



GREEN PAPER ON RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION IN EUROPE



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CHAPTER 0. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Responsible consumption is the conscious and deliberate choice of goods and services that considers their social, economic, and environmental impacts. Responsible consumption transitions from a model of excessive and wasteful consumption to a culture that prioritizes ethical considerations and sustainability. Responsible consumption has two main guidelines: first, to consume less, only if necessary, and second, to consume better, in the most conscious, critical, supportive, and sustainable way possible.

Responsible consumption acts as a counterpoint to the demand side of corporate social responsibility of companies, and includes three main dimensions: ethical-social, environmental, and economic. These dimensions manifest through concerns about the origins and methods of production of goods and services, the environmental impacts from obtaining their raw materials and during production processes, and for the economic sustainability as well as fair compensation for the individuals, SMEs, and communities involved in the processes of value creation.

Socially responsible consumption is fundamentally committed to economic, environmental, social, and cultural sustainability. It relates to conscious consumption, although it implies more, since it implies the commitment to know but also to consume better.

A literature review and bibliometric analysis have been carried out aiming to understand the evolution and interrelations of terms and topics surrounding socially responsible consumption.

The study aims to fill gaps in the existing literature and identify trends promoting socially responsible consumption. Utilizing the Web of Science database, the study analysed 111 papers, focusing on titles, author keywords, and abstracts. The analysis spanned from 1991 to 2023, with a notable increase in publications from 2016. The study used the Science Mapping Analysis Software Tool (SciMAT) to track scientific knowledge trajectory, dividing the analysis into three periods: 1911-2016, 2017-2020, and 2021-2023.

The results show that the most cited articles addressed topics such as Socially

Responsible Purchase

and Disposal (SRPD), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), local food shopping, and consumer behaviour regarding clothing waste.

Over time, the number of keywords has increased significantly, indicating evolving research interests. Thematic Evolution Maps have shown a progression from corporate social responsibility to socially responsible consumption.

Regarding the strategic analysis, different themes drove research in each period. In the first period, consumer behaviour was central. Attitudes and determinants emerged as driving themes in subsequent periods, influencing research focus on socially responsible consumption. The study highlights the growing interest in socially responsible consumption and the evolving nature of research themes, emphasizing the importance of understanding consumer behaviour and attitudes in promoting responsible consumption practices.

From the study of consumption in Europe through the consumer survey, it has been verified that there is a high degree of knowledge about the impacts of consumption and an awareness of the weight of consumer purchasing decisions. However, this awareness translates into a somewhat disparate purchasing behaviour since consumers behave responsibly sometimes but not others. From the study of the components of attitude, it has been concluded that the cognitive component presents a high level that does not always correlate with a similar affective component, since the respondents know a lot but are not necessarily concerned about it. The main obstacles to more responsible consumption are the price of sustainable products and their availability, as well as the need to be informed and compare, which is an investment of time and interest that not all consumers can make.

Regarding the regulation of responsible consumption in Europe, there is a large number of regulations on multiple aspects ranging from eco-design to waste management, which have led to replications in member countries at all levels. This abundance has created a profuse and sometimes confusing legislative framework, with an administrative and bureaucratic burden that often neutralises its ability to influence the real problem. In addition, the institutions that apply and manage this issue have been multiplied, but it does

not seem that companies, private institutions, and citizens have been effectively involved in its conception and implementation.

The push for responsible consumption in Europe has generated a wide range of actions aimed at promoting it, including campaigns and projects, both private and public, that appeal to individuals, governments, and businesses to address environmental and social challenges. The campaigns, projects and actions analysed reflect the search for a collective commitment, where consumers become active agents of change. Although the value of these actions individually is small, the presence of such a broad set of actions is creating a change of mentality and a state of opinion in favour of more responsible consumption that we believe will not be reversed.

The promotion of a socially responsible consumption model is a complex task, which involves all actors: consumers, companies, the third sector, as well as public administrations at all levels. The most relevant recommendations to consumers in this green book are displayed in the areas of food, clothing, mobility and tourism, and the responsible use of resources, such as water, energy, etc., and can be summarised in the well-known scheme of the 3Rs: reduce, reuse, and recycle.

With regard to administrations and policymakers, multiple measures have been compiled, ranging from consumer information and awareness, education at all levels, improved regulations to facilitate responsible consumption through labelling and regulation, as well as through the application of incentives that make ethical and sustainable products to be competitive with conventional ones. Not forgetting the importance of having independent and reliable certifications and accreditations that give consumers confidence and prevent them from having to search for detailed information that is not always within their reach.

CHAPTER 1. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

1.1. Concept of responsible consumption

Responsible consumption, at its core, is the conscious and deliberate choice of goods and services that take into account their social, economic and environmental impact (Fisk, 1973). It reflects of a shift in mindset from a model of excessive and wasteful consumption to a culture that prioritizes ethical considerations and sustainability.

Responsible consumption has two main guidelines: first, consume less, by sincerely and thoughtfully questioning the necessity of acquiring that good or service; and second, to consume better, in the most conscious, critical, supportive and sustainable way possible.

Although the concept of responsible consumption has its foundational roots in 'green' consumption (Dueñas Ocampo et al., 2014) today, most experts consider responsible consumption to be a complex construct that has been gaining new dimensions and evokes the idea of consumer social responsibility. That is why it is often referred to as socially responsible consumption, drawing a parallel between corporate social responsibility and consumer social responsibility. In this way, responsible consumption can be interpreted in two ways:

- On the one hand, as an ethical demand from market, which from the market urges the productive sector to fully assume its corporate social responsibility.
- On the other hand, as a reward from consumers to those companies that act with social responsibility.

However, responsible consumption is more than just a reaction by consumers to the current production and consumption model (Pérez-Barea et al., 2018). Responsible consumption has an intrinsic value that makes it feel worthwhile to do so even if it has no impact on supply, prompting companies to modify their production model. In fact, some research highlights the advantages perceived by those who practise conscious and attentive consumption (Palacios-González & Chamorro-Mera, 2020) as the feeling of well-being generated by having done the right thing. For this reason, concepts such as ethical consumption, fair consumption or conscious consumption are often

considered alongside to responsible consumption which, although they have great similarities with socially responsible consumption, also include in certain cases some differential nuances of their own.

1.2. Dimensions of responsible consumption

Responsible consumption contains a multitude of elements, which can assume different weights in the purchasing decisions of individuals, as they evoke aspects of the moral conscience, of the education and knowledge that one possesses, of individual responsibility and of the social and humanitarian concern of each person. The most significant dimensions of responsible consumption are aligned with to those of corporate social responsibility, which has three main areas: social, environmental, and economic:

1. Ethical and social considerations, which are manifested in an awareness of otherness, in a concern for the implications of consumption on others, considering aspects such as the working conditions in which goods are produced, animal welfare and general respect for life, and avoiding products that imply exploitation, child labour, inequality, forced labour or abuse.
2. Environmental awareness, which involves choosing products and services that have the minimum impact on the environment, making purchasing decisions that seek to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, conserve resources, minimize pollution, preserve biodiversity, reduce water and energy consumption, etc.
3. Economic considerations, since economically responsible consumption implies supporting companies that behave with social responsibility, that adhere to fair trade practices and contribute positively to local economies, maintaining fair treatment of their stakeholders, adequate remuneration to contributors to value creation and healthy integration with their environments.

To these objective elements we could add subjective and personal considerations, which refer to the idea expressed above that responsible consumption produces satisfaction and well-being in those who practise it:

- Responsible consumption is closely linked to personal health and well-being. Choosing local, seasonal and sustainable foods and products contributes to health, reducing the risk of products that are excessively refined, ultra-processed and full of chemical additives. Likewise, reducing the use of means of transport such as one's own vehicle to walk more or use bicycles are also factors that contribute to physical and mental well-being.
- Consuming consciously can reduce stress and promote a sense of personal satisfaction and empowerment by freeing us from the imperatives of fashion and the pressure of marketing with the conviction that we have acted responsibly by doing the best we can.
- A socially conscious consumer engages in social change by using their purchasing power as a political tool of citizen activism, undertaking their responsibility in solving common problems through these small daily gestures.
- Economic considerations also apply to the consumer himself, who may see how a more austere and prudent way of consuming benefits his economy.

1.3. Expressions of responsible consumption

Responsible consumption can manifest itself in different types of behaviours (Francois-Lecompte, Agnes & Roberts, James A., 2006; Pérez-Barea et al., 2018):

1. Concern about the consequences of business practices, which leads the consumer to take into account the conduct of companies in economic, labour, legal, social and environmental issues, penalizing brands that act unethically.
2. Preference for the purchase of products that contribute to good causes, such as humanitarian and social actions, development cooperation, fair trade, the fight against poverty, support for children, the promotion of equality and inclusion, contributions to scientific research, etc.
3. Support for small businesses over large companies, which is manifested in the preference for retail trade, buying in local markets or directly

- from producers, and the rejection of large multinationals and shopping centres.
4. Attention to the geographical origin of the products, giving preference to the products native to the country or the nearest local environment.
 5. Reduction of consumption in general, trying to buy only what is necessary, buying less quantity and less frequently, and avoiding the purchase of what the consumer can do for himself.

1.4. Possible Impacts of Responsible Consumption

Responsible consumption is of paramount importance in a context where the challenges of climate change, resource depletion and social inequalities are increasingly evident. A more responsible consumption model based on the well-known scheme of the three R's (reduce, reuse and recycle) leads to mitigating the impacts of consumption in many aspects, causing results such as the following:

1. Conservation of the environment, one of the most pressing problems facing humanity. Irresponsible consumption accelerates deforestation, habitat destruction, pollution, and the depletion of finite resources, so shifting towards a more responsible consumption model is essential to minimise these harms and preserve the planet for future generations.
2. Slowing down climate change, caused by the overconsumption of fossil fuels and the carbon footprint generated by manufacturing and transportation. Responsible consumption seeks to reduce energy use and support clean energy alternatives, playing a vital role in halting the climate crisis.
3. Promoting social equity, as responsible consumption is based on considerations of social justice and equity, supporting companies that pay fair wages, provide safe working conditions, and promote racial and gender equality. Responsible consumption also means becoming aware of the effects of globalization, which has negative social impacts on less developed or under-regulated communities.
4. Enhancing health and physical and mental well-being, since responsible consumption is committed to the choice of sustainable and natural foods and products, to an active lifestyle limiting the use of

the car, which has a positive impact on health, not only because of the increase in physical activity but also because it reduces pollution. On the other hand, consuming consciously provides a sense of self-control, reduces stress, and provides satisfaction for doing something right.

1.5. The relationship between responsible consumption and sustainability

Responsible consumption is a key component of achieving sustainability, as it aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (SDG12). Sustainability manifests in several dimensions, not only in the environmental one, although this is the most cited, which is why responsible consumption is sometimes identified with green or ecological consumption:

1. Environmental sustainability, as it is aware of the finitude of the planet's resources and seeks to reduce waste, pollution and curb the depletion of resources. Responsible consumption promotes the use of renewable energy sources, sustainable and regenerative agriculture, and biodiversity conservation.
2. Economic sustainability, which involves maintaining stable and prosperous economies that seek the well-being of all citizens, by supporting fair trade practices, decent and fairly paid work, fair competition, stable and equitable relationships with suppliers, support for local businesses, and responsible investment.
3. Social sustainability, through fair treatment of people and communities, both locally and globally, supporting companies that respect human and labour rights, equality, and non-discrimination, which contribute to the well-being of the communities in which they operate.
4. Cultural sustainability, by recognising the importance of preserving cultural diversity, ancestral knowledge, and natural and cultural heritage, through practices such as support for artisans, respect for indigenous communities, and cultural traditions.

Responsible consumption goes beyond individual actions; It encompasses a sense of global responsibility. It recognises that our decisions impact not only our local communities, but also the global ecosystem and society at large, being a multifaceted concept that includes ethical, environmental, economic, and social considerations.

1.6. Responsible consumption and conscious consumption

It's important to understand that while the terms "responsible consumption" and "conscious consumption" are often used interchangeably, they can take on slightly different nuances depending on the context.

The *concept of responsible consumption* emphasizes the individual's willingness and commitment to make purchasing decisions that can have a positive impact on both the environment and society. The commitment emphasizes individual responsibility, with the consumer assuming that their purchasing choices have consequences that go beyond individual satisfaction. Responsible consumption appeals to consumer ethics, to values that are based on otherness and empathy.

Conscious consumption, *on the other hand*, places the emphasis on personal awareness, focusing on making informed and thoughtful decisions when purchasing products and services, being aware of their implications. It appeals more to the cognitive and rational dimension. However, although conscious consumption is a necessary step towards a more responsible mode of consumption, this is not always the case, as is the case with the consumption of products that the subject himself knows to be harmful to himself or others.

In any case, both concepts are based on informed and thoughtful decision-making, which can contribute to modifying traditional purchasing habits towards a consumption model that is more concerned with social and environmental impacts. In addition, they place the focus on the consumer, recognising their core role in shaping the market.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL STUDY OF RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION RESEARCH

2.1. Bibliometric analysis

The objective of this bibliometric analysis is to understand the evolution and relationship of terms around ‘socially responsible consumption’. This involves developing a bibliometric analysis to address the gaps found in the literature, as well as to identify potential trends that encourage socially responsible consumption and that are not sufficiently developed.

2.2. Data collection

To conduct the bibliometric analysis, the Web of Science database was utilised, specifically, the core collection of the software. This database contains more than 68 million documents from 1900 to the present. Using an advanced search, the field tags 'socially responsible consumption' was entered in the title (TI), author keywords (AK) and abstract (AB). The search included the Science Citation Index Expanded (SCI-E), the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and the Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI). The objective was to analyse the results to identify trends and publication patterns.

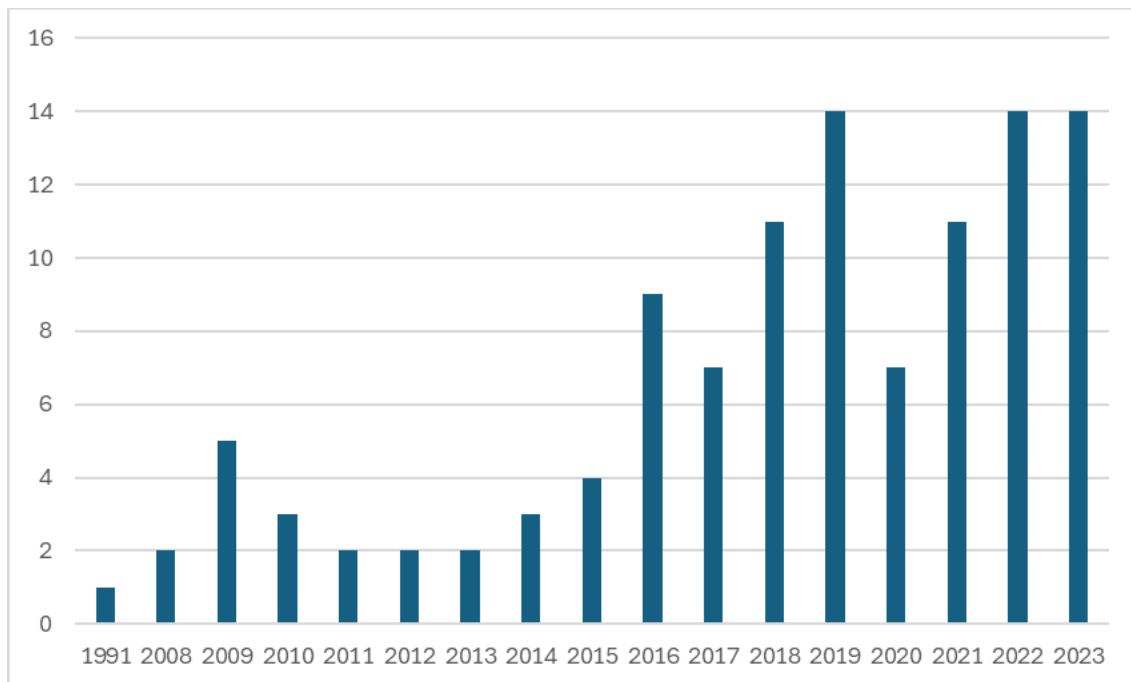


Figure 2.1. Number of documents per year of publication.

