

# Companies' actions for more sustainable consumption

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates how companies may efficiently enhance customers' sustainability awareness, first, by identifying the root causes of consumers' low level of engagement in sustainability. Second, by understanding the most trustworthy sorts of advertising. Third, comprehending the SHIFT framework to find solutions based on the previous three steps. This paper proposes actions for businesses to improve their customer's awareness of sustainability. Due to underlying root causes such as lack of knowledge about sustainability, lifestyle, sustainable products, and the activities businesses make to achieve sustainability goals, individuals with unsustainable lifestyles have wrong beliefs that impact their behaviours. As a result, companies should address the various root causes using the most trusted and influential factors, including social media, conferences, and word of mouth, to create a new consumer profile more involved in sustainability. Companies can use the SHIFT framework to make people feel and believe they are part of the problem and the solution. This study directs businesses towards solutions that address the underlying causes of the problem by addressing beliefs and feelings and engaging consumers.

**Keywords:** sustainability; sustainable consumption; companies; awareness; SHIFT framework

## 1. Introduction

Sustainability is one of today's most pressing issues covering many social, environmental, and economic problems. People worldwide are affected by significant challenges such as climate change. That is why a sustainable consumer is essential, especially if we want to keep the planet in excellent shape for future generations. However, shifting consumers' behaviour from concerned to proactive is difficult since it requires the application of appropriate techniques and knowledge. But it is not impossible. In this context, companies, especially sustainable industries, could influence consumers to follow and adopt a more sustainable lifestyle.

So, what are sustainability and sustainable consumption? What are the root causes behind unsustainable consumption? Which factors have the most effect on consumers? What is the SHIFT framework? How can companies increase consumers' level of sustainability efficiently?

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Sustainability

The "United Nations Commission on Environment and Development" also known as the "Brundtland Commission," inspired the modern definition of the term "sustainability" in 1983. After that, in 1987, the Brundtland Commission delivered its final report entitled "Our Common Future" (commonly known as the Brundtland Report). Sustainable development means satisfying current needs without harming future generations' ability to fulfil their own needs (Keeble, 1988). Thanks to this report, "sustainability" got integrated as a policy concept and the term "sustainable development" increased in popularity (Purvis et al., 2019).

In 1994, Elkington formulated the three dimensions of sustainability (social, economic, and environmental), which was a significant advance. These are the most widely acknowledged dimensions in academia and the industry, and constitute the Triple Bottom Line

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(Damico et al., 2022). The social dimension involves treating people fairly and ensuring that employees, stakeholders, and the society in which a business operates treat persons responsibly, ethically, and sustainably. The most addressed aspect of the environmental dimension revolves around reducing carbon footprints, water use, non-decomposable packaging, and wasteful operations. Besides, the economic dimension is the ability of a firm to produce enough revenues to keep functioning for a long time by finding a balance in making money in ways that are consistent with the other aspects of sustainability (Purvis et al., 2019).

The U.N. issued 17 goals, which the world leaders adopted in September 2015 at the historic U.N. Summit, and which entered into force in January 2016. One of the goals is responsible consumption and production, and they are hoped to be reached by 2030 (United Nations, n. d.).

## ***2.2. Sustainable consumption and its importance***

Sustainable consumption means using products and services that satisfy minimum requirements and improve people's lives while reducing the use of natural resources, harmful materials, waste, and pollution emissions throughout their entire lifecycle to meet future generations' needs (Ari & Yikmaz, 2019). Besides, a socially responsible consumer makes purchase and consumption decisions based on their awareness of environmental and social issues. In addition, they consider traditional purchase factors (price, quality, etc.), the product's social and environmental implications, and the firm that manufactures and markets it. Furthermore, it is crucial because, as proven, individual consumption choices have unprecedented effects on our environment (White et al., 2019). As a consequence, unless we start making more sustainable decisions, we will not be able to preserve our planet or continue operating as we do now. In this situation, businesses may play a crucial part in assisting customers in forming sustainable behaviours.

