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Climate Change and Global Warming: A Consumer Responsibility

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ABSTRACT

Environmental issues, and the solutions to them, are a growing source of worry in our culture. Environmental law and policy do not exist in isolation; instead, they are inextricably linked to consumer protection in response to those who believe they are inextricably linked. Global climate change and environmental challenges have captured the attention of numerous parties in recent years. Climate demonstrations are taking place worldwide, in the middle of arguably the most important call to attention that humanity has ever faced. This is because customers, governments, and communities are becoming more conscious of their natural resource deterioration and environmental damage responsibilities. Firms face various external constraints, including consumer demand and environmental legislation. As a result, businesses must adopt environmentally friendly practices, such as green innovation, to achieve sustainable development. Various consumer law provisions can increase consumer knowledge of environmental concerns to aid this evolution. This study aims to evaluate consumer responsibility for climate change and the function of ecological legislation in mitigating this relationship. This research paper aims to examine three significant facets of environmental and consumer engagement: first, the relationship between the consumer and the environment; second, the consumer's responsibility to protect the environment; and third, environmental and consumer laws and judicial responses.

Keywords: *Climate Change, Global Warming, Consumer Responsibility, Environment, and Law*

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, environmental concerns have arisen because of the connections between climate change, consumer lifestyles, and sustainable enterprises' legitimization efforts. Climate change awareness is a significant factor in sustainability-focused operations, but the dynamics vary. Attaining sociopolitical legitimacy appears critical for the energy sector's example businesses, particularly in light of government incentives and regulatory pressures. However,

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cognitive legitimacy is becoming increasingly crucial for companies, and corporations are attempting to connect with the lives of their clients.

In contrast, for instance, in enterprises functioning in the consumer (clothing) market, functionality and ease of use are emphasized, even though cognitive legitimacy based on a connection to their clients' lifestyles is apparent. These are not only the responsibilities of huge industries but also of emerging small businesses. Rapid industrialization and a lack of consumer awareness are the primary causes of environmental degradation. Water, air, soil pollution, and the disposal of hazardous and toxic waste are essential issues that must be addressed. As a result of various emerging environmental challenges, the government has enacted several ecological rules to reduce carbon emissions and minimize the environmental effect of material and energy consumption.² Numerous businesses have taken multiple steps to solve the issue and safeguard the environment. They have developed ecological management techniques to mitigate the firm's environmental effect and have taken steps to reduce energy usage and waste.³ While sustainable lifestyles are becoming increasingly vital and more widely acknowledged in company plans and practices, other aspects of running a business successfully in a highly competitive market remain crucial. As a result, establishing legitimacy that encompasses and justifies diverse methods emerges as the link between altering the consumer behavior and pro-environmental corporate actions. Apparel and textile goods are clogging landfills and adding to the global waste problem. The majority of textile waste occurs because the average customer is unaware of the proper care, disposal, and sustainable solutions for textile items. To ascertain customers' intentions to undertake sustainable behavior and acquire sustainable clothing alternatives.⁴

II. THE ENVIRONMENTAL-CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP

The availability of fast fashion has fueled the popularity of less-priced apparel, resulting in consumer overconsumption. Modern manufacturing techniques rely heavily on outsourcing to facilities abroad capable of producing low-cost clothes in large quantities compared to earlier decades. Almost 98 percent of clothes sold in the US are manufactured abroad, and the average cost of an apparel item is less than \$15. However, the growing production and use of garment items hurt the environment.⁵ Numerous garment goods are abandoned because they are of poor

² Brunnermeier S B, Cohen M A 2003 "Determinants of environmental innovation in US manufacturing industries. *J. Environ. Econ. Manag.*" 45 278-293.

³ Melville N 2010 "Information Systems Innovation for Environmental Sustainability," *MIS Quarterly*, 34 1 1-21.