The analysis covered 111 papers from 270 authors and 685 keywords. Figure 2.1 illustrates the number of documents published per year. There it can be seen that the publication of this subject has an upward trend from 2016 although there are years in which this trend is broken, but it reflects the interest of the academy in this field of study.

2.3. Methodology

To carry out the bibliometric analysis, we utilised the Science Mapping Analysis Software Tool (SciMAT), a software program that tracks the trajectory of scientific knowledge. The program examines the documents that form the knowledge base of the subject, compiling the keywords of the articles and authors to detail their evolution. Once this base is available, the software displays the results, which are divided into two sections: the longitudinal analysis and the analysis by period. The first shows the evolution of the topics and keywords over all the selected periods. In this study, there are three periods (Table 2.1).

Period	Number of documents
1911-2016	33
2017-2020	39
2021-2023	39
Total	111

Table 2.1. Reports the number of documents per period.

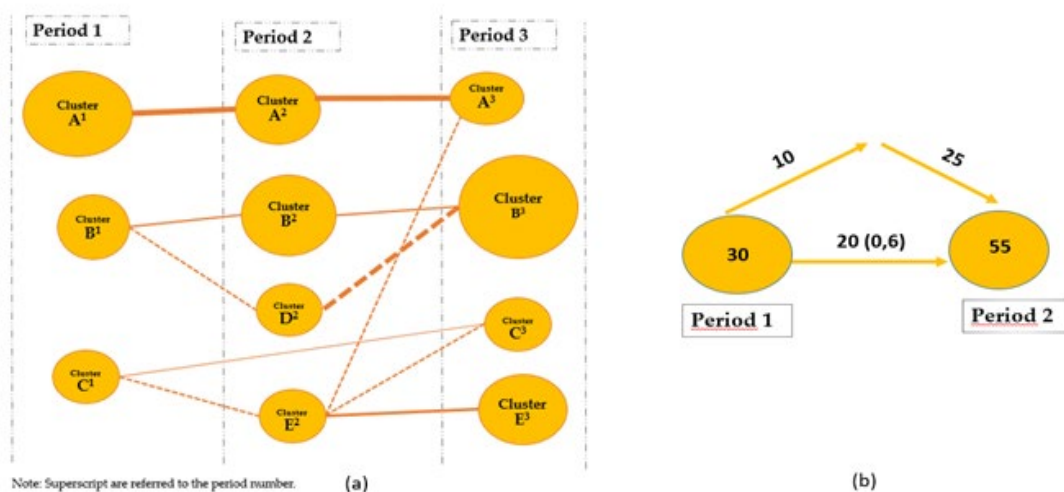


Figure 2.2. Thematic Evolution Map (2.2a) and overlap map (2.2b). Source: Adaptation of Cobo et al., 2011.

For a better understanding of the results, we will explain the meaning of each of the maps that make up the bibliometric analysis. The Thematic Evolution Map (Figure 2.2a) is composed of as many columns as periods created in the study and shows the topics most treated by science in each year, linked together according to the evolution of these topics. Figure 2.2b shows an example of the Overlapping Map showing the maintenance or entry and exit of keywords over the periods.

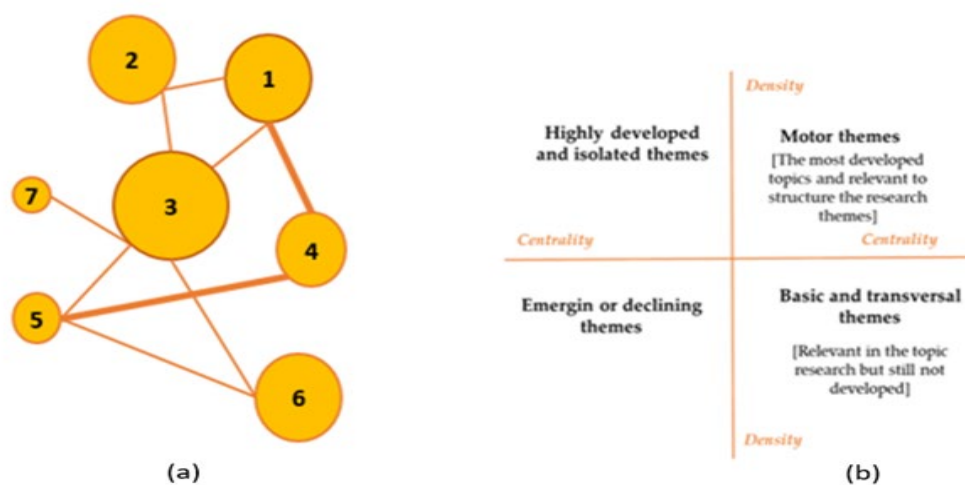


Figure 2.3. Thematic network (2.3a) and strategic diagram (2.3b). Source: Cobo et al., 2011

In order to understand the situation of the most discussed topics in this period, the Strategy Map (Figure 2.3b) should be divided into four zones according to centrality and density. Centrality measures the relevance of the external connections of the topic in question with others. Therefore, its consideration in the overall development of the socially responsible consumption theme. Density refers to the level of internal cohesion of the group under investigation, i.e., it is the internal pressure of those key words of the theme. In the upper right quadrant (Figure 2.3b) are the topics most discussed and developed in the period, in the lower right corner (Figure 2.3b) are the topics that have not been developed much, but have made important contributions to the research analysed, in the lower left corner (Figure 2.3b)

are the topics that are not yet developed and may be appearing as attractive topics for research and, finally, in the upper left corner (Figure 2.3b) are those topics that are very specific and isolated (Cobo et al., 2011).

The Thematic Network (Figure 2.3a) represents the graph formed by the keywords and their interconnections within a theme. It will be labelled with the name of the most central keyword within the topic. The volume of the spheres varies according to the number of documents of each keyword and the thickness of the link between the spheres is proportional to the equivalence index or internal relationship between the two concepts (Cobo et al., 2011).

2.4. Results

As already noted, the analysis covered 111 articles published between 1991 and 2023. From 2017 onwards, the publication of articles follows an ascending line, which demonstrates the interest in the subject among the scientific community. Table 2.2 displays the journals with 4 or more documents included in the present study. The most used publication is the Journal of Business Ethics with 8 published documents.

Journal	Documents
Journal of Business Ethics	8
Social Responsibility Journal	7
Sustainability	6
International Journal of Consumer Studies	5
Journal of Cleaner Production	4

Table 2.2. Number of documents ordered by source. Own elaboration.

Title	Authors	Year	Citations
A re-examination of socially responsible consumption and its measurement	Webb, DJ, Mohr, LA, Harris, KE	2008	289
Corporate Socially Responsible initiatives and Their Effects on Consumption of Green Products	Romani, S, Grappi, S, Bagozzi, RP	2016	110
Understanding local food shopping: Unpacking the ethical dimension	Megicks, P, Memery, J, Angell, RJ	2012	94
Sell, give away, or donate: an exploratory study of fashion clothing disposal behaviour in two countries	Bianchi, C, Birtwistle, G	2010	86

Understanding Consumers' Ethical Justifications: A Scale for Appraising Consumers' Reasons for Not Behaving Ethically	d'Astous, A, Legendre, A	2009	80
Underlying Motivations of Organic Food Purchase Intentions	Nasir, VA, Karakaya, F	2014	69
From Bounded Morality to Consumer Social Responsibility: A Transdisciplinary Approach to Socially Responsible Consumption and Its Obstacles	Schlaile, MP, Klein, K, Bäck, W	2018	62

Table 2.3. Number of citations of the main articles. Own elaboration.

Table 2.3 shows the number of citations of the main articles as well as the year of publication. The first of them deals with the Socially Responsible Purchase and Disposal (SRPD), which reflects the advances that have been made in theory and practice in this area. Ethics is also very present in the most cited articles related to the consumption of local foods, the justification of consumers who do not behave ethically in terms of their purchasing profile or the obstacles that socially responsible consumption may encounter. In addition, consumer behaviour in relation to clothing waste is the subject of another of the most cited exploratory studies.

2.4.1. Evolution of keywords

In order to analyse the development of the current research field in relation to socially responsible consumption, it is useful to represent how the keywords used in the research papers have evolved over time in the different periods. Thus, in the overlay map (Figure 2.4) the circles represent each period, and the number of each circle represents the associated keywords in that period. The outgoing top arrow represents the keywords that have ceased to appear from one period to the next, and the incoming top arrows indicate the keywords added to the new period. The arrows connecting the periods give the number of keywords shared between them, including the Stability Index between them.

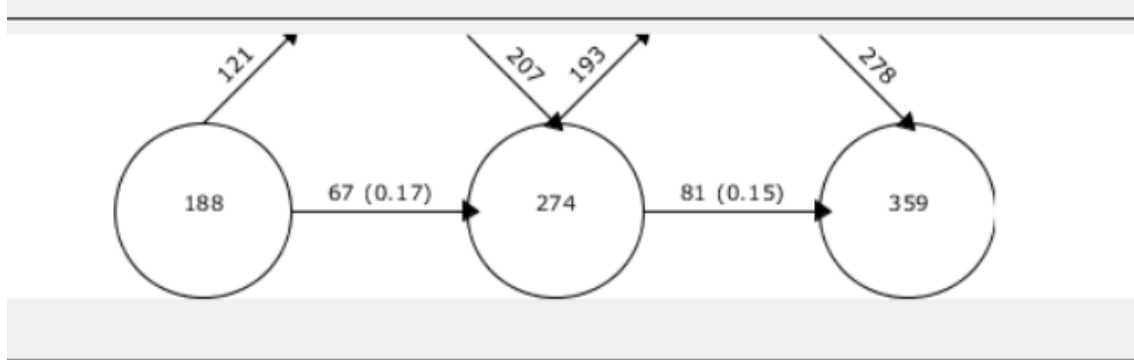


Figure 2.4. Overlapping graph of keywords from 1991 to 2023

The first period (1991-2016), although it adds a period of 25 years, is characterised by a smaller number of keywords than the last two (2017-2020 and 2021-2023). In the first period, there were 188 keywords, of which 121 were no longer used in the following periods. Of the words used in this first period, 67 persisted into the second period. For the second period, 207 additional words were introduced, totalling 274. From the second to the third period 193 keywords vanished and 278 new ones emerged, with 81 continuing to the last period. The number of keywords in the third period is significantly higher than in the first period (359). The stability index between the periods is (0.17), between first and second, and (0.15) between second and third, so the subject matter is undergoing a significant evolution and there is still no similarity between periods as new subjects and concepts are introduced.

2.4.2. Thematic Evolution Map

Within the longitudinal view, the evolution map (Figure 2.5) presents in columns the different periods of the sample, beneath which the most relevant themes are depicted in clusters.

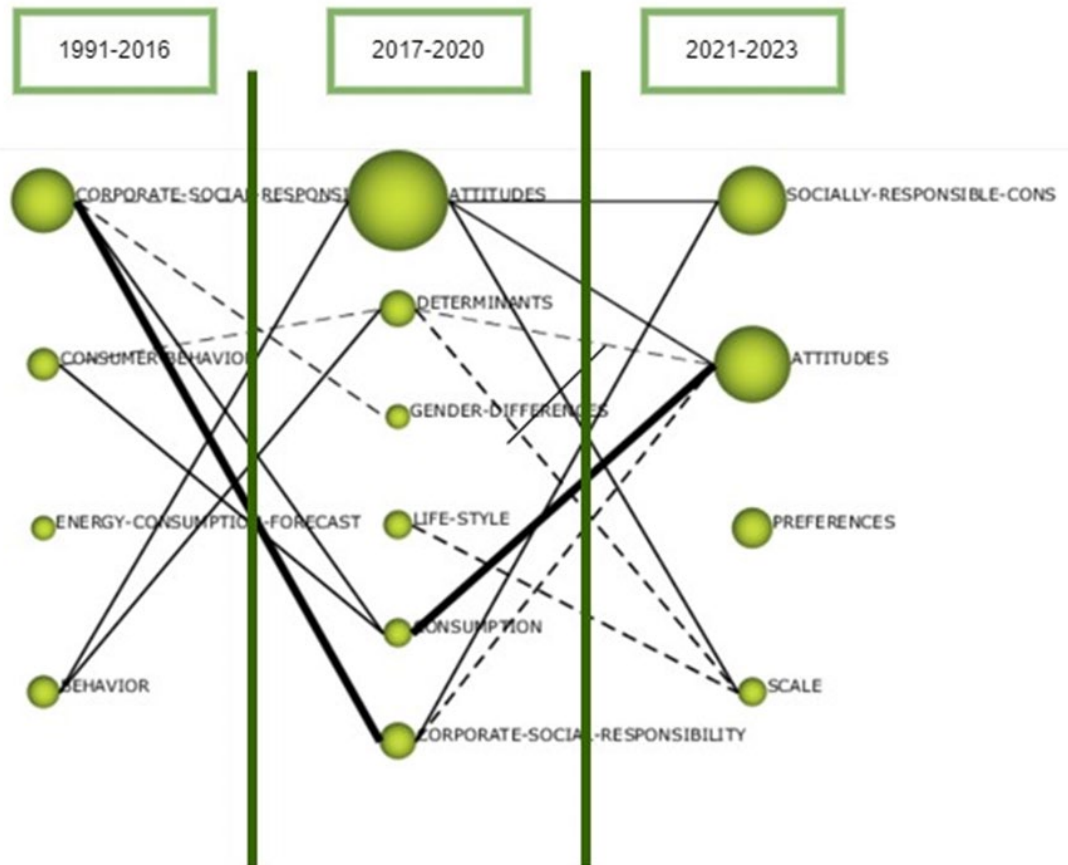


Figure 2.5. Thematic evolution map

These clusters are connected across the periods by lines, which represent the evolutionary trajectory of the topics. If two clusters are linked by a continuous line, they share the main theme, but when a discontinuous link is present between two clusters it indicates that they share elements but not the main theme. Some clusters may not be connected by lines, in which case they represent emerging or isolated themes that currently have no connection with any other cluster at the moment and whose evolution over the different periods needs to be monitored. The size of each cluster is determined by the selected performance measures. In this study, the focus is on the average number of citations.

In Figure 2.5, it is evident how the concept of corporate social responsibility is present in the first two periods with a very strong link (its importance in these two periods is significant) and evolves in the third period towards the concept of socially responsible consumption, which already establishes itself in this last period. Therefore, this last concept is developed on the basis of the corporate responsibility of companies and, as previously mentioned, with an important ethical component.

It is also notable the important evolution of the behaviour concept towards the attitudes concept in the second period, which is consolidated in the third period. In addition, the concept of consumer behaviour emerges from the first period, having a relationship with the concept of consumption until it is related in a very intense way to the cluster attitudes in the last period. Hence, consumer attitudes form the main line in the development of the field of study of socially responsible consumption at present.