## **3. Methodology**

### *Survey*

An online survey was conducted in the scope of this research paper. The participants' profiles are as follows: 90 persons took the survey; they were from 34 countries. 5 continents (50% from Europe, 23% from Africa, 19% from Asia, 4% from Australia/ Oceania, and 3% from America) in total participated, with people aged from 18 years old to 53 years old but the highest percentage 73% is aged between 18 and 30 years old. Most of the participants have a job, and the majority, 46%, have a middle income. 68% of participants are males, 31% females, and 1% others. Most survey respondents, 47%, have received tertiary level of education, either a master's or a Ph.D. degree.

### *Case study / interview*

Nowadays, many industries realize the need for more sustainable ways of conducting business, and one of them is Araven/ Grupo O.M. In this context, I have interviewed Nuria Lozano, the sustainability specialist of the company Araven/ Grupo O.M., which is an SME located in Rivas Vaciamadrid, Madrid, Spain. In fact, Araven/ Grupo O.M has three offices: two in Spain (in Zaragoza and Madrid) and one in Mexico. This company has three lines of business: the manufacture of carts and baskets for the transportation of purchases, elements for food storage in restaurants, and finally, the printing of posters and elements of visual merchandising for supermarkets. This firm is appealing because it integrates sustainability goals into its production and company culture. Plus, it tries to disseminate these goals among its employees.

## 4. Results

Based on Figure 1-2 (see Appendix 1 for full survey responses), even though the majority, 54%, know what sustainability means, they are not following a sustainable lifestyle. Most of them, 49%, follow it to some extent (Figure 1-2) and this could be explained by a significantly separating and differentiating between awareness and implementation. Furthermore, there are several obstacles to behavioural change (Padilla, 2018).

Figure 1: Do you know what sustainable development means?

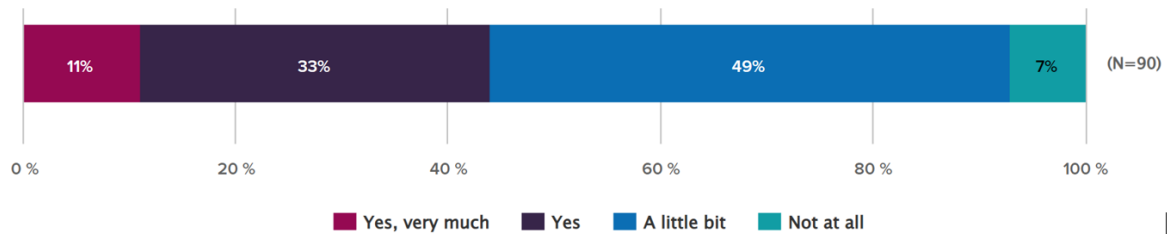


Figure 2: Do you follow a sustainable lifestyle?

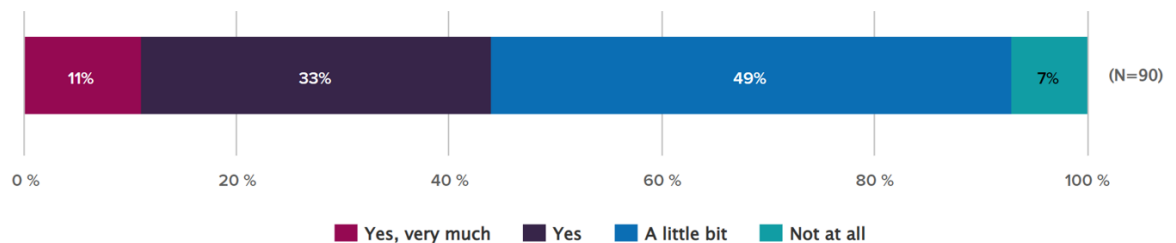


Figure 1-2. Survey takers' level of knowledge of sustainable development and level of engagement in sustainable lifestyle. Source: Survey answers. Author's own.

Figure 3 shows that the most significant percentage, 29%, chose "not applicable". As a result, these individuals (26 out of 90) have chosen a sustainable lifestyle. However, the rest had not adopted a sustainable lifestyle yet, and the root causes were as follows.

