

An Introduction to Special Issue: Sustainability and Ethical Consumption

We are pleased to present this special issue of *Management Decision*, the aim of which is to advance an in-depth understanding of the area of sustainability and ethical consumption and to proffer new possibilities for future research. This topic has been drawing significant attention, more so in recent decades, as was evident in the large number of manuscripts that were submitted to this issue. We are very delighted to introduce the ten articles in this special issue. Each of these papers furthers understanding of sustainability and ethical consumption and, together, they provide novel directions for future studies.

We first explicate the main concepts that form the basis of this special issue, sustainability and ethical consumption. We then provide an overview of the articles in this issue, highlighting various topics pertaining to this research area.

Sustainability and Ethical Consumption

The current expansion of contemporary capitalism manifests itself in the harm being occasioned to the environment and the promulgation of social and economic exploitation of the individual and societally. Increasingly, the need to take ecological and human social aspects into consideration when pursuing sustainable development objectives, is impinging on the awareness of more businesses (Slawinski and Bansal, 2015).

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) has defined sustainable development as one “that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, pp. 43). This fundamental definition of sustainable development offers a descriptor which clearly is indicative of the perceptions of cause and effect, signifying that today’s needs should not be fulfilled at the sacrifice of tomorrow’s generations. The sustainability debate is poly faceted with multiple

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3 voices whose dynamic is a function of psychological acculturation and political expediency
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5 resulting in an increasing number of environmental regulations. This, despite recognition and
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7 awareness of sustainability issues at national and local levels and the existence of multiple
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9 legislative attempts at regulation. Self-regulation in industry has been attempted, although,
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11 not always with complete success. Sustainability is also becoming a fundamental aspect of
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13 strategic decision making in contemporary businesses, guiding management in assessment
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15 risks which impinge upon the gamut of their business practices (Gupta *et al.*, 2014).
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19 The emphasis on balancing financial, societal and environmental aspects of running a
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21 business has evoked a stream of relevant research which studies the relationships between
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23 industry and society. Over the past three decades research on sustainability has seen a
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25 growing trend in areas such as: sustainable innovation, supply chain management, marketing,
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27 information systems and accounting and finance (Ming-hui and Rust, 2011), whilst Corporate
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29 Social Responsibility effectively dominates much of business studies (Lee *et al.*, 2012).
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33 At the same time, there has been an increase of consumer awareness of the impact of ethical
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35 behavior in the context of human welfare and environmental issues, and this has seen an
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37 exponential growth in research into ethical consumerism. As a result, ethical consumption is
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39 no longer considered as a niche (Carrington *et al.*, 2014; Caruana *et al.*, 2016). Consumers
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41 have become aware that they can effect change by changing the products which they buy, and
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43 are changing their behavior accordingly.
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47 From a business management and consumer behavior viewpoints, we acknowledge the
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49 significant role that sustainability and ethical consumption play in today's field of
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51 management theory and practice. This special issue covers many topics within sustainability
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53 and ethical consumption, which sometimes share commonalities and are yet distinct.
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56 **Papers in this Special Issue:**
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3 We called for empirical and conceptual submissions that offer valuable contributions which
4 have significant theoretical and managerial implications and review pertinent issues in
5 sustainability and ethical consumption. The articles in this issue deal with a range of topics
6 from philanthropic engagement, ethical investment in corporations, collaborative framework
7 for balancing stakeholder power and social responsibilities to responsible consumer behavior,
8 fair trade movement, mapping the sharing economy for sustainability, ethical product
9 attributes, green purchase intention, and the role of information to ethical consumers. The
10 studies in this issue employ different methodologies (quantitative, qualitative and conceptual)
11 and study different stakeholders (consumers, organizations).
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23 The first three papers focus on the **organizational perspective on sustainability**. The
24 opening paper ‘The effect of firm strategic orientation on corporate philanthropic
25 engagement’ (Abebe and Cha, 2018) focuses on the key role of corporate strategic
26 orientations as drivers of organization’s philanthropic engagement. In particular, the authors
27 examine relationship of two broad demonstrate corporate strategic orientation: domain
28 offence and domain abandonment strategies with the level of philanthropic engagement
29 exhibited by the organizations. For this purpose, data from 122 publicly traded US
30 organizations from 2008 to 2013 were examined to determine the relationship between
31 corporate strategic policies and philanthropic engagement. The authors found that there was a
32 positive relationship between domain offence strategies and philanthropy, whilst the contrary
33 was reported for domain abandonment strategies. As a result, the findings of this study
34 propose an important link between domain offence strategies and corporate philanthropy.
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49 The second study titled ‘Perfectionist decision-making style and ethical investment
50 willingness: a two-factor causal mediation model’ by Lin *et al.* (2018) aims to examine the
51 ethical investment willingness decision-making process of the investors in a CSR context.
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55 They found that perfectionist decision-making style is a driver for perceived moral intensity,
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3 substitutability of financial returns, and ethical investment willingness. Further, perceived
4 moral intensity and substitutability of financial returns were found to be positively related to
5 ethical investment willingness. Also, the authors found support for a two-factor causal
6 mediation model, as perceived moral intensity is positively related to substitutability of
7 financial returns. The third study titled 'For the balance of stakeholders' power and
8 responsibility. A collaborative framework for implementing social responsibility issues in
9 construction projects' by Lin *et al.* (2018) focus on developing and designing a collaborative
10 framework for balancing stakeholder power and social responsibilities in construction
11 projects. Adopting a multi-phase case study approach in a real estate project in China, the
12 authors substantiated the framework and found that stakeholder engagement is enhanced by
13 implementing the framework, also leading to better communication and trust, and increased
14 collaboration through a collective form of responsibility.