2.4.3. Strategic map and thematic network

Longitudinal analysis has made it possible to trace the evolution of the concepts between periods. Now it is pertinent to analyse the significance of each subject within the research field for each period.

a. Period 1991-2016

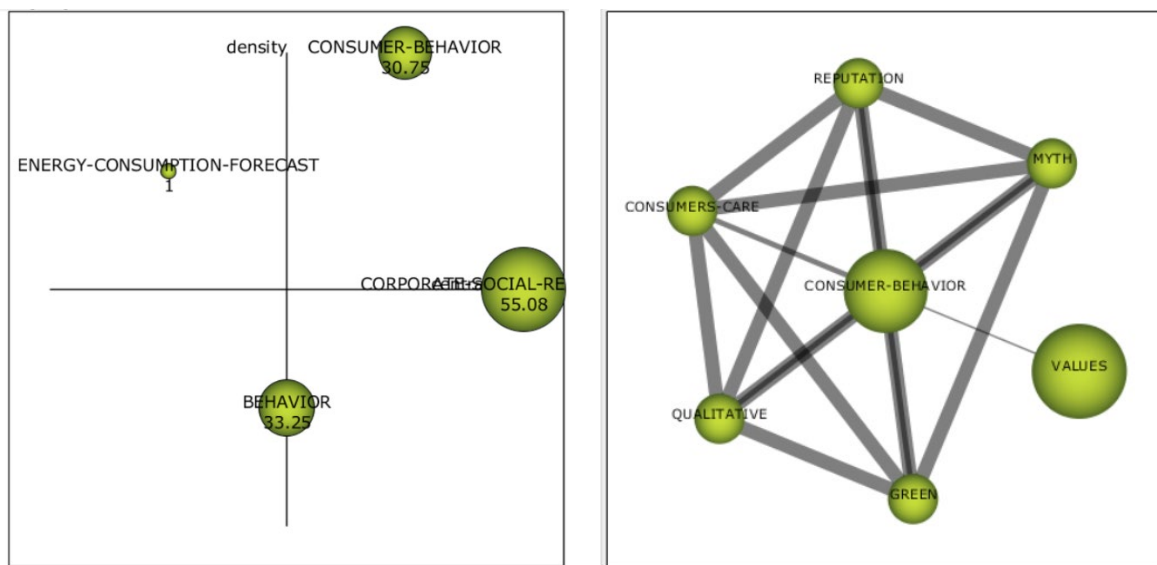
In this period, the driving theme is the concept of consumer behaviour, since it has the highest density and centrality, and it is the one that advances research in this period (Figure 2.6a). The thematic network of this cluster (Figure 2.6b) shows a significant relationship with concepts such as reputation, consumer care, green, qualitative, and myth, that underscores the consumers of responsible, green purchasing in both products (gifts) and services (music concerts), and the reputation of the companies producing these products or services, as well as the purchaser. These concepts are present in various investigations along these lines.

Corporate social responsibility is on the borderline between the driving themes and the cross-cutting themes to be developed. If we recall the information in the thematic evolution map (Figure 2.5), it is maintained in the

first two periods and fulfils this cross-cutting function until the third period, when it develops into the concept of socially responsible consumption.

The behaviour concept is among the cross-cutting and emerging themes and, according to its evolution in the thematic evolution map (Figure 2.5), it evolves towards the determinants concept, which becomes one of the driving themes of the second period.

The energy consumption forecast concept is isolated and without further development, as is also indicated in Figure 2.5.



Figures 2.6a Strategic diagram first period & **2.6b** Thematic network

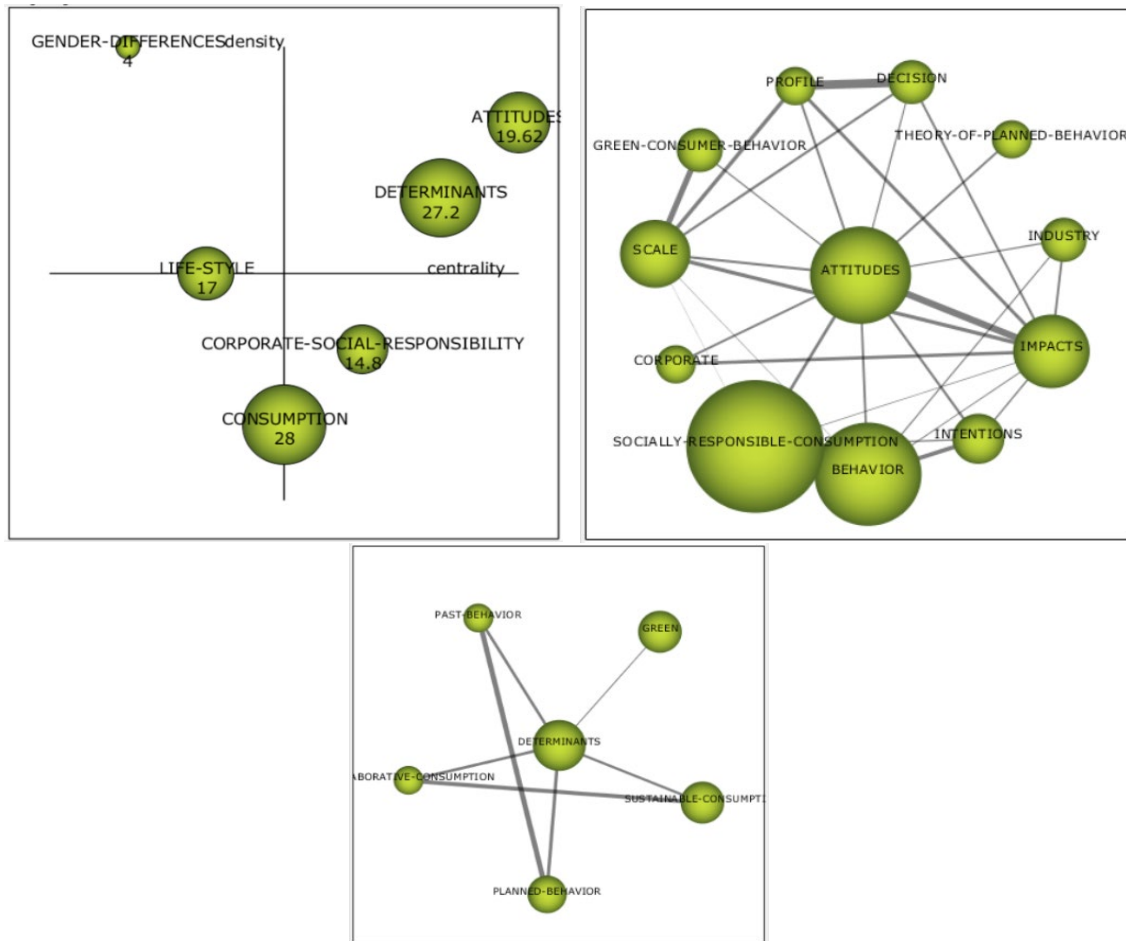
b. Period 2017-2020

The driving themes of this period are attitudes and determinants (Figure 2.7a), and they shape the development of the research in this period. If we study the thematic network of the attitudes concept (Figure 2.7b) indicates an important relationship with the concept of socially responsible consumption, which will be further developed in the third period, as well as with impacts and scale, taking into account the impacts of consumption and the different scales of consumption and the decision-profile binomial, since decisions respond to the profile of each consumer.

The thematic network of the determinants concept (Figure 2.7c) reveals information on the close

relationship of this term with others such as collaborative consumption, sustainable consumption, planned behaviour and past behaviour, all of which are determinants of socially responsible consumption.

The themes corporate social responsibility and consumption, even being on the border between two quadrants, are clearly transversal according to the information given in Figure 2.5 since the relationship between the latter concept and attitudes in the third period is very important.



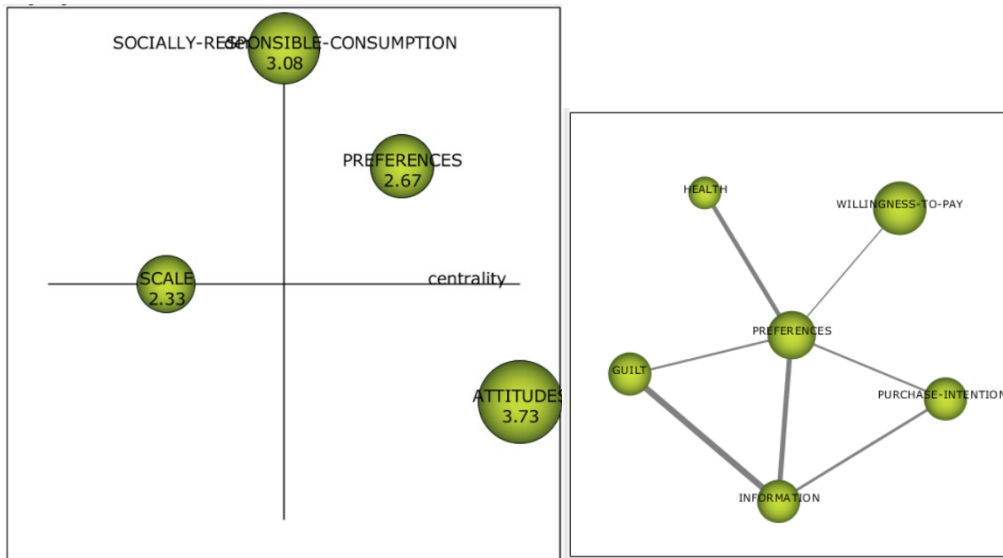
Figures 2.7a Strategic diagram second period, **2.7b** Thematic network Attitudes **2.7c** Thematic network Determinants

Gender difference’s theme is isolated and unrelated to any other and will not evolve in the third period, as can be seen in Figure 2.5.

c. Period 2021-2023

In this last period the driving theme is preferences (Figure 2.8a), whose thematic network (Figure 2.8b) highlights the themes with which it is most

related: information, health, guilt, and purchase intentions, to a lesser extent with willingness to pay. Attitudes is once again a cross-cutting theme that has the potential to be developed in future research towards other concepts, but it underscores the importance of studying consumer attitudes in relation to responsible consumption.



Figures 2.8a Strategic diagram third period & **2.8b** Thematic network

CHAPTER 3. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

3.1. Survey on responsible consumption

To better understand the behaviour of European citizens regarding responsible consumption, a consumer survey has been carried out in the countries involved in the project. Primary data were collected through an ad hoc questionnaire, which aimed to investigate several issues:

1. To measure the level of knowledge that ordinary people have about responsible consumption and its dimensions, by presenting a series of concepts related to the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of consumption.
2. To assess the degree of public awareness of the social, cultural, economic, and ecological implications of consumption.
3. To inquire about social, individual, and cultural attitudes (positive, negative, or neutral) regarding socially responsible consumption.

To understand the types of behaviour and general patterns of consumption that occur in daily life and particularly to identify the disadvantages or obstacles perceived by consumers in practising a more conscious consumption behaviour.

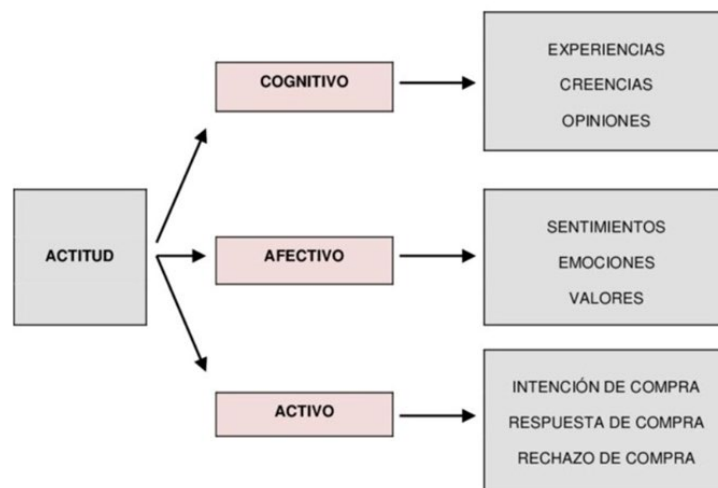


Figure 3.1. Components of Attitude (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960)

3.1.1. Components of Attitude

Using the fundamental concepts of attitude theory and its components (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960) a questionnaire was designed for the general consumer population. In addition to the usual demographic questions, several blocks were included to inquire about the following issues:

- Block 1: **Cognitive component**, i.e. knowledge, experiences, opinions, and beliefs about responsible consumption and its impacts.
- Block 2: **Affective component**, which investigates feelings, emotions, and values associated with responsible consumption, including a question related to the perceived social norm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) to determine the extent to which the consumer is influenced by others' opinion about the consumption habits.
- Block 3: **Behavioural or volitional component**, expressive of the intentions and actions derived from the previous components. This block includes issues such as the respondent's self-perception as a consumer and their motivations, both for moving towards more responsible consumption and for the obstacles they perceive in practising more responsible consumption.

3.1.2. Survey Questionnaire

The questions were posed in an objective format to circumvent the bias of social desirability. Instead of asking respondents about their personal perception or opinions, they were asked to answer why people might choose one action over another.

The issues relating to each group of components are as follows:

Block 1: Cognitive Component

A. KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION – Experiences, information, beliefs, opinions

Point out which of these concepts you are familiar with (you can check as many as you like):

- Climate change
- Eco Bleaching
- Decent Work
- Water footprint
- Micro Plastics
- Greenhouse effect
- Cultural Appropriation
- Micro Mobility
- Emission allowances
- none
- I don't want to answer / I don't know what to answer

Do you know the working conditions in the places where the clothes we buy in developed countries are sewn?

0. I don't want to answer / I don't have an opinion
1. I never notice that
2. Quite a bit
3. I know in some countries the conditions are bad, but it's the legal thing to do there
4. Many large firms outsource to poorer countries to save costs
5. Most of the clothing is produced under abusive working conditions

Are you interested in learning about new forms of mobility, such as hydrogen, electric, hybrid/plug-in vehicles, biofuels, biogas, micro-mobility solutions...? To answer, use the following scale:

- 0 = I don't want to answer / I don't know
 1 = Nothing
 2 = Little
 3 = Something
 4 = Quite a lot
 5 = A lot

What weight do you think the following elements have in purchasing decisions to make consumption more responsible? To answer, use the following scale:

- 0 = I don't want to answer / I don't know
 1 = Very little
 2 = Little
 3 = Neither too much nor too little
 4 = Quite a lot
 5 = A lot
- The price, that it is not quite more expensive than an unsustainable product
 - That uses recycled/renewable materials
 - Offered in bulk or with minimal packaging
 - That it is manufactured under fair working conditions
 - That you can easily find in stores

What reasons do you think most influence people to consume irresponsibly? To answer, use the following scale:

- 0 = I don't want to answer / I don't know
 1 = Very little
 2 = Little
 3 = Neither too much nor too little
 4 = Quite a lot
 5 = A lot
- Lack of awareness of the good or bad impacts of consumption
 - The price, as sustainable products are usually more expensive.
 - Sustainable products are harder to find
 - Believing that sustainable products are of poorer quality/appearance
 - Convenience, not having to waste time getting information and comparing

Block 2. Affective component:

B. FEELINGS, EMOTIONS AND VALUES TOWARDS RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION : worries, fears, feelings of liking or disliking, rejection, etc.

My opinion regarding the accelerated model of consumption that predominates in our society is:

0. I don't want to answer / I don't know what to answer
1. I completely agree, otherwise there would be no prosperity
2. I quite agree, as it has many more advantages than disadvantages
3. I somewhat agree, it's good for the economy and bad for the environment, but you can't have it both
4. I quite disagree, as we are putting our future at risk in exchange for immediate well-being
5. I completely disagree, if we do not act immediately we are heading towards a catastrophe

Mark your degree of agreement with the following statements: To answer, use the following scale:

- 0 = I don't want to answer / I don't have an opinion
 1 = Strongly disagree

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- 2 = Strongly disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Strongly agree
- 5 = Completely agree

- Public transport (metro, bus) is mostly used by people who cannot afford a vehicle of their own
- It is important to dress according to the fashion of each season and to frequently renew your wardrobe
- In the food business, the biggest profits go to distributors
- Restoring or repairing objects such as furniture or appliances is better than directly replacing them with a new one
- Local fresh produce markets have social, cultural and environmental value

Do you think people care what others think about how they shop or consume? To answer, use the following scale:

- 0 = I don't want to answer / I don't know
- 1 = Very little
- 2 = Little
- 3 = Neither too much nor too little
- 4 = Quite a lot
- 5 = A lot

Block 3: Behavioural or volitional component

C. BEHAVIOUR, INTENTIONS, AND RESPONSE ACTIONS

I believe that our purchasing decisions as consumers have an impact on the environment and society. To answer, use the following scale:

- 0 = I don't want to answer / I don't know
- 1 = None
- 2 = Little
- 3 = Something
- 4 = Quite a lot
- 5 = A lot

In your consumption habits, how do you identify yourself as a consumer?