⁴ La Rosa, A. Johnson Jorgensen, "Influences on Consumer Engagement with Sustainability and the Purchase Intention of Apparel Products Sustainability" 2021, 13,

⁵ Weber, S. Lynes, J. "Young, S.B. Fashion interest as a driver for consumer textile waste management: Reuse, recycle or disposal. *Int. J. Consume. Stud.*" 2017, 41, 207-215

quality and build or because the client no longer wears them regularly owing to changing trends or personal style.⁶ Between 1999 and 2009, the United States raised its post-consumer textile waste from 8.3 million tonnes to 11.3 million tonnes. The annual volume of textile waste increased and was predicted to reach 16.1 million tonnes by 2019. Unfortunately, while most of this trash is 100 percent recyclable, around 85 percent of textile waste is discarded in landfills.⁷

Frequently, old or discolored clothing is discarded, but things in good shape are more likely to be recycled.⁸ This waste necessitates a more in-depth examination of sustainable consumption, described as an individual's awareness of the long-term consequences of their consuming behavior. Sustainability is fueled by sustainable engagement, often characterized by pro-environmental and pragmatic impacts on sustainable consumption.⁹

Due to the garment industry's desire to reduce environmental waste and consumers' growing interest in sustainable activities, it is critical to track customers' participation in sustainability through their purchasing intentions, care for, and disposal of clothes.¹⁰ The theory of planned behavior is utilized to explain these consumer actions, as it emphasizes the effect of attitude, subjective standards, and perceived behavioral control on customers' buy intention and involvement.

(A) Consumerism

Consumerism is based on the belief that material goods are valued and that life would be incomplete without them, which may trump social ties or experiences. Clothing goods, for example, are purchased for hedonic reasons in addition to their intrinsic practical use, and shopping is viewed as a pleasurable pastime by millions of customers.¹¹

(B) Fashion Industry Sustainability

Sustainable apparel is described as 'clothing that integrates at least one facet of social and environmental sustainability, but a sustainable supply chain takes the triple bottom line into

⁶ Lang, C.; Armstrong, C.M.; Brannon, L.A. "Drivers of clothing disposal in the US: An exploration of the role of personal attributes and behaviors in frequent disposal. *Int. J. Consume. Stud.*" 2013, 37, 706–714.

⁷ Weber, S.; Lynes, J.; Young, S.B. "Fashion interest as a driver for consumer textile waste management: Reuse, recycle or disposal. *Int. J. Consumer.*" 2017, 41, 207–215

⁸ Sun, M. Trudel, R. "The effect of recycling versus trashing on consumption: Theory and experimental evidence." 2017, 54, 293–305.

⁹ Kadic-Maglajlic, et. all "Being engaged is a good thing: Understanding sustainable consumption behavior among young adults." *J. Bus. Res.* 2019, 104, 644–654.

¹⁰ Geiger, S.M. Fischer, D.; Schrader, U. "Measuring what matters in sustainable consumption: An integrative framework for selecting appropriate behaviors." *Sustain. Dev.* 2018, 26, 18–23.

¹¹ Armstrong, C.M.; Kujala, S.; Lang, C. Niinimäki, K. "A user-oriented clothing economy ? Preliminary affirmation for sustainable clothing consumption alternatives." 2016, 24, 18–31.

account. Supporting businesses that adhere to the triple bottom line is critical for customers interested in sustainable products.¹²

As a result, customers must spread the word about sustainability to their peers in order for it to take root. Consumer statistics on sustainability revealed that buyers were more interested in being “eco-friendly,” “recycling,” and “ethical.” These broad notions imply a technique for stores to interact with consumers.

(C) The Premeditated Behavior Theorem

There is a well-established paradigm for predicting and understanding human behavior in the theory of planned behavior (TPB). Based on the theory of reasoned action (TRA), the TPB distinguishes between two categories of behavior. People use logic to analyze information and take action as a starting point. The behavior will follow if you have a clear goal in mind. Second, the formulation of a decision is influenced by attitudes and subjective standards.¹³

(D) Attitude

Sustainability and the environment are important to people; therefore, they are more likely to change their purchasing patterns positively. In general, a positive attitude can help us better understand the challenges our consumers encounter as they transition to a more environmentally friendly lifestyle.