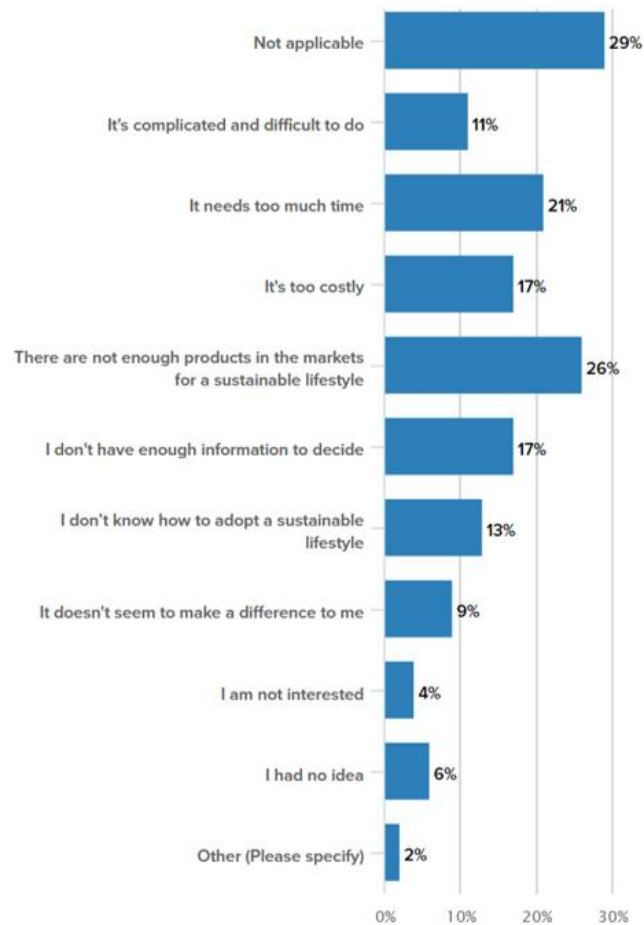
Lack of sustainable products in the market: 26% of participants believed there are inappropriate products for a sustainable lifestyle (Figure 3). This resulted in three primary causes. First, specific countries, mainly developed nations, have sufficient sustainable items on the market, but consumers are unaware of this due to a lack of communication from firms about their sustainable products. Second, there is a paucity of sustainable items available for customers in certain other nations, notably in emerging economies. Third, some consumers choose to deflect responsibility by blaming or attributing the consequences of unsustainable behaviour to others.

In the same context, participant ID 87 answered the question "who influenced you to follow a sustainable lifestyle? What motivates you?" by saying, "our thoughts influence our sustainable lifestyle. But every human being must firmly believe that. There are enough products in the global market for every human being on the planet to live a sustainable lifestyle" (See Appendix 1 for complete survey answers).

### *Time-consuming*

As shown in Figure 3, 21% of respondents believe that living a sustainable lifestyle requires too much time. In today's fast-paced world, people choose less time-consuming options, especially when they lack information; it takes time for them to search, ask for, and discover sustainable items, as well as embrace their lifestyle and make sustainable choices (De Smet, 2022).

Which of the following describes why you have 'not adopted a sustainable lifestyle yet?



Note: Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

Figure 3. Survey takers' reasons behind following unsustainable lifestyle.  
Source: Survey answers. Author's own.

#### *Lack of information*

Survey participants stated they lack information to decide, and this is a critical root cause because information has a vital role in decision-making (Citroen, 2011). When responding to one of the survey questions, "How can companies help you in adopting a sustainable lifestyle?" some participants, such as participants ID 46, 59, 60, 70, and 37, confirmed that they were either unaware or unsure of how companies could help them adopt a sustainable lifestyle. (See Appendix 1 for complete survey responses). Moreover, 13% of people declared they are unsure of how to adopt a sustainable lifestyle (Figure 3), also indicating that they miss related information. Research and empirical data indicate that individuals do not consume to damage the environment: the environmental costs result from the pursuit of well-being (Akenji & Chen, 2016). As a result, individuals are unaware of the significance of choosing a sustainable lifestyle, its benefits, and consequences.