- 0. I don't want to answer / I don't know what to answer
- 1. I'm not worried about what kind of consumer I am
- 2. Sometimes I stop to think about what I should do to consume better
- 3. In some respects I am a conscious consumer, but in others, I am not
- 4. I try to consume consciously quite a few times
- 5. I'm usually a conscientious and responsible consumer

In order to consume more carefully and responsibly, how important do you think the following elements are? To answer, use the following scale:

- 0 = I don't want to answer / I don't know
- 1 = No importance
- 2 = Unimportant
- 3 = Some importance
- 4 = Quite important
- 5 = A lot of importance

- Educate yourself on environmental impacts before you buy
- Read labels to compare products in-store
- Take into account where and under what working conditions the products have been manufactured
- That the product has seals or certifications of quality, sustainability, fair trade, ethical manufacturing, etc.
- That the product or service is from a well-known and reputable brand

Have you stopped consuming a brand when you learned that the company was not socially or environmentally responsible?

- 0. I don't want to answer / I don't know what to answer

1. I never notice that
2. Very rarely
3. Sometimes
4. Quite a few times
5. Always or almost always

3.2. Results of the Survey on Consumer Attitudes and Behaviour

As a result of the survey, 398 responses to the questionnaire were obtained. From this total, 267 filtered responses were retained after eliminating outliers and inconsistencies. Of the filtered total, 246 responses correspond to consumers who declare themselves interested or responsible, while those stating little or no interest in responsible consumption constitute only 7.87% of the valid sample (table 3.1). This proportion aligns with the high level of education among most respondents, implying sufficient knowledge of the subject matter of the survey.

1.	Target population / universe: consumers over 18 years of age.
2.	Geographical coverage: Europe
3.	Languages: Spanish, English, Italian and Portuguese
4.	Sample size: 398 participants
5.	Filtered sample size: 267 participants
6.	Sample design: Sample for convenience
7.	Data collection technique: Google Forms
8.	Job Date: 2022-2024

Table 3. 1. Survey technical sheet

Consumer participation is comparable across the countries involved in the CARE project. In percentage terms, Portugal (29.6%), Italy (29.2%) followed by Spain (28.8%), lead. By gender, 61.6% of respondents are women and 37.3% are men. Regarding age, the majority are between 31 and 40 years old (34.9%) and 41 to 55 years old (29.9%), and, finally, those over 55 years old (22%). Notably, the age group over 41 constitutes more than half of the sample (52%), indicating that the project's main target audience, mature consumers, has been engaged. These are individuals who generally have not been reached by the formal education system with environmental and formal consumption education.

The respondents' level of education is generally high, with 76% having completed higher education. In terms of frequency of consumption, most share shopping tasks with other household members (43.1%), followed by those who habitually or exclusively shop for the home (45.3%). This supports the significance of the results as it represents a population regularly involved in the subject of this research.

3.2.1. Results of the cognitive component

Regarding the first block of questions that investigated the *cognitive dimension of the attitude* (knowledge, experiences, opinions, and beliefs) concerning responsible consumption and its various facets and indicators, the results are congruent with the high educational level of the sample. Most participants are familiar with many of the concepts. Thus, from the total sample, the average number of concepts known is 5.83 out of the 9 items proposed, with the average being slightly higher among responsible consumers (5.89) than among those who declare little or no interest in responsible consumption (5.48). The *level of knowledge* of the proposed concepts is as follows:

- Climate change (94.7%)
- Eco-bleaching or *greenwashing* (48.0%)
- Decent work (78.9%)
- Water footprint (58.9%)
- Microplastics (78.5%)
- Greenhouse effect (90.2%)
- Cultural appropriation (52.8%)
- Micro mobility (32.9%)
- Emission allowances (54.5%)

The most widely recognised concepts are those with the greatest tradition and presence in information sources, such as climate change and the greenhouse effect, with more than 90%. Over 75% are familiar with decent work and microplastics and, finally, the least known are more specialized or recently widespread terms, such as micro mobility (32.9%) or greenwashing (48%).

Generally, responsible consumers are aware of most terms related to environmental and social awareness, and in fact, 100% of consumers self-identified as responsible answered "no" to the question "I don't know any of those concepts", indicating the sample's consistency. Moreover, responsible consumers are more interested in acquiring information on issues such as new forms of sustainable mobility (74%) compared to less responsible consumers (57.1%). They are also more cognisant of the poor socio-working conditions in which clothes are manufactured, as most acknowledge that many large companies subcontract to poorer countries to save costs (46.7%), or that most of the garments are produced under abusive conditions (30.5%). This awareness is present in 77.2% of the more responsible consumers, whereas only 42.9% of the least conscious consumers are aware of fashion production methods.

In summary, it could be concluded that although the most responsible consumers have greater knowledge and interest in being informed than the less responsible ones, the differences in terms of the degree of information are not as marked as to explain the latter's lack of interest in developing better consumption behaviour. This suggests that it might be more impactful to act on the affective component of the attitude rather than the cognitive component, appealing to concerns about the future of our children, the effects on our own health and well-being of the current consumption model, or the repulsion caused by abusive labour practices.

The beliefs of the respondents about the *factors favouring* more responsible consumption align with expectations. When asked about the importance of sustainable products' prices not being significantly higher than traditional ones, 71.7% agree somewhat or completely with this statement, which is shared by both the most and least conscious consumers. There is also substantial agreement on the preference for products that use renewable or recycled materials in their production, as nearly 75% of all consumers agree somewhat or completely on the importance of using such materials.

The feasibility of purchasing products in bulk or with minimal packaging is also deemed significant, with 61.5% of all consumers somewhat or completely agreeing. Greater importance is attributed to the products being

manufactured under decent and fair working conditions, with almost 70% of all consumers agreeing with this statement (72% of consumers who declare themselves responsible).

Finally, the need for sustainable products to be accessible and found in ordinary retail outlets is widely recognised, as only 30.8% of all consumers consider it of little or moderate importance, viewing it as an obstacle to more responsible consumption.

In conclusion, it can be said that consumers, even those most aware, value the convenience and accessibility of sustainable products in terms of price and availability.

Furthermore, when questioning the population about *barriers to sustainable consumption*, the responses greatly reinforce the previous conclusions. The majority of all respondents agree that one of the causes of irresponsible consumption is a lack of awareness about consumption impacts (73.4%), which underlines the need for projects such as CARE to promote greater education and awareness about our consumption habits. Conversely, most surveyed individuals dismiss the belief that sustainable products are of lower quality or appearance than conventional ones, with only 22.8% of the responses somewhat or totally agreeing with this statement.

Other items confirm the idea that the prevailing hedonistic and economic model of consumption often deters even the most conscientious consumers, as price and convenience continue to be key factors influencing better consumption or, conversely, obstacles to more responsible consumption. Thus, 80.1% of all consumers agree somewhat or completely that the higher prices of sustainable products are a significant barrier. Regarding the difficulty of finding sustainable products in regular trade, 73.4% of all consumers consider this factor quite or very important, while only 59.1% of the least responsible share this view, perhaps because they have not directly experienced the challenge of searching for sustainable products and not finding them. Furthermore, 64% of respondents agree that another cause of irresponsible consumption is the reluctance to spend time informing and comparing to understand the negative impacts of consumption.

Therefore, the primary barriers identified for more responsible consumption are price (46.1% strongly agree) and lack of awareness about consumption impacts (37.8% strongly agree), or the absence of time to inform and compare (30.7% strongly agree).

Identifying as one of the main obstacles supports the notion that incentivising the demand for more responsible products is necessary to create a critical mass of consumers large enough to encourage companies to expand and improve their offerings. The issue largely relates to the belief that consuming sustainable products is not accessible but rather a select 'club' of informed, conscientious, and financially able consumers. In this context, tax incentives and all types of purchase incentives for responsible products could help to bridge this gap until demand reaches a volume that allows the production and distribution of sustainable products to be fully competitive.

3.2.2. Results of the affective dimension

Questions related to the feelings, preferences and concerns raised by consumption capture the emotional and affective response this phenomenon provokes in consumers and second determining component of attitude (Rosenberg & Hovland, 1960).

The survey's findings reveal widespread concern regarding the fast-paced model of consumption prevalent in developed societies. Only 21.3% of all consumers (19.1% of the most responsible consumers) agree that this model brings prosperity, has more advantages than disadvantages, and is beneficial for the economy. Conversely, 80.9% of aware consumers believe we are jeopardising the future for immediate well-being, or that we are heading directly towards a catastrophe if immediate action is not taken.

Other aspects explored in this block pertain to subjective perceptions, biases, and personal preferences imbued with opinion or affect. For instance, the question concerning public transport users (metro, bus) indicates prejudices persist, with a significant view that people use because they cannot afford a private vehicle; 37.8% of all consumers, including the most aware, agree somewhat or completely with this notion, while 41.4% think the opposite, with

a marginally higher percentage among the most responsible consumers (43.5%).

When questioned about the importance of dressing fashionably and frequently updating their wardrobe, 65.7% of all consumers place little to no importance on this concept, with only 7.5% valuing fashion highly.

Additionally, when asked about the preference for repairing or restoring items such as furniture or appliances over buying new ones, as 72% favour restoration, aligning with the recent accord by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on the 'right to repair', which aims to dispel the notion that it is better to replace a broken appliance than to repair it.

There is a strong belief in the social, cultural, and environmental value of small local fresh produce markets, with 84% of all consumers somewhat or fully acknowledging this value. This aligns with 65.3% of all consumers who believe that in the food business, distributors reap more profits than producers.

Lastly, this block of questions probed the social norm –that is, the extent of consumers' concerns about others' opinions on their consumption habits. Overall, this concern is of moderate or significant importance to only 23.1% of respondents, while 47.8% consider it of little or no importance. This response is consistent with the autonomy felt by participants, as most hold a high level of education and information, generally acknowledge many dimensions of responsible consumption, and are concerned about the social and environmental impacts of their consumption habits.

3.2.3. Results of the volitional or behavioural dimension

The *volitional or behavioural dimension* is the component of the attitude that defines a person's predisposition to act in a way that is congruent with the cognitive and emotional aspects.

The majority of respondents report a very high level of *awareness about the impact of their purchasing decisions*. More than half (52.3%) firmly believe that their choices have an impact on the environment and society, while only 11.6% believe that the impact negligible or low. Overall, 88.1% of all consumers consider their consumption decisions to have a substantial or significant

impact on the social and environmental milieu, with this percentage being slightly higher among responsible consumers (89.8%). This finding warrants further consideration, as it does not align with the purchasing behaviour of less responsible consumers and reinforces the previously expressed notion that conscious consumption and responsible consumption are not synonymous.

When asked what *type of consumer* they identify with, 48.1% view themselves as fairly or very responsible, and only 7.8% regard themselves as little or not at all concerned with this aspect of their behaviour. Focusing on the responsible consumers group, many perceive themselves to be responsible in certain respects, but not comprehensively (47.6%) and a majority of 52.4% practise responsible consumption fairly or very frequently.

In terms of *factors that contribute to a more responsible consumption behaviour*, the importance of information and education comes to the fore again: 74.6% attribute significant importance to understanding the impacts before buying, 69.8% to reading labels to make better choices, and 74.3% to considering the location and working conditions where the product has made.

The way these determinants of responsible consumption are accredited is also noteworthy. Thus, 75.4% of consumers *rely on the seals, accreditations and certifications* of quality, sustainability, ethical manufacturing, among others, to make a responsible purchase. In contrast, less than half rely solely on the *reputation of a well-known* brand for responsible production; 52.6% think that a recognized brand name carries none, little or only some importance in ensuring responsible purchase.

Lastly, the extent of respondents' engagement in responsible consumption was gauged by asking whether they have ceased using brands that are not socially or environmentally responsible, to which 25.7% of all consumers said they have never or almost never done so, 31% sometimes, and 42.9% quite often or always (10.8%). As expected, this behaviour is more prevalent among the most responsible consumers compared to the least responsible, as evidenced by the data:

Boycott of not responsible brands	Less responsible consumers	Responsible consumers	Total Consumers
Never, or almost never	47,62%	23,89%	25,75%
Sometimes	28,57%	31,05%	30,97%
Almost always or always	22,73%	44,35%	42,91%

Table 3.2. Frequency of consumers boycotting non-responsible brands

3.3. Conclusions of the empirical study

This descriptive analysis leads to several conclusions that can inform recommendations or guide future research:

- Demographics show a variety of ages and education levels, suggesting a broad representation in the study sample.
- There is a noticeable awareness of the environmental and social impacts of consumption, accompanied by a high level of information and knowledge in the majority of the sample.
- It could conclude that although the most responsible consumers are better informed and more interested, the differences in the degree of information are not as marked as to account for the less interested consumers' lack of desire to develop better consumption behaviours.
- This finding indicates that influencing the affective component of the attitude might be more effective than focusing on the cognitive component, by addressing concerns about the future generations or the impact of current consumption models on personal health and well-being. However, the limited sample size of less responsible consumers suggests that further research with a more extensive data set is needed to obtain a more representative insight.
- There appears to be a discrepancy between the interest in responsible consumption and selective purchasing behaviour. Notable barriers such as the price and availability of sustainable products remain, even for conscientious consumers.
- Thus, it is evident that consumers, including those most conscious of the need for responsible consumption, place value on the convenience

and accessibility of sustainable products, regarding both their price and their availability.

- Identifying price as a major barrier to responsible consumption emphasises the necessity of incentivising the market for more sustainable products to build a significant consumer base that can influence companies to expand and enhance their offerings competitively.
- The findings also suggest that sustainable consumption is perceived as a behaviour accessible only to an informed and financially stable minority, rather than the general population.
- The proportion of consumers claiming to have boycotted brands for lack of social and environmental responsibility is significant, although it is not clear whether this action is sporadic or consistent. Behavioural differences between the more and less responsible consumers are most distinct in this area.
- Concern about the social norm, or how one's consumption is viewed by others, is considered of moderate or high importance by less than a quarter of respondents, with nearly half attributing it little to no importance.
- This outcome suggests that the respondents view themselves as independent, consistent with their high levels of education and awareness, their general knowledge of various dimensions of responsible consumption, and their concern for the impact of their consumption on society and the environment.
- The substantial percentage (88.1%) of all consumers who perceive their purchasing choices to significantly impact the social and environmental context is very notable.
- This aspect is incongruous with the behaviour of less responsible consumers and indicates a need for more comprehensive data from this segment for reliable conclusions.
- Almost half of the participants self-identify as conscious consumers to a moderate or high degree, with a minimal proportion (7.8%) indicating little or no interest in this aspect of their behaviour. Among the more conscious consumers, many consider themselves responsible in certain

respects, with over half engaging in responsible consumption most or all the time.

- The pivotal question assessing respondents' commitment to responsible consumption—whether they have stopped using brands not adhering to social or environmental standards—reveals that a quarter have never or rarely done so, with a third sometimes and the rest quite often or always (one in ten).
- It is in this realm where the behavioural divergence between more and less responsible consumers is most evident, with the former significantly more likely to boycott brands for failing to uphold social and environmental standards.

CHAPTER 4. REGULATION OF RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter will review the types and levels of measures adopted by the authorities and institutions in each country to promote responsible consumption and assesses their effectiveness, particularly regarding whether they influence the factors empirical research has shown to be most important.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, numerous countries have established measures for their implementation. Consequently, the European Union integrated them into its strategies and action plans, ratifying the Paris Agreement on climate change later that year, which legally binds its members.

To meet these goals, an ambitious, holistic approach was adopted, leading to initiatives such as the European Green Deal in 2020, setting a roadmap for an EU sustainable economy, integral to its growth strategy.

Subsequently, a multitude of public and private proposals have emerged, including programs for awareness, promotion, training, and economic and a societal transformation aligned with the SDGs. Particularly notable is SDG 12, which aims to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns, foundational to the CARE project (Attentive Consumption for Responsibility towards the Environment).