(E) Perceived Behavioral Control

Behavioral Control (PBC) refers to the perceived effort or ease with which an action is done. In order to achieve the desired behavior, it is required to govern a wide range of factors, including the available resources, skills, and abilities. A person’s behavioral intention decreases when they believe they have less control over the outcome.¹⁴

(F) Behavioral intention to engage and purchase

Behavioral intention acts as a precursor to forecasting an outcome behavior and emphasizes the possibility of engaging in that behavior in the first place. When people have strong choices, they are more likely to engage in that conduct. In the case of recycling, the behavioral objective would be to create a procedure that is compatible with customers’ lives. Thus, identifying

¹² Zak, A. “Tripe bottom line concept in theory and practice. 2015, 387, 251–264.

¹³ Do Valle, P.; Rebelo, E.; Reis, E.; Menezes, J. “Combining behavioral theories to predict recycling involvement.” 2005, 37, 364–396.

¹⁴ Youn, C. Jung, H.J. “Semantic network analysis to explore the concept of sustainability in the apparel and textile industry Sustainability” 2021, 13, 3813

methods in which individuals might participate enables the identification of future results that may work for others.¹⁵

Sustainable consumption, in general, must feel relevant to customers' life and boost their social image. If these circumstances are satisfied, customers are more likely to acquire a favorable attitude toward sustainable alternatives and experience increased peer pressure to purchase sustainable clothes and overcome barriers to sustainable consumption.¹⁶

III. CONSUMERS' RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

The overexploitation of natural resources for human interests and its long-term negative consequences forced us to acknowledge our duty to nature. One manifestation¹⁷ Of this understanding is the growth of environmentally responsible purchase behaviors among consumers. According to one study, private family consumption activities account for around 40% of environmental damage.

Environmental responsibility of consumers refers to consuming actions that assist the environment or cause minor damage than substitutable activities.¹⁸ The ecological concern may be defined as a solid favorable attitude toward environmental preservation.¹⁹ Then, they described²⁰ environmental concern as a general or global attitude that has an indirect influence on the action via behavioral intentions, based on the work of this definition, which defines environmental concern as "a broad notion that encompasses sentiments about a variety of green concerns." Consumer Environmental Responsibility is defined as "a state in which an individual expresses an intention to take action aimed at resolving environmental problems, acting not as an individual consumer with his or her economic interests, but rather through the lens of a citizen consumer concept of societal-environmental well-being." "Additionally, this action will be defined by an awareness of environmental problems, knowledge of the remedial alternatives best suited for problem alleviation, ability to carry out their own chosen activity,

¹⁵ Chung, K. "Exploring customers' post-dining behavioral intentions toward green restaurant: An application of the theory of planned behavior." 2016, 9, 119–134.

¹⁶ J. Liu, C. Kim, S.-H. "Environmentally sustainable textile and apparel consumption: The role of consumer knowledge, perceived consumer effectiveness and perceived personal relevance." 2013, 37, 442–452.

¹⁷ Grunert S. C., "What is green about green consumers besides their environmental concern? 22nd Annual Conference of the European Marketing Academy," 2: (1993).

¹⁸ Ebreo A., Hershey J. and Vining J. "Reducing solid waste: linking recycling to environmentally responsible consumerism, Environment, and Behaviour," 31: 107–134 (1999).

¹⁹ Gill J. D., Crosby L. A. and Taylor J. R., "Ecological concern, attitudes, and social norms in voting behavior, Public Opinion Quarterly," 50: 537–554 (1986).

²⁰ Zimmer M.R., Stafford T.F., and Stafford M.R., "Green issues: dimensions of environmental concern, Journal of Business Research," 30(1): 63-74 (1994).

and a genuine desire to act after weighing their locus of control and determining that these actions can be meaningful in problem alleviation.”²¹

A new environmental paradigm is required, including an attitude and specific activities that the ecologically conscious individual would engage in.²² These scholars acknowledged that ecological issues mainly resulted from more conventional attitudes and ideas prevalent throughout society. Additionally, they urged that man lives in peace with nature and that economic expansion be constrained.