On the other hand, sustainable customers who participated in the poll seemed to have had adequate knowledge and education. For example, participant ID 90 responded to the question, "who influenced you to follow a sustainable lifestyle? What motivates you?" by saying "I have studied for a master's degree in sustainable development... I have done a project for sustainable development in Portugal. We made good progress in that project called '2020-changemakers'". On the other hand, participant 65, stated that "reading" provides him with information and direction on how to live a sustainable lifestyle.

So, one of the significant primary reasons for unsustainable individuals is a lack of information about sustainability. At the same time, having adequate information is crucial for boosting consumers' participation in sustainability.



Figure 4. Survey takers' attitude towards present environmental issues. Source: Survey answers. Author's own.

Furthermore, in Figure 4, 46% of respondents indicated their concern about current environmental challenges. Plus, they are taking steps to mitigate effects. The remainder, 54%, chose other answers. 27% of individuals believe that environmental concerns are significant but will have only a slight impact on global well-being. This is due to a lack of awareness about the dangers and repercussions of these environmental difficulties. Besides, 16% said such problems are not serious and may be resolved shortly. These respondents lack knowledge about the severity of environmental challenges and the hazards they pose to humanity. On the other hand, let us look at consumers who follow a sustainable lifestyle, like participant ID 77, who declares, “My field of study influenced me to be a sustainable person; I am doing my Ph.D. about geothermal renewable energy, which can be used in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner, unlike fossil fuels. Thus, what you are studying will affect your daily behaviour and lifestyle and you will be more conscious about the environment and how you manage its natural resources to protect it in the long-term”. These people appear to understand the need to conserve natural resources and the consequences of failing to do so. In fact, concerning the question “what is your attitude like toward the present environmental issues?”, one participant from the survey stated, “the world has been balancing itself all the time.” (See Appendix 1 for complete survey responses). This way of thinking stems from a lack of knowledge about the severity of the subject, and as a result, these people continue to follow an unsustainable lifestyle. However, participant 35, who cares about sustainability, said, “to live you have to be sustainable.” and participant 40 declared, “I just want to think about my future, the future of my child.”. These examples demonstrate the two identifiable distinct customer attitudes.

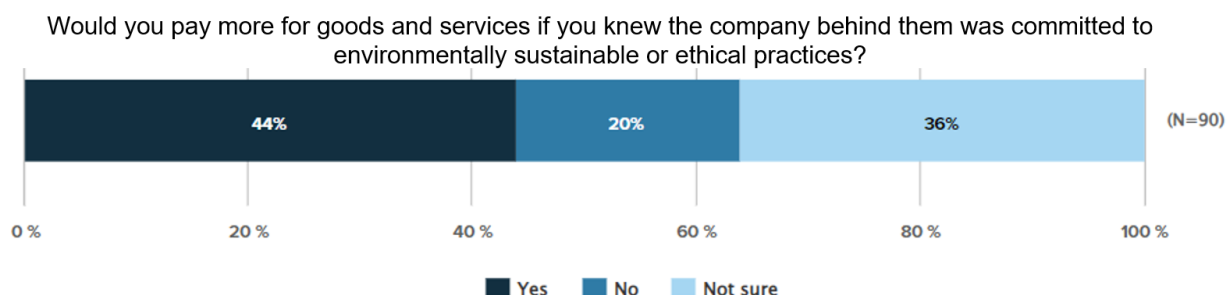


Figure 5. survey takers' level of willingness to pay more for goods and services who belong to companies engaged in sustainable practices. Source: Survey answers. Author's own.

Furthermore, some people lack knowledge about firms that conform to sustainable development goals, and they are unaware of these companies' initiatives toward a more sustainable world. These persons are unable to distinguish these firms from others. As a result, a lack of information results in obstacles to the decision-making process. The decision-making

process does not begin without information about an issue (Devine et al., 2004). So, the absence of information will keep customers engaging in unsustainable behaviours, attitudes, and choices.