The primary objective of CARE is to contribute to the planet's health and thus to people and society. It offers training and support tools for entrepreneurship that promote responsible consumption, urging citizens to become conscious of their actions, shopping habits, and their societal and environmental impacts.

The methodology employed first analyses the consumption phenomenon in Europe, exploring attitudes, behavioural patterns, stimuli, and barriers to responsible consumption. It also identifies best practices to derive valuable and transferable experiences. Additionally, policies and actions from public and private institutions aimed at fostering responsible consumption are

examined, with focus on public actions, particularly on regulations and their application across various territorial levels.

Evaluating their adequacy and efficacy, it may be too 40ep to confirm any significant impact in terms of the goals set and, more crucially, in the transformative capacity and depth of influence on citizens.

At present, general awareness about sustainability and individual actions for responsible consumption remains and varies widely between countries, and within them, among different social sectors and industries.

This discrepancy is stark against the backdrop of extensive regulations, recommendations and campaigns, which continue to grow, adding complexity to compliance and outcomes for businesses, especially SMEs, micro-enterprises, and the self-employed. Originating from action plans and strategies like the EU's Circular Economy Plan and "the new consumer" agenda and directive, these regulations, proposals, incentives, or sanctions are also proliferating at national, regional and local levels, adding to the complexity of their comprehension, compliance, and effectiveness.

Nevertheless, responsible consumption remains a pivotal element in the EU's circular strategy, requiring careful alignment with the planet's limitations due to its significant impact.

The scope of public procurement is leveraged to catalyse transformation, setting specifications that enhance durability, increase recycled content, minimise lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions, and favour non-toxic materials. This, coupled with various regulations, impact circular public procurement and company consumption practices.

Through "responsible marketing" campaigns, EU citizens are encouraged to commit to the circular vision and adapt their consumption to a more mindful and responsible model. They are called to moderate consumption, avoid wasteful behaviours like "fast fashion," and embrace collaborative economy approaches to fulfilling their needs. Product-service system models, established in key sectors, aim to reduce production volumes and material use while offering opportunities for economic growth and prosperity.

Regarding domestic consumption, its environmental impacts are significant and often surpass planetary boundaries. Two-thirds of EU consumers acknowledge the negative environmental effects of their consumption habits, with changing consumption and production patterns being the most commonly suggested solution.

However, studies indicate a disconnect between consumers' good intentions and actual behaviours, echoing observations from the empirical research conducted for this project. Factors influencing consumer purchases include price, availability, convenience, as well as habits, values, social norms, emotional appeal, the desire to make a difference, and peer pressure. Consumption patterns are also used by individuals to "communicate" their identity to themselves and others. Research on consumption impact reveals that spending is primarily driven by income levels.

In conclusion, considering sustainable growth as a core goal of the EU, especially in a climate of escalating change and a rising demand for energy and resources, the policies and initiatives implemented for sustainable consumption and production can be broadly categorised into several policy blocks.

4.2. Legal and regulatory basis

Articles 191 to 193 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provide the legal basis for European legislation on responsible consumption.

4.3. Objectives and results

4.3.1. Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production

In July 2008, the Commission launched a series of actions and proposals focused on sustainable consumption and production and sustainable industrial policy. These initiatives aim to improve the environmental performance of products throughout their life cycle, raise consumer awareness, increase demand for sustainable products and production

technologies, foster innovation in EU industry, and tackle international aspects such as trade and standards. The Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production has spurred initiatives in areas: such as extending the Ecodesign Directive, revising of the Ecolabel Regulation, updating the Eco-management and Audit Regulation, legislating Green Public Procurement, creating the Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe, and formulating the Eco-Innovation Action Plan. These instruments form a crucial part of the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy (ESD), reinforcing the commitment to sustainable development challenges and enhancing cooperation with non-EU partners, such as through the UN Marrakesh Process.

4.3.2. Towards a resource-efficient Europe

Following the Europe 2020 initiative for efficient resource usage, which advocates for a strategy outlining medium- to long-term resource efficiency goals and the means to achieve them, the Roadmap to a Resource-Efficient Europe was introduced. It proposes methods to increase resource productivity and decouple economic growth from resource usage and its environmental impacts.

4.3.3. Eco-labelling and energy labelling

Labels play a vital role in equipping consumers with the information to make informed choices. The European Ecolabel, established in 1992, is a voluntary system encouraging businesses to market environmentally friendly products and services. Awarded items feature a flower logo, making them easily identifiable to consumers, both public and private. The Ecolabel is awarded to diverse categories, including cleaning products, home appliances, paper, clothing, and more, based on life cycle environmental impact assessments. The 2008 review of Regulation (EC) aimed at boosting the Ecolabel scheme's adoption by minimising costs and administrative burdens. On 30 June 2017, the Commission released its assessment ('Health Check') of the Regulation. The findings suggested that while the Regulation is relevant, coherent, and adds European value, it is only partially effective and efficient, with

improvements needed in environmental performance criteria and broader usage for some product types due to potentially prohibitive compliance costs. Directive 92/75/EEC introduced an EU-wide energy labelling system for domestic appliances, informing potential consumers about the energy consumption of various models. Since its introduction in 1995, the EU Energy Label has become a benchmark for manufacturers and consumers alike. In June 2010, Directive 2010/30/EU on energy labelling was revised to extend its scope to a wider range of energy-related products. On 15 July 2015, the Commission proposed reinstating a single labelling scale from A to G. Regulation (EU) 2017/1369, enacted on 4 July 2017, establishes new energy labelling requisites for specific product categories. As of 2021, certain product groups have been 'rescaled,' for instance, an A+++ refrigerator has been recategorised to class B with no change in energy consumption. The A-class remains vacant to accommodate more energy-efficient models in the future, aiding consumers in identifying the most energy-efficient products.

4.3.4. Ecodesign

The Ecodesign Directive ensures the technical improvement of products. The 2009 revision (Directive 2009/125/EC) of the Directive 2005/32/EC extended its scope to energy-related products that are not strictly energy-using products; these are products that do not consume energy during use, but indirectly influence energy consumption, such as windows, insulating materials, or some products that use water. On 30 March 2022, the Commission published a proposal for a regulation establishing a framework for setting eco-design requirements for sustainable products and repealing Directive 2009/125/EC.

4.3.5. Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)

EMAS is a management tool that enables companies and other organisations to assess, report and improve their environmental performance. Companies have been able to make use of this system since 1995, although it was initially available only to companies in the industrial sectors. However, since 2001, the EMAS system has been usable in all economic sectors, including public and private services. In 2009, EMAS underwent major reforms with the adoption

of the new EMAS Regulation (EC) n.], with a view to encouraging EMAS registration by different organisations. This revision of the EMAS Regulation has improved the applicability and credibility of the system and strengthened its visibility and outreach. In 2017, Annexes I, II and III of the EMAS Regulation were amended to incorporate the changes associated with the revision of ISO 14001:2015. Regulation (EU) 2017/1505 amending these Annexes entered into force on 18 September 2017.

4.3.6. Green Public Procurement

Green public procurement is a voluntary policy, set within the framework of strategic public procurement, which support authorities in the procurement of products, services and works with a low environmental impact. In recent years, the utility of green public procurement as a tool for promoting markets for green products and services and reducing the environmental impact of authorities' activities has been widely recognised. Member States implement green public procurement through national action plans. Two Directives (2004/18/EC and 2004/17/EC) on public procurement adopted in 2004 were the first to contain specific references to the possibility of incorporating environmental considerations into the procurement process, for example through the inclusion of environmental requirements in technical specifications, the use of eco-labels or the application of award criteria based on environmental characteristics. The three Directives adopted in February 2014 as part of the reform of public procurement under the Single Market Act – Directive 2014/24/EU on traditional services, Directive 2014/25/EU on public services and Directive 2014/23/EU on concession contracts – simplify the relevant procedures by facilitating innovation for businesses and encouraging greater use of green public procurement, thus supporting the transition to a resource-efficient and low-carbon economy.

In 2008, the Commission published a Communication entitled 'Public procurement for a better environment', setting out a number of measures to be taken by Member States and individual contracting authorities in favour of the implementation of green public procurement. As a result, the Union's criteria for green public procurement have been developed as part of the

optional measures taken

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in this area. So far, twenty-one sets of green procurement criteria have been published so far for certain sectors, such as transport, office equipment, cleaning products and services, construction, thermal insulation, and gardening products and services.

4.3.7. Eco-Innovation Action Plan (EcoAP)

The EcoAP launched by the Commission in December 2011 is the successor to the Environmental Technology Action Plan (ETAP), which aims to boost the development and use of environmental technologies and improve European competitiveness in this area.

The EcoAP is mainly linked to the Europe 2020 flagship initiative 'Innovation Union'. It aims to ensure that innovation policies also focus on green technologies and eco-innovation, as well as to highlight the role of environmental policy as a driver of economic growth. It also addresses the specific barriers and opportunities of eco-innovation, especially those that are not covered by more general innovation policies. EcoAP promotes eco-innovation through environmental policy, financial support for small and medium-sized enterprises, international collaboration, new standards, and skills development.

The EcoAP encompasses a broad policy framework that is funded from different sources. Between 2014 and 2020, the main source of funding was the Horizon 2020 programme. Other sources include the European Structural and Investment Funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund, the Environment and Climate Action Programme (LIFE), the COSME programme and the Common Agricultural Policy. More recently, another important source of support has been introduced: the NextGenerationEU recovery plan. In recent years, many of EcoAP's objectives have been grouped under the concept of circular economy, an economy that learns not to generate waste by drawing inspiration from nature. Eco-innovation is key to making many aspects of the circular economy a reality: symbiosis or industrial ecologies, cradle-to-cradle design, new and innovative business models, etc.

The Eco-Innovation Index assesses Member States' eco-innovation achievements using a measurement framework composed of 12 indicators.

4.3.8. Sustainable Product Policy

As part of the European Green Deal, the Commission presented a new Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) in March 2020, announcing an initiative on sustainable products to make products fit for a climate-neutral, resource-efficient and circular economy, as well as reducing waste. The Sustainable Products Initiative builds on the Ecodesign Directive and addresses the presence of harmful chemicals in products such as electronic and computer equipment, textiles, furniture, steel, cement and chemicals.

On 22 March 2023, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on new rules for the justification of green claims, which addresses false environmental claims and the large expansion of public and private eco-labels. In addition, the Commission adopted a proposal for a directive on common standards to promote the repair of property. The "right to repair" initiative encourages sustainable consumption, making it easier and cheaper for consumers to repair defective products rather than replace them. Together with the proposal for a directive on the empowerment of consumers for the green transition, the new rules establish a regime of environmental claims and labels aimed at combating greenwashing.

The Directive on responsible consumers, which entered into force on 26 March 2024, for the empowerment of consumers for the ecological transition, through better protection against unfair practices and better information.

4.4. Incentives and stimuli for responsible consumption

Regarding the implementation of incentives and subsidies to promote more responsible consumption in the European Union, in line with all of the above, a battery of programmes aligned with previous action plans is included, ranging from energy and transport to food and waste prevention or management:

1. *Renewable energy*: Many European countries offer financial incentives for the installation of renewable energy systems, such as solar panels and wind turbines, through subsidies, feed-in tariffs, and tax

- deductions. These incentives help encourage the transition to cleaner and more sustainable energy sources.
2. *Energy Efficiency*: Non-refundable grants and low-interest loans are offered for energy efficiency improvements in homes, commercial and industrial buildings. For example, to improve the insulation of structures, include efficient heating and cooling systems, LED lighting, etc.
 3. *Sustainable mobility*: Many cities and countries are promoting the use of public transport, electric bicycles and low-emission vehicles through incentives such as discounts on fares, free access to low-emission zones, subsidies for the purchase of electric vehicles, among others. In Spain, for example, among other measures, the MOVES program is now in its third edition, although with very little result/impact in practice. Among other reasons, due to the list of available vehicles, the lack of infrastructure to make the switch to an electric vehicle viable or the limitations of the program in terms of prices, among other reasons.
 4. *Sustainable food consumption*: Programs are being implemented to support organic and sustainable agriculture, as well as initiatives to reduce food waste and promote the purchase of local and seasonal products. Tax incentives and subsidies are also offered for the adoption of environmentally friendly agricultural practices. In some countries, through incentives, in others, through sanctions. In addition, in disparate regulations that, in most cases, make it difficult to know or understand and, therefore, to comply with. In addition, the aid, in a general comment by the obligors, is not arriving or not in the amounts, forms and deadlines necessary; without prejudice to their direct management by different administrations or public companies, including some created for this purpose, even if the bodies for the same purpose are duplicated or tripled.
 5. *Waste management*: Incentives are promoted to encourage the reduction, reuse, and recycling of waste. This can include community composting programs, installation of recycling bins, drop-off, and take-back systems for packaging, among others. However, implementation is disparate and heterogeneous, depending on various administrations

that sometimes overlap or are not coordinated in terms of time or scope.

6. *Education and awareness-raising*: Education and public awareness campaigns are carried out to promote more responsible and sustainable consumption. From educational programs in schools, advertising campaigns, community events, etc.

From our study, although there is a lot of information, the reality is that, basically, institutions have multiplied for the proposed objectives, even though there were already offices and administrative structure for their management. Public companies have been created and programmes have been set up that in the end result in putting the Public Administration at the centre of everything (and this, in all territorial areas, moreover), instead of effective projects and proposals that include the rest of the interest groups and really make these incentives facilitate and result in a change of inertia. attitude and increased consumer awareness. Something that would have been more effective by counting on companies and citizens to help both to be instruments of change, giving the economic and financial support that all this effort requires. Instead, the bureaucracy, the normative and regulatory sphere, as well as the demands on each other, have become even more complex, strangling the communication of the transformation towards a sustainable society and consumer.

It is still too early to have a clear vision of the outcome of the measures implemented. Perhaps what we have just commented on is part of the process, "a necessary evil" in the future, about which much could be argued, especially from the perspective of a strategic vision.

In this sense, in line with another of the objectives of CARE, a series of recommendations could be drawn for policy makers for the formulation of future awareness programmes.

- First, and crucially, it is essential to achieve regulatory simplification.
- On the other hand, greater coordination, and collaboration between administrations and between them and the rest of the social agents, especially companies, is needed.

- It would also be important to work along the lines of incentives and aid, rather than on the formula of sanctions.
- Apply incentives in the pre-acquisition phase, deducting them from the cost, so that they are a real stimulus and not a bonus for a behaviour already carried out.
- In addition, it is necessary to promote the rapprochement of value chains by providing instruments and channels so that they can be designed according to the needs and circumstances of each market and territory, with a clear and shared common horizon.
- That economic aid is truly provided for campaigns and private proposals that are implemented by the main actors and promoters of change, in collaboration with the Administration but without the latter assuming the role of manager, entrepreneur and communicator, beyond the scope that corresponds to it.
- Regulations, proposals and incentives need to be clear, traceable, measurable and of real utility.
- They must also reach those who can materialize that promotion, that change, that influence, that awareness, that inspires and goes further by truly creating that circularity that, let's not forget, is something that our ancestors already knew and that, in most cases, with the study and rescue of uses, customs, and techniques for the use and enhancement of resources, they would allow us to move forward and save.

In short, it is necessary to unify criteria and join forces to align everyone in the conviction that it is a necessary reality to be able to preserve life on this planet and its continuity.

CHAPTER 5. CAMPAIGNS AND ACTIONS TO PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION IN EUROPE

5.1. Introduction

This section analyses the efforts made to promote consumer social responsibility, both from public and private entities within the member countries of the project – Belgium, Spain, Italy and Portugal. The partners have made a selection of different types of initiatives, which have taken the format of information and awareness campaigns to promote responsible consumption, education projects with similar objectives to CARE, specific regulations and standards, recommendations and guides, etc. This material has been compiled with the purpose of better understanding the efforts made by public and private agents and also with the aim of being presented on the REA-CARE platform and in the EduCARE didactic block as international reference cases.