Environmentally responsible consumers must possess environmental knowledge and awareness.²³ Individuals' level of understanding may not necessarily correspond to the amount of information they are exposed to. For example,²⁴ Because of our long-term immersion in environmental data, academics have a limited understanding of what the general population knows about environmental issues. Research on 128 ecological studies was examined in a meta-analysis.²⁵ They determined that knowledge is necessary for many other characteristics linked with environmentally responsible behavior. Additionally, we offer an environmental behavior model in which the desire to act is driven by a mix of different elements, such as cognitive knowledge, cognitive abilities, and personality traits. According to this approach, mental knowledge refers to an individual's awareness of current environmental challenges. As a result, it is reasonable to predict that consumers' level of knowledge and understanding about ecological concerns affects their level of responsibility regarding their purchase behavior.

Along with possessing an attitude and understanding, environmentally conscious customers must engage in specific actions.²⁶ Attitude and knowledge influence the ecologically appropriate behaviors that individuals are currently undertaking or are willing to pursue. The importance of 'actual commitment' as a proxy for an individual's current behavior was emphasized. It appears that consumers' environmental responsibility is mirrored in their prior ecological activity.²⁷

²¹ Stone G., James H. B., and Cameron M., "ECOSCALE: a scale for measuring environmentally responsible consumers, *Psychology & Marketing*," 12: 595-612 (1995).

²² Dunlap R. E. and Van Liere K. D. "The new environmental paradigm, *Journal of Environmental Education*," 9, 10-19 (1978).

²³ Stone G., James H. B., and Cameron M., "ECOSCALE: a scale for measuring environmentally responsible consumers, *Psychology & Marketing*," 12: 595-612 (1995).

²⁴ Arcury T. A. "Environmental attitudes and environmental knowledge, *Human Organization*," 49, 300-304 (1990).

²⁵ Hines J. M., Hungerford H. R., and Tomera A. N. "Analysis of research on responsible environmental behavior: a meta-analysis, *Journal of Environmental Education*," 18: 1-8 (1986)

²⁶ Bennet D. B. "Evaluating environmental education programs." In J. A. Swain & W. B. Stapp (Eds.), *Environmental Education* (113-164). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. (1974).

²⁷ Hines J. M., Hungerford H. R., and Tomera A. N., "Analysis of research on responsible environmental behavior: a meta-analysis, *Journal of Environmental Education*," 18: 1-8 (1986).

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER LAWS AND JUDICIAL REACTIONS

Ecology is the study of the interaction of organisms and their environment. It now encompasses humanity's reliance on and relationship with the natural world.

Environmental cost: is the price paid by the environment, industry or the manufacturer for the manufacturing and disposal of a consumer product. This industry call not quantifiable in monetary terms but is related to environmental deterioration and depletion. Environmental costs are also paid by future generations of humanity, not only the current age.

The Polluter Pays Principle (PPP) is a relatively new concept in which the individual or entity responsible for any pollution is held accountable. The payment to the polluter might be compensatory, or the polluter can make apologies by altering his consumption or production patterns to minimize corrosion.

The User Pays Principle (UPP) states that a consumer product can pollute the environment during its manufacturing process and use. Occasionally, the cost of pollution is split between the polluter and the user. The user's contribution to mitigating the product's polluting impacts is mainly related to its disposal.²⁸

V. INDIA'S ENVIRONMENT AND CONSTITUTION

The preservation and promotion of the environment is a constitutional obligation. It is a big thing for a government that believes in the values of the welfare state. The Indian Constitution has specific provisions for environmental preservation in the chapters of the Directive Principles of State Policy and the Fundamental Duties. In recent years, court activity has contributed to the lack of specific constitutional protections for the right to a clean and healthy environment.

Clause (g): 48-A and 51-A At first, environmental protection was not explicitly included in the Indian Constitution. India's 42nd Amendment to the Constitution was passed in 1976 due to the Stockholm Conference and rising public concern over environmental catastrophes in the 1970s. Environmental protection was added to the Constitution in a new amendment.