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29 From a **collaborative sustainable development** view point, in the fourth paper titled
30 'Mapping the sharing economy for sustainability research', Plewnia and Guenther (2018)
31 develop a holistic framework of sharing economy including various business models and
32 activities. In this conceptual paper, they propose four main dimensions characterising sharing
33 economy, namely, shared good or service, market structure, market orientation, and industry
34 sector.

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43 The remaining papers deal with a range of topics within ethical consumption. The fifth paper
44 titled "Selecting decision-relevant ethical product attributes for grocery shopping" by
45 Hasanzade *et al.* (2018) aims at understanding consumer preferences for the provision of
46 relevant product production information (labour exploitation, animal welfare and
47 environment) which could address underlying uncertainties and add impetus to address
48 concerns about ecological matters. The authors determine three consumer segments, ethically
49 motivated, price oriented and price-quality oriented consumers. They also argue that
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3 information about animal welfare is most important to the consumers in making decisions
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5 followed by information about human and labour rights and environmental protection.
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7 The objective of the sixth study titled ‘Sustainable consumption: Insights from the protection
8 motivation (PMT), deontic justice (DJT) and construal level (CLT) theories’ by Ibrahim and
9 Al-Ajlouni (2018) is the examination of the role of Deontic Justice, Protection Motivation
10 and Construal Level theories to understand green motivations and intentions. The authors,
11 through an experimental survey, involving 471 participants, propose and test the influence of
12 threat appraisal, coping appraisal, and deontic justice dimensions on green purchase intention.
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14 The authors also study construal variable as a moderator in the relationship between these
15 variables and green purchase intention.
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25 In the seventh paper titled ‘Fair trade and consumer social responsibility exploring consumer
26 citizenship as a driver of social and environmental change’ Anderson (2018) explores the
27 historical perspective of fair trade consumers. The influence of the ethical consumer as a
28 motivator for change is examined in the context of Fair Trade, which has now expanded
29 beyond the original north-south divide and now encompasses such emergent economies as
30 India, South Africa and Brazil. Hence, the position of the consumer as an agent for change is
31 of significance to this study and the grouping of consumers into four subtypes is proposed for
32 convenience. These subtypes are considered to be consumers whose concerns are moral
33 action and simple living, living in the world as citizen consumers, solidarity with the
34 marginalized producers, and demand choice. The paper also examines the potential for and
35 impact of globalizing the citizen-consumer and the effects on Fair Trade consumption.
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49 The eight paper “Looking for info? Understanding ethical consumer information management
50 using a diary approach” by Papaoikonomou *et al.* (2018) investigates the role of information
51 in relation to ethical consumption. The authors examine the information search and use of
52 this information by ethical consumers, unpacking the related issues and examining how
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3 consumers address them. By employing a longitudinal qualitative design over 11 weeks, with
4 interviews and diary records, they explained the importance of information search, use and
5 timing of information. They found that consumers spend time and effort in information
6 search and processing regarding a purchase decision. The authors also identify key issues in
7 information management owing to which consumers often shift from maximizers to
8 optimisers.

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15 The ninth paper 'Moral avoidance for people and planet: Anti-consumption drivers' by
16 Sudbury-Riley and Kohlbacher (2018) examine the reasons for moral avoidance as a form of
17 anti-consumption among older consumers and propose that concerns for the planet and
18 human exploitation are the two main causes of moral avoidance. Using a quantitative survey
19 of 457 UK consumers, results confirm existence of two forms of anti-consumption,
20 ecological anti-consumption, related to the exploitation of the planet and social anti-
21 consumption, owing to exploitation of humans. The authors also found that ecological
22 concerns and perceived consumer effectiveness are key predictors to both forms, while
23 ethical ideology also influences anti-consumption.

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36 The tenth article, Ethical consumption and consumers' decision making: the role of moral
37 intuition by Zollo *et al.* (2018) examines the predictors of moral reasoning and cognitive
38 processes which impinge upon adoption of an ethical posture by the consumer by employing
39 the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the socio-intuitionist model. They also propose holistic,
40 inferential, and affective dimensions of intuition as the antecedents of environmental
41 concerns which then impact ethical consumption. It is argued that the only significant
42 antecedent of this is inferential intuition. This, in turn, has born considerable influence on the
43 dimensions of eco-friendly consumer behavior.

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53 Overall, the articles included in this special issues provide meaningful insights in wide
54 ranging topics in the broader literature of sustainability and ethical consumption. The papers
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3 in this special issue help us understand the diverse and complex issues in this field of study.
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5 We hope that this issue will generate a momentum for new research ideas in management
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7 studies pertaining to sustainability and ethical consumption.
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10 11 **Acknowledgments**

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21 continued support.
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