The main objective of CARE has been to promote awareness about responsible consumption in the private sphere, especially among adults, since this population group constitutes the group with the highest incidence of consumption, although they often lack formal education on the appropriate practices for this behaviour, improving the knowledge of consumers, especially those who have not received previous training in this field, in order to increase their awareness as consumers by providing accurate information on the consequences of individual and family consumption.

Under this premise, priority has been given to related content, projects and campaigns whose purpose is focused on:

1. Provide objective and truthful information on the impacts of consumption.
2. Increase the social, environmental, and cultural awareness of the consumer in their purchasing behaviour.
3. Promote healthy, responsible, and sustainable habits, such as the reduction of unnecessary consumption, reuse, recycling, preference for local products and the reduction of waste and consumption of resources.

The analysis has been structured in a systematic way, establishing six main thematic blocks that correspond to the thematic categories formulated in the

CARE project plus some general categories: 1) Resource Use, 2) Waste and Resource Management, 3) Mobility and Transport, 4) Clothing and Fashion, 5) Food and Household, and 6) General Themes.

5.2. Review and impact of European actions in promoting responsible consumption

Through numerous examples of campaigns and projects, both public and private, the importance of considering not only the environmental impacts of consumption, but also its economic, social, and cultural effects, such as working conditions, inequality, poverty and gender gaps, along with the cultural impact on marginalised communities, has been visualized. At the end of the project implementation period, a total of 177 projects and campaigns have been analysed and shared in Spanish, English, Italian, and Portuguese. Within this global calculation, more than 35 projects and campaigns come from private entities, and more than 29 come from activities promoted by public bodies.

5.2.1. Campaigns from the public sector

In the field of resource use and waste management, public campaigns such as EU Green Week stand out, which promotes environmental awareness and the adoption of sustainable practices globally throughout the continent. In the same vein, the European Week for Waste Reduction seeks to reduce waste, while "Somos Responsables", promoted by the University of Barcelona, aims to reduce energy consumption and involve the entire university community to save costs and protecting the environment.

In terms of mobility and transport, initiatives such as City of Gdynia in Poland and Bicibus - Pedibus in Italy promote alternative forms of sustainable transport, in line with the European Mobility Week and Move Lisbon to promote conscious urban mobility.

In the fashion and clothing sector, campaigns such as the Sustainable and Circular Fashion Week (CSFW 2023) organised by the Spanish Pinto City Council or the Swedish Public Campaign on Sustainable Fashion, which seek

to promote more sustainable practices in the textile industry in Spain and Sweden respectively, stand out. Also worth mentioning is Reset the Trend, the European Commission's multilingual communication initiative aimed at engaging citizens in the fight against fast fashion and raising awareness of the EU's strategy for sustainable and circular textiles. Finally, it should be emphasised in this subsection, the REDRESS Project organised by the Ricrea Consortium seeks to promote the recovery and recycling of textiles in Italy by raising awareness about the circular economy in fashion.

In the area of food and household, campaigns such as the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste and the World Food Day organised by FAO address the reduction of food waste and the promotion of sustainable nutritional habits. Other government campaigns, such as "Alimentos de España, Aquí no se tira nada" and the Italian "SPRECO ZERO - Last Minute Market", also promote a culture of making the most of food.

Finally, in the general category, the Spanish Ministry of Consumer Affairs' campaign "Think. Then, buy" that promotes conscious and thoughtful consumption in all aspects of daily life to raise awareness about the environmental impact of excessive consumption, urging reflection on the need to reduce and acquire only what is necessary.

5.2.2. Campaigns from the private sector

Within the framework of food and the home, various campaigns strive to promote healthier and more sustainable habits. From initiatives that explore the meaning of healthy eating beyond what we eat, to apps that facilitate the proper disposal of packaging, such as the Junker App. Likewise, the right to sustainable food is promoted by advocating to reduce food waste with campaigns such as "Bon appetit, zero gaspi" by LIDL; and pursuing the promotion of awareness about the origin of food through initiatives such as the Guide to Responsible Consumption of the Italian association CIWF (Compassion in World Farming).

With regard to the fashion and clothing environment, various initiatives invite reflection on the ethics behind the textile industry. Campaigns such as Look Behind the Label seek to reveal the truth behind the clothes we wear, while

others such as Detox my Fashion and Good Clothes, Fair Pay promote more conscious and ethical fashion. In line with these campaigns, the communicative effort to invite people to explore new ways of dressing is also noteworthy, thanks to proposals such as Wear Next by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Wardrobe Change promoted by Portuguese NGOs associated for this purpose. Also noteworthy is Fashion Revolution's international initiative "Who made my fabric?" thanks to which the population is invited to ask themselves and know who is behind the manufacture of fabrics and garments, urging brands to provide more transparency about their processes, from the production of textiles to the manufacture of trimmings and garments.

When it comes to the use of resources, campaigns such as Biopack Packaging and SULAPAC promote the responsible use of packaging, while companies such as IKEA encourage the adoption of more sustainable practices with initiatives such as Go Green With IKEA. The care of water is also promoted with proposals such as "The Time for Water is Now" from Andalusia (Spain), and environmental awareness in general is promoted with events such as the Italian Environment Festival (Festa dell'Ambiente).

In the field of mobility and transport, more sustainable forms of travel are advocated, through campaigns such as those promoting shared mobility and initiatives that support urban cycling, such as Città 30 Subito – of the Italian Federation for the Environment and Bicycle (FIAB).

And in a more general sense, every individual is invited to be part of the change in the fight against climate change, as well as to explore inspiring initiatives in sustainability with events such as the alliance of A2A and the Italian organization ELIS through the Sustainability Olympics (Olimpiadi della Sostenibilità) to educate students about sustainable development, using didactic tools and practical examples. Particularly laudable is the case of AWorld, a young company from the city of Turin (Italy), which has launched an innovative application in support of ACTNOW, the United Nations campaign for individual action on climate change and sustainability, which calculates the user's environmental impact in terms of CO₂, water, waste and

goodness. and offers daily suggestions to reduce it, as well as rewarding users for their progress in adopting sustainable lifestyles.

5.3. Evaluation of the selected campaigns and projects

After analysing all the campaigns and projects chosen to be included in the CARE Knowledge resource library (n=177), it is evident that there is a wide range of initiatives focused on promoting sustainability in various areas, such as food, fashion, mobility and resource use, as well as in general aspects that cover various areas. These campaigns demonstrate a joint effort to address the environmental, social and economic challenges we face today.

Some of these campaigns stand out especially for their clear focus and the concrete actions they promote for awareness and behaviour change towards more sustainable practices, which are discussed below.

5.3.1. Campaigns organised by public institutions

EU Green Week: for raising awareness about the responsible use of resources, a critical issue to address current environmental challenges. The EU Green Week provides a strong platform to promote sustainable practices and raise awareness across the European community.

Climate Ticket (Deutschlandticket): This Deutsche Bahn initiative stands out for its focus on sustainable mobility and the reduction of carbon emissions. By offering a "Climate Ticket" at a fixed price and very economical, the use of the train and public transport in general is promoted as an ecological alternative to private transport by road or plane, encouraging a positive change in consumer behaviour.

Think. Then, buy: An invitation to reflect before buying, which is essential to promote more conscious and sustainable consumption. By encouraging consumers to consider the environmental, social and economic impact of their purchasing decisions, this campaign can contribute significantly to the reduction of overconsumption and waste.

Fashion Revolution: international initiative focused on the promotion of sustainable and ethical fashion. By questioning the status quo of the fashion

industry and promoting transparency and accountability for brands, the project aims to inspire positive change in the way fashion is produced and consumed.

Move Lisboa: focused on the promotion of sustainable mobility in the city of Lisbon, it seeks to encourage the use of public transport and active mobility, such as walking and cycling; in addition to contributing to the reduction of air pollution and traffic jams, thus improving the quality of life in the city.

5.3.2. Campaigns organised by private institutions

LIDL's Bon appetit, zero gaspi: This campaign directly tackles the problem of food waste, offering practical solutions to reduce waste, such as tips and recipes, to actively involve consumers in the fight against this problem.

Know the Truth Behind Food Labels and Support CIWF's Guide to Responsible Consumption: By revealing the information behind food labels and providing guidance on how to make more conscious choices, this campaign empowers users to make informed and ethical choices about their purchases.

Explore the ethics behind fashion with Look Behind the Label: This campaign educates consumers about ethical and sustainable practices in the fashion industry, which is critical given the growing awareness of the negative impacts of fast fashion. By highlighting the ethical aspect of fashion, it motivates consumers to consider the impact of their purchasing decisions on the environment and society.

Biopack Packaging and SULAPAC promote the responsible use of packaging by addressing the problem of plastic packaging, offering more sustainable and biodegradable alternatives. By providing tangible solutions, they inspire consumers to adopt more responsible practices and put pressure on companies to offer more sustainable packaging options.

The A2A and ELIS Sustainability Olympics: By showcasing concrete examples of how individuals, businesses and communities can make a difference, they motivate others to take similar steps and contribute positively to the shift towards a more sustainable world.

5.3.3. Critical Summary of Actions for Responsible Consumption

To recap, it should be noted that all the campaigns have been selected following the criteria of their high relevance, interest, and effectiveness in the objective of raising awareness and generating positive changes in the consumerist habits of adults. All cases address relevant issues, offer practical solutions, educate, and inspire consumers to adopt more sustainable and ethical behaviours in their daily lives.

In terms of effectiveness and relevance, the most outstanding campaigns are those that manage to actively engage consumers, providing clear and practical information on how they can contribute to a more sustainable world in their daily lives. In particular, campaigns that have a transnational focus, such as those promoted by the European Union and international bodies, show greater effectiveness in capitalizing on the importance of international collaboration in the fight against climate change and the promotion of sustainable practices on a global scale.

However, promoters rarely provide information on the effectiveness of their campaigns, and it can be assumed that their effectiveness comes rather from the synergies resulting from the accumulation of different initiatives from many areas. The profusion of projects, campaigns, initiatives, and actions to promote responsible consumption that we have experienced, especially in the post-pandemic stage, are creating a very favourable state of awareness towards more conscious consumption, increasing the degree of awareness among the population.

Campaigns, guides, and recommendations that formulate guidelines for action in an explicit and concrete way, rather than appealing to large concepts and abstract values, which are very distant to most consumers, are also more effective. It is better to advise what to do with water, energy, what to buy or how to recycle a given waste than to appeal to ideals such as saving the planet, preserving species, or reducing waste.

However, as we have seen when analysing the results of the survey on consumer habits, there is still a certain gap between awareness and responsible purchasing action, so that even the most conscientious

consumers do not carry out responsible consumption behaviour on all occasions, due to various obstacles and barriers.

In any case, it is crucial to highlight the need to continue improving communication and community participation in these campaigns. Public awareness of sustainability issues is on the rise, but there is still much to be done to bring about meaningful change in consumer behaviour and public policy.

5.4. Final thoughts

Campaigns and projects, both private and public, that advocate for responsible consumption represent a positive step towards a more sustainable future, but it is essential to continue to drive action and collaboration at all levels, from individuals to governments and businesses, to address the environmental and social challenges we face as a society.

The push for responsible consumption in Europe has led to a wide range of campaigns and actions aimed at promoting sustainable and conscious practices among consumers. These initiatives address various areas, from food to fashion and mobility, with the aim of generating a positive impact on the environment, society and the economy.

- In the field of food, campaigns have been developed to reduce food waste, encourage the consumption of local foods and promote a healthier and more sustainable diet.
- In the fashion sector, initiatives have been launched to raise awareness of responsible garment production and consumption, in some cases highlighting the importance of supply chain transparency and the promotion of ethical practices throughout the textile industry.
- In terms of mobility, actions are being carried out to promote more sustainable forms of transport, such as the use of public transport, cycling and shared mobility, seeking to reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions by promoting greener transport alternatives.
- Other, more transversal campaigns address general aspects of the consumption of resources, water, energy, as well as the generation and

recycling of waste, in order to move towards the key of circularity with the objective of 'zero waste'.

- Transnational campaigns, such as the "EU Green Week", by addressing key sustainability issues at the European level promote collaboration between countries to address common environmental challenges.

As a final reading of all European campaigns and projects, it should be noted that campaigns and actions to promote responsible consumption in Europe increasingly reflect the urgent search for a collective commitment towards a more sustainable future, where consumers become active agents of change towards more ethical and environmentally friendly practices. Its value lies above all in the whole, which is creating a change of mentality and a state of opinion favourable to more responsible consumption that will have no turning back.

CHAPTER 6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDANCE FOR CONSUMERS

6.1. Responsible and sustainable consumption in food

In the pursuit of responsible consumption, few areas of human life have as much power for change as those related to dietary choices. Food is not only a way to provide sustenance and energy, but also a reflection of values, culture, history and adaptation to the environment. Food has an impact on health, the environment, and communities around the world. Below are the main guidelines and recommendations for responsible and sustainable food consumption.

6.1.1. Local and seasonal products

Eating local and seasonal produce is a cornerstone of sustainable food consumption because it means choosing foods that are grown or produced close to where they are consumed and that this happens in the ideal season. The benefits derived from this practice are of various orders:

1. Environmental impact: when you buy local food, you reduce the carbon footprint derived from long-distance transport: fewer kilometres travelled mean fewer polluting emissions and in addition, seasonal products normally require fewer resources such as water and energy to grow.
2. Supporting local economies, as buying locally supports local producers and strengthens the local economy, making it easier for small producers to compete with large companies and fostering a sense of connection between consumers and producers.
3. Locally sourced and seasonal foods are often fresher and more nutritious, as they do not need to be harvested prematurely or treated with chemicals to withstand long storage or displacements, so they also contribute to the well-being and health of the consumer.
4. Protection of environmental and cultural diversity, as local foods include many plant and animal species and varieties that are in danger of disappearing because they are not profitable on an industrial scale. This is also how the local gastronomic culture is taken care of, the

heritage of ancestral knowledge of techniques of cultivation, conservation and preparation of food associated with native products that would disappear without them.

Tips for eating better and more sustainably include getting to know local farmers' markets and community farming projects in the area, joining consumer communities or food cooperatives, learning about the seasons and foods available in each region and time of year, and finally, learning how to preserve and store seasonal foods for later use, thereby reducing food waste. A good practice is to reject superfoods, including plant-based ones, that come from other cultures and distant geographical areas, which often results in local communities being deprived of basic ancestral foods in their diet as they are exported to satisfy the whims of wealthy societies. A paradigmatic example of this fact was the case of quinoa, which has multiplied its price, making it inaccessible to the Andean peoples who traditionally consume it.

6.1.2. Reducing food waste

Food waste is a global problem, which has profound economic, social, and environmental consequences. While much of this loss occurs pre-consumer phases, measures need to be taken to minimise food waste in areas within consumers' reach.

It is estimated that one-third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted. Food waste is responsible for between 8 and 10% of global greenhouse gas emissions, according to the FAO. It means the loss of valuable resources used in production without return, while millions of people are suffering from hunger.

At home, there are several ways to reduce food waste, such as good meal planning, using shopping lists to avoid over-procurement, storing perishables correctly to extend their shelf life and freshness, and developing creative cooking, making use of leftovers and incorporating them into new recipes. Finally, compost can be made from food scraps and vegetables to produce fertile soil for gardens or pots.

6.1.3. Adopting more plant-based diets

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The environmental impact of food choices is also explained by the type of diet followed. Plant-based diets, which prioritise fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, and seeds, while reducing or excluding animal products, have attracted attention for their benefits for sustainability, but also for physical and mental health and well-being.

Diets based primarily on plant foods have undoubted environmental and social benefits, such as reduced greenhouse gas emissions, as livestock farming contributes significantly to these emissions; lower land and water use than animal production; the preservation of biodiversity, as large-scale livestock farming often leads to deforestation, habitat destruction, and the production of toxic and difficult-to-manage waste (slurry).