VI. IMPLEMENTATION OF A UNIFIED CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

As a result, who has the authority to make such a call? In a Western-style democracy, the Parliament, the democratically elected head of state, is held to account. There are, however, two issues with this answer. Global interdependence may significantly impact the effectiveness

²⁸ consumer responsibilities, available at: <https://www.egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/13491/1/Unit-10.pdf> accessed 20 feb 2022

of national governmental decisions. The second is that consumers' and the environment's interests are spread thinly throughout the political spectrum, making it difficult for them to influence policy.

The ability of national states to conduct business and provide for the needs of their citizens has been severely weakened as a result of the economic system's globalization. While there are agencies with enormous worldwide influence, regionalization has been the answer up to now, rather than the establishment of global political organizations,²⁹ The daily politics, on the other hand, are unaffected by them. The European Union is responsible for addressing both policy areas in Europe. Increasingly, the Member States' responsibility is to implement Brussels-issued directives. Using the EC Treaty's subsidiary principle to halt this trend would be futile, as this trend is irreversible. There will, of course, be some accountability on the part of Member States.³⁰ I have attempted to concretize this notion elsewhere in the world of tourism. It is not appropriate for European tourism policy to take the place of national tourism policies. They must be more cohesive, but they must also be less competitive in setting their environmental standards to attract as many tourists and tour companies as possible.

The term "diffuse interests." Social security, consumption, and the environment are common interests shared by everyone in society. Individual citizens do not care about them because of the free-rider mechanism. Decision-making is challenging for them because notable interest organizations are not promoting them. There is a need to take specific steps to assure their presence on the board. Endowing groups with the right to be heard to take action, and suit for damages (class action) based on their skill and willingness to advance shared interests, rather than their membership, is a way to achieve these goals. NGOs, which stand for non-governmental organizations, operate in much the same way as today's environmental and consumer advocacy groups. Consumers and environmental groups can also bring together ecological concerns. Environmental groups can offer advice.³¹ More than in consumer magazine articles, examinations have been done previously and to more considerable extents. In Germany, for example, there has been a long tradition of providing food guidance that includes environmental factors for years. These centers interact with environmental organizations and provide energy-saving recommendations.

²⁹ Harland, D. (1987). "The United Nations guidelines for consumer protection. *Journal of Consumer Policy*," 10, 245–266.

³⁰ Micklitz, H.-W. (1995b). "Principles of justice in private law within the European integration." pp. 249–267.

³¹ Grunert-Beckmann, S.C. "The environmental commitment of consumer organizations in Denmark, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Belgium." *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 20, 45–67. (1997).

Legislators must create substantive and procedural requirements for NGOs if their validity can be proven. Eco-taxes and other particular measures cannot be enacted until Parliament formally adopts a bill, of course. To avoid paternalism in decision-making, legislators should instead set up mechanisms that ensure that all relevant interests are taken into consideration. The right to make decisions on topics that are not garnering attention is not what NGOs need to demand.³² These organizations necessitate the formation of ecologically diverse advisory councils. Membership in such groups is a requirement for the appropriate non-profit organizations. Ecological issues must be considered when developing legislation governing public access to cultural and natural resources. Such a rule should be void if it does not comply with the law.

I used lower court involvement as an example, but the right to be heard in top courts, such as the European Court of Justice, is essential. Unfortunately, the precedent set by the ECJ prevents this from happening. Therefore, environmental concerns are actively represented at three levels: local government, legislative legislation, and jurisdiction (the three power centers of the modern democratic state). Nationally and locally, this is true.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Consumers concerned about environmental issues are more likely to purchase environmentally friendly clothing and habits, as seen by the findings of this study. Customers that are not concerned about sustainability will recycle less and engage in less environmentally friendly practices. Family and friends can impact whether or not a person decides to seek environmentally friendly methods and solutions. We cannot expect permanent change until sustainable practices are widespread and straightforward. Customers must also understand the long-term benefits and adverse effects of not adopting sustainable practices uniformly. A foundation is laid for future studies on the desire to practice sustainable behavior and buy sustainable items using the findings from this study.

³² Reich, N. (1998). "System der subjektive öffentlichen Rechte" in the Union: A European constitution for citizens of bits and pieces. In: *Academy of European Law*" (Ed.), *Collected Courses of the Academy of European Law*, Vol. VI, Book 1, pp. 157–236.