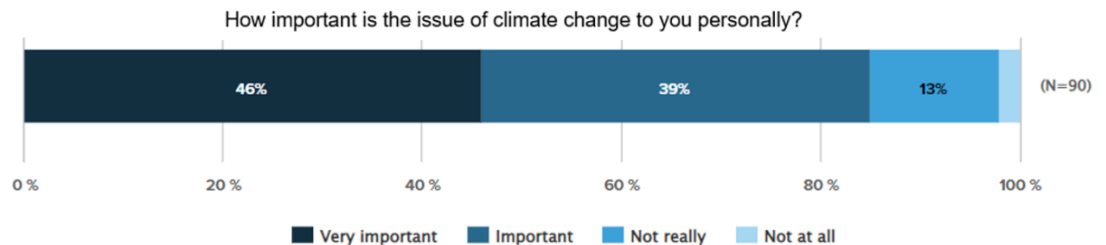
In fact, in one of the survey questions (see Appendix 1 for total survey responses), most respondents said (40 out of 90) they are willing to pay a higher price for various goods and services if they know the companies behind them are committed to ecologically sustainable or ethical practices. As a result, a lack of knowledge prevents customers from selecting businesses with ethical practices and ideals. Likewise, limited knowledge is a significant underlying factor for many individuals not yet embracing a sustainable lifestyle.

### *Costly*

17% of survey-takers had not yet adopted a sustainable lifestyle because it is too expensive (Figure 3). Some people are aware of sustainability but do not practice it since they have priorities and a limited budget, especially those with middle or low salaries or those who are students. Price is one of the most crucial elements for them when purchasing a product. While individuals are getting more conscious about sustainable behaviour, price and quality continue to drive consumer behaviour (Padilla, 2018).

### *Complexity and difficulty*

11% are discouraged from starting a sustainable lifestyle because it is complicated and demanding for them (Figure 3). It is also crucial to note that a lack of knowledge might lead people to believe that adopting sustainable practices is difficult since they do not know what to do. Also, it is challenging for them because it sometimes requires commitment, time, cost, and practice. One of the crucial barriers to sustainable consumer behaviour is that customers typically perceive such behaviours as having a personal cost, such as additional work, increased expense, reduced quality, or lower attractiveness (White et al., 2019).



**Figure 6. Survey takers' level of engagement towards climate change issue.**

*Source: Survey answers. Author's own.*

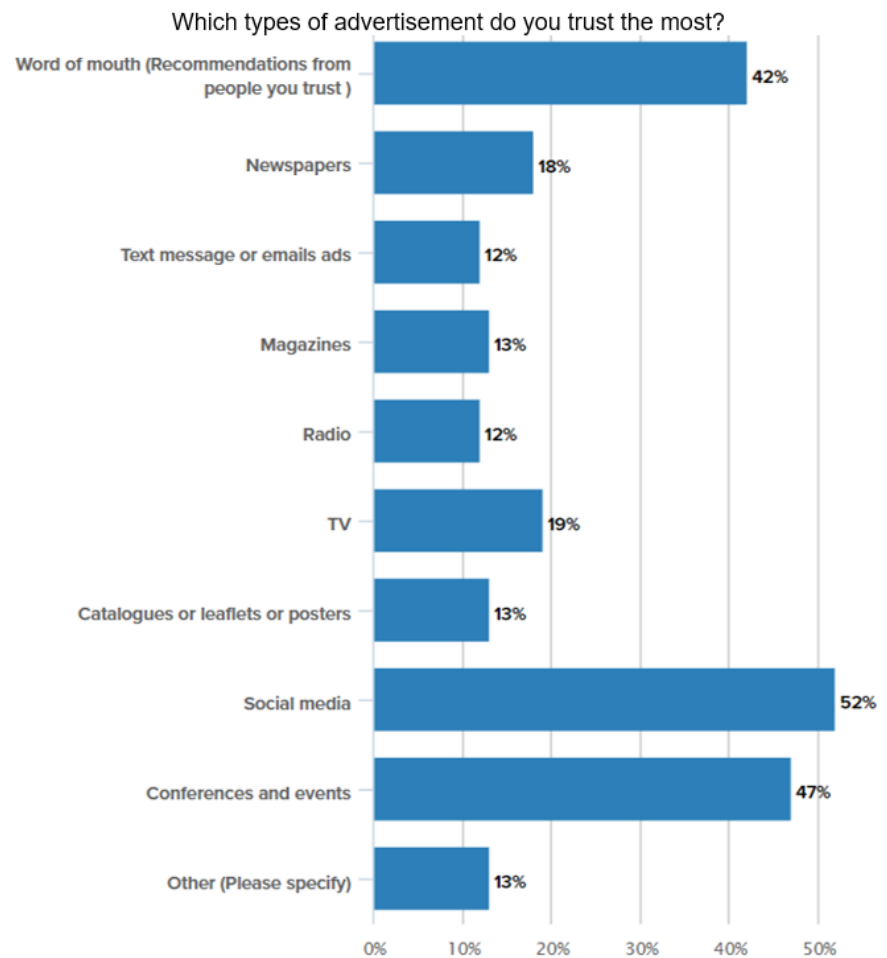
Climate change is “very important” to 46% of people, while it is “important” to 39%. These two responses constitute 85% of survey-takers’ answers (Figure 6). This means that, while they are aware of the importance of climate change, most of them are incapable of living sustainably, which might be explained by the complexity and difficulty of living a sustainable lifestyle as seen by these individuals.