There are also social and cultural consequences of the excessive consumption of food of animal origin, since intensive agricultural and livestock farms require few personnel and do not fix the population to the territory as traditional agriculture and livestock do and displace ancestral crops and breeding due to their lower profitability, with the loss of diversity that this entails.

Moving towards a more plant-based diet doesn't mean being completely vegetarian or vegan. Adopting a flexitarian approach, which results in frequent meals without meat or with very little meat, can have a significant impact. Most traditional diets are of this nature, as is the case with the Mediterranean diet, and have been tremendously effective in keeping us alive and healthy.

6.1.4. The Role of Sustainable Agriculture

Sustainable agricultural practices prioritize the long-term health of ecosystems, soil, and communities. By supporting sustainable agriculture, consumers can contribute to a more responsible food system. Sustainable agriculture is based on principles such as crop rotation, which improves soil health and reduces pests; reducing the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides by minimising chemical inputs or replacing them with organic or natural alternatives; the protection of natural habitats and biodiversity; and

finally, for honest labour practices, where workers are treated ethically and paid fairly.

Choosing sustainable products is easy as there are seals, certifications and labels that guarantee their organic origin, and that they are products obtained through responsible agricultural practices.

6.2. Conscious Clothing & Fashion

Fashion isn't just about clothes; It is a reflection of our identity, culture and values. However, the modern fashion industry often comes at a high cost, both environmentally and ethically. In this section we will explore the world of conscious clothing and fashion, examining the impact of fast fashion, the rise of ethical and sustainable fashion brands, the value of second-hand shopping, and the importance of eco-friendly clothing care practices.

6.2.1. The Impact of Fast Fashion

Fast fashion is a term used to describe a production and sales model that is based on the rapid rotation of clothing collections by brands and retailers, which encourages consumers to constantly buy new items. Compared to the traditional model of two collections a year (summer and winter), fast fashion involves constantly producing new designs and models in shorter and shorter cycles, of two or even a week. It is based on low-cost manufacturing, often carried out in developing countries, with significant consequences:

From an environmental point of view, fast fashion leads to excessive waste, as consumers throw away clothes after only a few uses. It also leads to resource depletion, as production consumes large amounts of water, energy, and non-renewable resources. In addition, the fashion industry is a major contributor to water pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. The textile industry is responsible for between 4 and 10% of global emissions, according to different estimates, and could reach 26% by mid-century.

Fast fashion also has ethical and social implications, as it often involves exploitative labour practices that are carried out in countries with low wages and lax labour regulations, where occupational risks are not controlled, there

is no equality, and no work-life balance is facilitated. It is common for there to be accidents, seeing mothers sewing with their babies next to them or girls working. In short, the search for low production costs entails a production model where the people who produce the garments receive practically nothing of the value contributed to the product (some estimates put the remuneration for work at 0.6% of the sale price), with an enormous disregard for human and labour rights.

6.2.2. Ethical & Sustainable Fashion Brands

The awareness that the fast fashion model is unsustainable is leading to some positive change in the industry, with an increasing number of brands prioritizing ethical and sustainable practices. These brands are committed to transparency, fair wages, and environmentally responsible manufacturing:

- Fair Trade Fashion: Fair Trade fashion ensures that workers along the supply chain receive fair wages and work in safe conditions. Brands such as Patagonia and Eileen Fisher have embraced fair trade principles.
- Sustainable materials: Ethical brands prioritize sustainable materials such as organic cotton, hemp, and recycled fibres. This reduces the environmental impact of clothing production, although it should not be forgotten that even organic and natural materials involve massive water consumption.
- Transparency: Ethical brands provide insight into their supply chains, manufacturing processes, and labour practices, allowing consumers to make more informed decisions.

6.2.3. Second-hand shopping

One of the most sustainable ways to minimize the impacts of fashion is by extending the lifespan of existing clothing through second-hand purchases and savings. There is a maxim that sums up responsible consumption behaviour in fashion: 'The most sustainable clothes are those that are already in your wardrobe', and we could add 'or in someone else's'.

Buying second-hand clothes has several benefits, as it reduces the need for new production and limits textile waste and the consumption of resources such as water, energy, etc. It is more affordable, as second-hand clothes are usually cheaper than new clothes and can allow you to wear select garments at an affordable price. In addition, you can contribute to creating a unique and personal style, by exploring and searching for original and unique garments, in a vintage style.

For this reason, more and more second-hand shops and vintage boutiques are appearing, as well as rental or temporary use of garments, as well as there are 'retoucherie' workshops to reform or modify garments for a very low cost. More well-known are app-based online resale platforms with functionalities and services that make them easy to use (Wanadoo, Vinted, etc.).

6.2.4. Eco-friendly laundry care

Responsible fashion choices go beyond shopping and the way we take care of our clothes is also important. Eco-friendly laundry care practices can extend your lifespan and reduce your environmental footprint.

For example, it is advisable to reduce the washing of garments, since experts estimate that it is not necessary to wash garments as frequently as we do, and in addition, the washing process consumes water and energy, pollutes with detergents, and generates microplastics: it is estimated that a third of microplastics in the oceans come from synthetic textiles.

On the other hand, washing with cold water is positive for reducing energy consumption but also punishes the fabrics less. The same happens with air drying, since hanging the clothes to dry instead of using a dryer saves energy and avoids subjecting the garments to high temperatures that can cause further deterioration.

Proper maintenance of clothing during storage also helps to prolong its life and maintain its original shape. Likewise, mastering certain basic sewing skills for small arrangements is very convenient.

Finally, being aware that it is important to dispose of clothes responsibly when it is necessary to get rid of clothes is essential, for which you can donate,

dispose of waste at clean points or make use of the textile recycling programs that companies and NGOs carry out.

6.3. Sustainable transport and responsible tourism

Transportation is a fundamental aspect of modern life, connecting people and goods from all over the world. However, it also contributes significantly to environmental degradation and energy consumption. This section explores sustainable transport options, emphasising the importance of public transport, active travel, electric and hybrid vehicles, carpooling and reducing air travel, facilitating carbon footprint reduction, and supporting a more sustainable future.

6.3.1. Public transport and active travel

Collective public transport systems, such as buses, trams, subways, and trains, offer numerous benefits, as collective transport facilitates minimal impacts per person transported, i.e. collective public transport produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions per passenger-kilometre than private vehicles. They are also more efficient in occupying roads, alleviating traffic congestion, and are cheaper than acquiring and maintaining a private vehicle, also alleviating the problem of parking in cities.

Along with the use of public transport, active travel is also very positive, both for the health of those who practice it and for the environment. Thus, walking and cycling for short distances reduces dependence on cars and helps maintain a healthy level of physical activity. For this reason, most cities are committed to creating infrastructures that are friendly to active travel, through the construction of bike lanes, the pedestrianisation of urban areas, the signposting of greenways, the design of itineraries for walking, etc.

One of the concerns where it is most important to act is in the area of commuting. In this sense, the rise of virtual meetings enabled by technology reduces the need for travel for work purposes, as is the case with remote work or teleworking, which drastically reduces travel and its consequences in terms of emissions, occupation of roads, etc. However, many companies continue to

show reluctance about this modality and even workers in some cases suffer from problems of isolation and lack of social contact.

6.3.2. The role of urban planning

Sustainable mobility is closely linked to urban planning and design, and in some cases, more compact cities make pedestrian and public transport easier. However, the prevailing model of cities has led to a design where residential areas are far from work and commercial areas, causing the need for multiple trips: to work, to study, to shopping, etc. Hence, cities that operate as a constellation of villages should be promoted, and that combine residential, commercial, and recreational spaces as much as possible, while at the same time being located at points close to areas of economic activity.

6.3.3. Electric vehicles

The electric vehicle is taking a big boom in many areas, it is considered that it will completely displace combustion vehicles.

There is no doubt about the advantages offered by this type of vehicle in the environmental aspect, as they reduce air pollution, contributing to the fight against climate change and improving air quality in urban environments. Electric motors are also more efficient than combustion engines, as they make better use of energy and have a lower cost per kilometre travelled.

Electric vehicles are becoming increasingly viable and attractive to consumers thanks to technological innovations in areas such as batteries, and improvements in charging infrastructure. All this makes it possible to increase the range, reduce the charging time and extend the useful life of the vehicles.

By relying primarily on electricity, electric vehicles contribute to reducing dependence on fossil fuels, promoting energy diversification and autonomy. However, it should not be forgotten that, for this to be positive, the sources of electricity must be renewable, otherwise the impacts would be shifted to the energy-producing centre, i.e. externalising emissions.

In any case, the electric vehicle still raises reservations among consumers for several reasons. Although modern batteries provide more range, it can still be

limited compared to conventional vehicles, especially in more affordable models. On the other hand, the availability of fast-charging stations is heterogeneous and limited in many areas, which is particularly worrying on long journeys.

On the other hand, battery production is not environmentally neutral: the extraction of raw materials for lithium-ion batteries, as well as their production and recycling, have significant environmental impacts if not properly managed, posing a huge challenge in terms of long-term sustainability.

Finally, while EV prices are dropping regularly, they still have a higher starting price than combustion vehicles, which can be a barrier for some consumers, despite the long-term savings on fuel and maintenance. This brake would be largely avoided with the implementation of incentive systems for the purchase of electric vehicles that would be deducted from the purchase price, instead of having to wait to receive the subsidy months or years after the disbursement has been made.

6.3.4. Shared vehicles and rides

Shared mobility solutions offer various options for vehicle ownership and use. Carpooling reduces the number of vehicles on the road, reducing emissions and benefits in terms of savings in depreciation, maintenance, insurance, taxes, etc., compared to other alternatives.

Among the options of this shared mobility, we find the following:

- *Carsharing*, where a company that owns the vehicle rents it to different users throughout the day, making the most of the vehicle that is in use for a long time. Brands that operate this model are Yuko, Car2Go, etc.
- *Carpooling*, in which an owner of a private vehicle makes free spaces available to other users for certain journeys. Although it applies to short urban journeys, it is more common on intercity journeys. The management of this shared transport is done through applications such as BlaBlaCar. It is also common for companies to encourage their workers to go to the workplace.

- *Ride-hailing* or VTC services, where the user hires a ride in a vehicle with a driver, usually through an application where they pay for the ride and rate the service, as is the case with Uber, Bolt or Cabify.
- *Ride-sharing*, which is the possibility of sharing the route of a VTC with other passengers who require similar routes, thus allowing you to take advantage of all the seats in a vehicle. Some VTC firms offer it, as is the case of Uber through the UberPool modality.
- *P2P Carsharing*, which involves lending the private vehicle to other users while the owner does not need it.

6.3.5. Reduction of air travel

Air transport is a significant contributor to carbon emissions and air pollution, even though its direct impact on climate change is relatively small compared to other modes of transport (2% emissions compared to 16% for the transport sector as a whole), its rapid increase is making it a general concern.

Efforts to reduce air travel focus on modal shift, replacing flights with more efficient alternatives like high-speed rail, as well as electrifying rail lines and road vehicles. However, these alternatives also have environmental impacts.

Air travel emissions are particularly high for long distances, where viable alternatives are limited. For short and medium distances, it is recommended to opt for lower-impact options such as trains or electric vehicles.

Technological improvements to enhance flight efficiency and the development of biofuels from plant-based materials are areas of interest. However, mass production of biofuels may shift environmental impacts towards crop production for fuel manufacturing.

6.3.6. Responsible tourism

Tourism is a global phenomenon with the power to both enrich and harm the places it touches. Responsible tourism seeks to maximize the positive impacts and minimize negative effects. Practices include reducing overall travel and limiting its.

- Travel reduction: Many people are considering limiting or halting travel due to awareness of the negative impacts of mass tourism. Options include local holidays, exploring one's own territory, or opting for fewer but longer trips.
- Social and community tourism: This form of tourism that focuses on the well-being and development of local communities in destinations by promoting cultural exchange, respect for local traditions, and the participation of tourists in the daily life of the communities visited.
- Ecotourism or low-impact tourism, such as camping, eco-friendly accommodations, environmental friendliness, and sustainable adventure travel.

In short, responsible tourism is about experiencing the world while preserving its wonders for future generations. By choosing eco-friendly accommodations, respecting local cultures and environments, supporting communities, and embracing more sustainable travel, travellers can ensure that their visits leave a positive legacy, understanding that responsible tourism is not just a way to explore the world; it's a way to protect it.

6.4. Responsible use of resources

All our activities involve the utilisation and consumption of various resources: water, energy, materials, soil, air, etc., and in general, they all produce impacts and waste. Being aware of the resources used in daily life, of their origin and whether or not they are renewable helps to minimise the impacts of consumption in all areas of life, making choices easier for processes that require the least use of resources, that they are renewable and that at the end of these processes the least possible impacts and waste are generated.

6.4.1. Energy Efficiency

One of the most effective ways to practice responsible consumption is by reducing energy consumption, something that not only reduces energy bills but also reduces greenhouse gas emissions and decreases our impact on the environment by contributing to climate change mitigation.

Reducing energy consumption can be achieved on many fronts. One of the most recommended is to have efficient appliances and energy-efficient lighting, based on LED bulbs. While efficient lighting has become very affordable, this is not so true for appliances that tend to have a significantly higher price for more energy-efficient ones.

Along with this, something much more accessible is to engage in intelligent energy management, having programmable thermostats to regulate the air conditioning more effectively and comfortably, unplugging electronic devices when they are not in use to avoid "phantom" energy consumption in *standby* mode, and turning off lights and appliances when they are not needed. The installation of presence sensors and detectors can be a great help in automating these practices, something that is currently very affordable thanks to the general availability of Wi-Fi in homes.

Another very important aspect is the thermal insulation of buildings and spaces, installing both exterior and interior panels or infills when possible to meet heating and cooling demands. It is equally important is sealing gaps and cracks to prevent leaks, drafts and energy loss.

When building or renovating homes and workplaces, sustainable building practices can significantly reduce energy consumption and environmental impact, as can passive design, which makes it possible to take advantage of natural light, benefit from the orientation of windows and spaces, create desired air circulation at will, and maintain a high thermal inertia of buildings, This is achieved by using materials with high thermal mass that retain temperature for longer.

Improving energy efficiency also extends to renewable energy generation sources, such as photovoltaic solar panels or solar water heating systems for domestic use or heating. In some cases, it is also possible to install wind turbines, which harness the power of the wind to produce energy. Nowadays there are multiple alternatives beyond the private initiative to create renewable energy communities, where several partners (individuals, local entities, NGOs, etc.) come together to generate and distribute their own energy, with economic, social, and environmental advantages.

Energy efficiency improvement practices extend to the workplace, where businesses can significantly reduce energy consumption and associated costs. To this end, in addition to measures such as those applicable to households, it is important to foster employee commitment, through awareness and training programs for the correct management of energy, establishing incentives that allow suggestions to be captured and good practices rewarded, promoting teleworking, virtual meetings and flexible workspaces, etc.

6.4.2. Reduced consumption of single-use devices

One of the basic rules of responsible consumption is the reduction of consumption in all areas, since by consuming less, it is necessary to produce less and therefore fewer resources are used. Additionally, less waste is generated, since the useful life of items is extended, and existing ones are reused more times.

One of the clearest examples of the convenience of this behaviour is the rejection of disposable products, i.e. single-use products. This affects not only products where for sanitary or hygienic reasons it is necessary (even in such cases there could be a revision in the guidelines advising disposal) but also many everyday products that we have practically forgotten were reused many times: tissues, napkins, lighters, pens, bags, razors, glasses, plates and cutlery, combs, toothbrushes, and containers, etc.

Many of these products are also made of plastic, which exacerbates the problem as the ubiquitous presence of single-use plastics has become a global environmental crisis, posing a significant threat to the health of our planet. Much of this waste ends up scattered in nature and in the oceans, where veritable islands of plastic have formed that not only remain on the surface but are distributed throughout the ecosystem, entering the species' food chain in the form of microplastics and leached chemicals, with long-term consequences that are still unknown but threatening.

