. Future research may also concentrate on studies published in various languages or local databases to enhance country-specific analyses and do a more comprehensive literature assessment. This method would enable the investigation of cultural differences' impact on sustainability perception and support comparative analysis of current research.

The recommendations of this study for future research are not confined solely to its limitations. The comprehensive analyses conducted during the study facilitated the formulation of a research agenda for future inquiries based on three primary ADO categories:

Antecedents

While sustainability is vital, it is also crucial to articulate this effectively to pertinent stakeholders. While the literature addresses packaging (e.g., Polenzani et al., 2020), other promotion efforts and also issues related to product, pricing, and distribution should be examined in future research. Research can be undertaken to ascertain the most effective methods for conveying the sustainability of the product or service's production. Consumer behaviors about pricing accompanied by sustainability information can be analyzed. Research may also be conducted on the delivery mechanisms of sustainable products or services to consumers to ascertain the preferences of potential purchasers regarding the locations and methods via which they wish to encounter the products or services. At the same time, analyzing both traditional and digital sustainability communication efforts would be beneficial.

Current literature identifies several antecedents of consumer perceived sustainability, including altruism, attitude toward sustainability, corporate environmental responsibility behaviors, explicit information (labels, logos), implicit cue (auditory, tactile and visual elements), perceived benefits, perceived risks, quality aspects, and travel behavior. These variables demonstrate the importance of both cognitive (e.g., perceived benefits) and behavioral (e.g., travel behavior) antecedents.

Despite this diversity, crucial antecedents have not been thoroughly investigated. Specifically:

- Existing models sometimes fail to consider cognitive elements such as personal beliefs, knowledge, motivation, and affective elements such as emotions, mood, feelings, etc.
- Studies on communication primarily focus on packaging and labels, without considering cost, distribution, and digital communication
- There is limited research tying antecedents to consumer value frameworks or cognitive-affective models

Proposition 1: Future study should look into how cognitive, affective, conative, and contextual aspects affect consumer sustainability perceptions.

Proposition 2: To uncover effective persuasive techniques, researchers should assess multi-channel sustainability communication (product, pricing, distribution, and promotion).

Decisions

Owing to the paucity of research that concurrently examines the three dimensions of sustainability (e.g., Estrada et al., 2024; Shih et al., 2024), the volume of studies focusing on each component can be augmented. Each dimension possesses a distinct structure, allowing sustainability to be assessed from environmental, social, and economic perspectives. Preliminary investigations concentrating on additional dimensions may be pursued. The multidimensional framework proposed by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2025) in the context of tourism can be applied to other domains, including economic, environmental, socio-cultural, political, and technological sustainability. This presents an opportunity to explore new dimensions and identify other aspects that can be investigated within each pertinent topic.

Comparative analyses may be performed regarding perceptions of sustainability. This initiative can be maintained by commencing with a study that examines product and service sustainability independently (e.g., Chen et al., 2020), while simultaneously incorporating comparative analysis to enhance contributions. Research investigating several services and product categories can be undertaken to offer a whole service viewpoint or a whole product viewpoint, rather than merely contrasting specific products or services. Research can also be conducted on currently examined domains such as food and beverages, travel destinations, and fashion, while also exploring potential new areas for perception studies. For instance, media outlets, dining establishments, and non-profit entities.

Current research examines sustainability decisions across multiple dimensions, including ecological, economic, environmental, institutional, political, product, service, social/cultural, stakeholder-centric, and technological sustainability. While numerous elements are exam-

ined, many studies concentrate on environmental and product sustainability, with less emphasis on political, institutional, or technology sustainability.

Gaps in this regard:

- Limited comparative analysis of sustainability characteristics and product/service categories
- Limited study on new or context-specific factors, such as socio-political or technological sustainability in various sectors
- Limited theoretical integration with frameworks like consumer value theory, cognitive-affective models, and stakeholder theory to better understand how sustainability impacts decision-making processes of various receivers of sustainability decisions and communications

Proposition 3: Future studies on sustainability should use multidimensional frameworks to collect comparative consumers' views of products and services.

*Proposition 4: To identify domain-specific decision drivers, research should look across industries at developing dimensions (political, institutional, and technology sustainability) based on established marketing and consumer behavior theor*ies.

Outcomes

Current research predominantly focuses on the category level. Emphasizing sustainability at the brand level necessitates increased acknowledgment. Additional research from a branding viewpoint is required. Such research should concentrate on the behavioral responses that corporations seek to provoke regarding the brand when perceptions of sustainability are positive. Variables including brand image, brand love, brand distrust, and brand preference may be emphasized. Investigating the detrimental effects of negative sustainability perceptions on the brand would also be beneficial.

Existing research demonstrates effects such as advocacy, brand affect, brand likability, brand resonance, perceived value, purchase intention, engagement, trust, satisfaction, service experience, and tourist citizenship behavior. These demonstrate the impact of sustainability perception on behavioral, attitudinal, and affective results. To our knowledge, no research has been identified regarding the emotional responses elicited by the encounter with a sustainable product, service, or brand based on perceived sustainability. Research is also required to understand consumers' emotional responses to settings that lack an emphasis on sustainability. These studies will enhance the understanding of the effects of sustainability perception on marketing research and practices.

Underexplored themes based on this current research:

- Emotional responses to sustainable and non-sustainable products and services are rarely studied
- Long-term success and brand-level outcomes are underexplored
- Limited integration with cognitive-affective and consumer value frameworks hinders understanding of how perceived sustainability influences behavior

Proposition 5: Future study should investigate the emotional and affective consequences of perceived sustainability, including both positive and negative brand implications.

Proposition 6: Studies should use consumer value frameworks to better understand how sustainability perceptions translate into long-term behavioral responses at brand-level.

7. Conclusion

This study employs ADO framework to provide a thorough evaluation of prior behavioral research regarding consumer perceptions of sustainability, analyzing 45 studies. A review was performed according to the PRISMA protocol. A descriptive summary of these publications was provided, followed by an ADO examination. This effort expands upon both systematic literature reviews and empirical research in existing literature from a *consumer perception* perspective. This study proposes a framework and future research agenda that is expected to enhance sustainability studies from a consumer viewpoint and broaden consumer behavior research in the realm of sustainability. The study's conceptual and operational elucidation of perceived consumer sustainability will enhance the development of theoretical and sectoral knowledge in marketing.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

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