Traditional plastic in its various forms is a petroleum derivative and although technologies are currently available for the manufacture of bioplastics, there is also discussion about the suitability of its production, use and

biodegradation capacity. Plastic damages ecosystems, affects animal species and causes direct economic damage to industries such as fishing or tourism.

The main problem with conventional plastic is its recycling, since the collection, classification, and reintroduction of this material into the production chain is difficult and expensive, not being competitive with the production of new plastic. Although promising technologies that break down plastic are being explored, they are not yet efficient enough to be competitive and widely used.

Consumers are often called upon to replace disposable products made of plastic with others made of natural materials, such as paper, bamboo, bioplastics or wood, but this alternative is not very sustainable either: what really reduces the impacts is to change single-use devices for their durable alternatives, whether they are shopping bags, plates, cutlery, napkins, bottles, or containers.

The alternative to the massive use of plastic and other disposable products is basically a cultural change that leads us to prefer reusable and durable products, even if they are made of plastic. A bamboo toothbrush that is only used once and discarded is no more sustainable than a durable plastic one that is used for several months. Nor is a non-returnable glass bottle that needs to be taken to the bin, washed, melted, and turned back into a new container, instead of coming back to the returnable packaging model that was prevalent up to 40 years ago, which was cheaper for the consumer, needed less energy and generated less waste.

Hence, measures such as extended producer responsibility programs are being implemented, which makes manufacturers responsible for the entire life cycle of their products, including recycling and disposal, which applies to packaging and household waste but also to devices such as electronic devices, used oils, batteries, tires, etc. Also of interest are the return and reward systems (SDR), which encourage the return and/or recycling of bottles and containers through economic incentives, and which are implemented through recycling machines located in shopping centres, educational centres, etc. On the other hand, taxing the use of single-use plastics or packaging, something that seemed like a promising measure, is not having the same

effectiveness, and consumers tend to assume the extra cost as a negligible increase in price that more than compensates for the convenience of not having to worry about packaging.

More effective can be campaigns to raise awareness about the negative impacts produced by the unconscious consumption of this and other types of products, as well as to provide convenient and accessible alternatives to users to facilitate actions such as the return of packaging, the recommendation to take the containers themselves to the shops, the placement of devices to facilitate a selective collection of waste, etc. etc.

6.4.3. Moving towards a more circular economy

The concept of circular economy has gained significant attention in recent years as a sustainable alternative to our linear throw-away consumption model. The circular economy, at its best, would consist of achieving an ideal of zero waste, but this goal is still a long way off.

In the meantime, it is useful to explore the principles of a circular economy, informing and educating about practical ways to minimise waste, the importance of recycling and reusing materials, and the role of sustainable product design. These principles concern people, but also companies and public administrations in order to achieve the goal of minimising waste and achieving optimal use of resources.

The circular economy is the opposite concept to the linear economy, based on the traditional consumption model that involves extracting resources, manufacturing products, and disposing of them as waste. In contrast, the circular economy prioritises resource efficiency, product longevity, and waste reduction to the ideal of achieving a zero-waste model.

The circular economy is based on principles that appeal to companies, such as the design of durable and repairable products that have a long useful life and whose components are recoverable to re-enter the production cycle. But it also appeals to consumers, who are called upon to reduce compulsive consumption, to repeatedly reuse products, extending their useful life as much as possible and ending with their proper disposal, recovering elements

that may continue to be useful and conveniently recycling non-recoverable waste.

In the domestic and personal sphere, there are several actions that can contribute to moving towards a more circular economy, such as adequate planning of purchases, which avoids having redundant goods, which limits food waste and, above all, breaks with the compulsion of always wanting to acquire the latest, moving from a culture of the new and modern to a mentality that values goods for their quality and usefulness and not only for their novelty or trendiness.

Within this context, it is important to foster a culture of repair, which focuses on repairing items rather than replacing them with new ones. In this sense, the role of product design and the commitment of manufacturers to supply spare parts in the long term is fundamental and many European legislations are advancing in this regard. The modular design and use of recyclable materials allow products to be created with easily replaceable or upgradable parts and makes it easier to disassemble for proper recycling and reuse of materials.

For this reason, it is necessary for conscious consumers to learn to value these aspects in their purchasing decisions, to favour goods that are repairable to those that must be discarded as soon as they are no longer useful. In this sense, there are online platforms and applications on the market for refurbished, restored or updated second-hand goods at much cheaper prices than new ones and that offer enough guarantee to make your purchase very attractive.

In this chapter, we have explored the principles of a circular economy, practical methods for reducing waste, the importance of recycling and restoration, and the role of sustainable product design. By embracing circular economy principles in our daily lives and supporting companies that prioritize resource efficiency, we can minimise waste, conserve valuable resources, and contribute to a more sustainable and responsible approach to consumption. A circular economy should not just be an environmental ideal: it is a real necessity for a possible future.

CHAPTER 7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR AND THE ADMINISTRATION

The promotion of a socially responsible consumption model is a complex task, which must involve all actors: consumers, companies, the third sector, as well as public administrations at all levels.

7.1. Promotion of socially responsible consumption by the public sector

One of the most important roles in promoting a socially responsible consumption model is that of the public sector, both at the political and legislative levels as well as at the administrative level, as both can help to create an environment conducive to a more sustainable lifestyle and consumption model, both socially and environmentally.

Some of the recommendations that could serve as a guide for policymakers would be the following:

1. Education and awareness of the population, through the implementation of educational programs in schools and communities on the principles of responsible consumption, which rigorously illustrates the social and environmental impact of purchasing decisions. Awareness is essential to change consumer habits, as clear, complete, and rigorous information will help to create awareness, modify beliefs, awaken concern for the future and mobilise the will towards a more conscious purchasing behaviour.
2. Improved regulation of product labelling, to provide clear and understandable information on key aspects for responsible consumption, such as the origin of materials and components, the ecological footprint, the working conditions under which it has been produced, etc., so that consumers can make informed decisions. An important point in this area relates to seals and certifications of the origin and method of manufacture of products, which must be made known so that consumers really take them into account.
3. Tax incentives and incentives for companies to adopt sustainable practices and produce goods and services under socially responsible standards. This

- can take the form of tax deductions, subsidies, administrative facilities, social clauses in public procurement, and any other type of incentive for companies to produce goods and services under ecological criteria and to practice fair labour policies, assuming their social responsibility in an integral way in all their value creation processes.
4. Penalization of bad practices, requiring companies to strictly comply with the regulations established in terms of supply, production, consumption, waste management, etc., and establishing exemplary sanctions for those that do not comply with the laws. Among the measures that can ensure compliance with responsible production regulations and promote ethical and sustainable business practices, would be the application of penalties such as financial penalties that are proportional to the damage caused, suspension or withdrawal of permits and licenses, exclusion from public procurement, claims for damages and reparations, negative publicity, withdrawal of harmful products from the market, etc.
 5. Support for the local and circular economy, through policies that encourage the production and consumption of goods and services within each territory, as this not only reduces the environmental footprint associated with transport but also supports local communities and SMEs, and favours the preservation of species, products, and traditional knowledge. It also contributes to fixing the population to the territory, favouring the development of rural areas, and avoiding the depopulation of the countryside.
 6. Transparency and the exercise of corporate social responsibility, requiring companies to disclose information about their social and environmental practices, both in their own processes and in their supply chains. Many of these good practices can be accredited through seals and certifications that offer consumers verified information, so one way to contribute to their implementation would be to support companies to undergo these audit and certification processes through incentives and public recognition.
 7. Encourage innovation and the development of sustainable technologies, favouring investment in this field, both through public research centres and by encouraging companies to improve their processes and operations in aspects such as energy efficiency, the consumption of raw materials,

- waste reduction and recycling, and thus promoting a responsible production model.
8. Investment in infrastructure that supports more sustainable lifestyles, such as efficient public transport systems, waste management, renewable energy production and distribution systems, efficient water management, friendly and interconnected urban planning, etc.
 9. Promotion of fair trade and decent work, both nationally and internationally, to ensure fair conditions for producers and workers throughout the value chain. These production models also have accreditations and certifications that endorse their ethics.
 10. Fostering international collaboration to address the challenges of responsible consumption at a global level, sharing best practices, standards, and policies, both from international organizations and governments. At this point, the establishment of consensual international treaties, conventions and standards is essential to have a common frame of reference, especially to prevent the more developed economies from shifting the negative impacts to other poorer and poorly regulated countries and regions.
 11. Citizen participation, involving civil society in decision-making related to responsible consumption policies and practices, ensuring that the voices of consumers and affected communities are taken into account. The role of social organisations such as consumer associations, environmental and animal rights organisations, neighbourhood associations, consumer communities, trade unions and other third sector actors is key to structuring citizens around this problem since it is in these grassroots organisations that consumers can really acquire direct information and awareness about the problem of socially responsible consumption.
 12. To keep information and awareness campaigns alive on a regular basis, especially those that offer guidelines and concrete examples of good practices in responsible consumption. It is much more effective to inform and educate on specific responsible consumption behaviours than to do it in a generic way by appealing to abstract values and concepts. In this aspect, it is also important to appeal to the emotional component of the consumer, since, as we have seen in the empirical study, the mere

transmission of information does not necessarily modify behaviour if it does not cause a change in the consumer's emotional commitment to the problem.

7.2. Consumer incentives to encourage responsible consumption

To incentivize socially responsible consumption, governments and institutions can establish a variety of fiscal incentives, subsidies, and administrative facilities that make responsible consumption more attractive and simpler.

Some of these specific policies and measures could include the following:

1. Tax reduction: Tax reductions can be offered on products and services that meet certain sustainability and social responsibility criteria, such as organic, fair trade or eco-labelled products, for example by applying lower VAT rates than those for conventional products.
2. Tax deductions for consumers for the purchase of socially responsible products or for the adoption of sustainable practices, such as the installation of renewable energy systems at home or the purchase of electric vehicles, such as the reduction of the IBI applied by the municipalities for the installation of photovoltaic panels, etc.
3. Direct discounts to consumers to help offset the additional costs associated with purchasing socially responsible products, such as organic food or fair-trade products, to make them more competitive with conventional products. This can include vouchers and other types of economic advantages, which encourage consumers to try this type of product, but it is very important to build loyalty, so this type of incentive cannot be one-off or sporadic but must be recurrent.
4. Financial facilities, offering preferential interest rates or more favourable financing conditions for the purchase of products or services that meet sustainability and social responsibility standards, such as energy-efficient appliances or electric vehicles.
5. Education and advice for consumers, through programmes that inform about the options available for responsible consumption and the benefits for them as well as for the environment and society. This type

of information must also be sectorised to adapt to each area so that consumers know what options they have in their locality and where they can find them.

6. Awareness-raising, sensitisation, and promotion campaigns to highlight the importance of responsible consumption and to encourage citizens to make informed and ethical decisions in their purchases. As noted above, these campaigns should be recurrent and focus on informing and educating about specific behaviours, rather than appealing to abstract concepts or values. It is more effective to say 'turn off the tap' than 'take care of the water'.
7. Certifications and labelling, facilitating the identification of socially responsible products by supporting certification systems, making them known to the public, requiring companies to come up with clear and easy-to-understand labelling, educating consumers to read labels so they can make informed decisions.

These measures can help create an environment conducive to socially responsible consumption by reducing financial barriers and educating consumers on more conscious behaviour. But in addition, they encourage collaboration between government, companies, and civil society to promote more sustainable and ethical business practices, since, as we have seen above, the problem of socially responsible consumption summons us all, citizens, companies, administrations and the third sector.

7.3. Socially responsible consumption seals and certifications

One of the most significant results of the descriptive analysis carried out in the survey carried out within the framework of the CARE project is the trust that consumers place in the seals and certifications that accredit aspects of the origin, materials, mode of production, etc., of goods and services.

In this sense, there are a large number of certifications and seals that identify products that meet certain ethical, labour and environmental standards. This includes aspects such as the controlled and sustainable origin of raw materials, animal welfare, working conditions, etc.

7.3.1. Combined certifications

1. Fair Trade: The Fair-Trade seal guarantees that products have been produced and marketed according to standards that promote better working and trading conditions for producers and workers in developing countries. This includes paying a fair price, safe working conditions, and respect for labour rights.
2. World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) Guaranteed Fair Trade: This certification ensures that an organization complies with the principles of fair trade set forth by the WFTO, including fair business practices, respect for workers' rights, and promotion of gender equity at work.
3. EU Ecolabel: It is an official ecolabel of the European Union that certifies products and services that meet rigorous environmental standards throughout their life cycle, from the extraction of raw materials to production, use and final disposal.
4. UTZ Certified: This seal is found on agricultural products such as coffee, cocoa, and tea, and certifies that they have been produced sustainably, with practices that promote environmental conservation and worker well-being.
5. B Corporation: It's not a specific seal, but companies certified as B Corps have gone through a rigorous assessment that assesses their overall social and environmental impact, transparency, and corporate responsibility.
6. Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS): Certifies textile products (such as clothing and home textiles) that meet ecological and social standards throughout the supply chain, including the cultivation of organic raw materials and fair working conditions.

7.3.2. Certifications of the origin of materials

1. Rainforest Alliance: This seal focuses on promoting sustainable agricultural practices, environmental protection, and better living conditions for farmworkers. It is commonly found in products such as coffee, tea, chocolate, and fruits.
2. Forest Stewardship Council (FSC): Certifies wood and paper products that come from sustainably managed forests, ensuring that the principles of

environmental conservation, social responsibility and economic viability are respected.

3. Marine Stewardship Council (MSC): This seal certifies seafood (such as fish and shellfish) that come from well-managed and sustainable fisheries, helping to protect marine ecosystems and ensure food security.

7.3.3. Labour certifications

1. Social Accountability International (SAI) SA8000: This certification focuses on social responsibility in the workplace and sets standards to ensure fair and safe working conditions throughout the supply chain. The SA8000 addresses issues such as child labour, forced labour, occupational health and safety, freedom of association and collective bargaining.
2. Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI): This initiative focuses on improving working conditions in the global supply chain. While it is not a specific seal, companies that meet BSCI standards can demonstrate their commitment to improving working conditions in factories and other production sites.
3. Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) Base Code: The ETI is an alliance of companies, trade unions and civil society organisations working together to improve working conditions in the global supply chain. Its Base Code sets minimum standards for ethical work, including the prohibition of child labour, forced labour, and discrimination in the workplace.

7.3.4. Animal welfare certifications

1. Organic Certification: Although not exclusively for animal welfare, organic certification often involves agricultural practices that benefit animals as well, such as access to the outdoors, natural diets, and more humane farming methods. Organic certification is granted by accredited certification bodies, which are authorized to carry out inspections and assess whether producers meet the established standards. These bodies can be both public and private and vary by region and country. Some examples of internationally recognized organic certification bodies include USDA Organic in the United States, EU Organic in the European Union, and JAS Organic in Japan.

2. Animal Welfare Approved Certification: This certification focuses specifically on animal welfare on farms and ranches. It ensures that the animals have been treated with respect and that they have been provided with an environment in which they can express their natural behaviour.
3. Global Animal Partnership (GAP) Certification: This certification classifies meat products according to their level of animal welfare, from level 1 to level 5+, allowing consumers to make informed decisions about the type of farming practices they are supporting with their purchase. Also of interest is AGW's Certified Animal Welfare Approved Certification, awarded by the non-profit organization A Greener World (AGW), which guarantees that animal products come from farms that meet high standards of animal welfare, sustainability, and social responsibility.
4. Certified Humane Certification: This certification applies to a variety of animal products, including meat, dairy, and eggs, and ensures that animals have been treated humanely throughout their lives, from birth to slaughter. Very similar is the Label Rouge (France), a seal that guarantees that products of animal origin (such as poultry, pork, and lamb) have been raised and processed according to strict standards that prioritize animal welfare and product quality.

These are just a few examples of seals and certifications that can help consumers make more ethical and sustainable purchasing decisions. It is important to research and familiarize yourself with these seals so that you can recognize and support companies and products that meet ethical and environmental standards.

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