Finally, due to all these root causes, individuals not living sustainably have some beliefs that drive them to that way of thinking. They feel that living a sustainable lifestyle is difficult, time-consuming, ineffective, pricey, difficult to implement, and requires much information. Furthermore, others think they are neither the cause nor the solution. People are also terrified of changing their lifestyles and attempt to avoid it at first since it is outside of their comfort zone. Individuals’ beliefs influence their behaviours because each decision begins with a belief. That is why there is still a significant gap between what people say and what they do.

### *Most trusted type of advertisement*

According to poll responses (see Figure 7), over half of the participants chose social media above other multiple-choice options, making it the most trusted method of advertisement for the majority. The reason is that social media allows consumers to interact

including giving suggestions, writing reviews, participating in online forums, giving recommendations, and being part of communities, which are generators of trust in social media (Ridings & Gefen, 2004).



Note: Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

**Figure 7.** Types of advertisement by the level of trust based on survey answers.  
*Source: Survey answers. Author's own.*

For example, one of the most significant aspects of social media is reviews. Consumer feedback about different products and services is available, which provides significant value to customers and businesses (Nambisan, 2002). This social media-generated electric word of mouth helps customers make shopping decisions (Pan & Chiou, 2011). One sustainable consumer in the survey declared that the “Community” influenced him/her to live sustainably (see Appendix 1 for complete survey responses). Additionally, potential clients rely on recommendations. According to research, other users’ suggestions stimulate the attention of future customers more than vendor-generated product information (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Moreover, these interactions enhance the level of trust. As a result of social media referrals, 71% of people are more likely to make a purchase (Ewing, 2019). Among those who responded to the poll and identified themselves as following a sustainable lifestyle, one stated that “social media influencers like Dean Schneider” inspired him/her to pursue a sustainable lifestyle (See Appendix 1 for total survey responses.) That is why social media dramatically influences consumers in building awareness of certain products (ElAydi, 2018). Another environmentalist who took the survey mentioned that he/she was motivated by “social media, public influencers” to purchase sustainable products. So, social media is an assertive means of communication and functions as an influential tool.

In the survey, 47% tend to trust conferences and events. In fact, any event which aims to promote a product or service by corporations is known as event marketing. Furthermore, the most common forms are conferences and live or virtual events (Tomlinson, 2020).

Additionally, even though advertising is more focused on digital events and conferences, this remains a widespread and trusted trend because firms can generate emotional connections and trust with their or potential customers thanks to their ability to provide a personal touch in the conferences that the digital world usually lacks (EMI & MOSAIC, 2016).

People trust conferences and events because they can interact directly with businesses (CMO Council & E2MA, 2013), discover them, and gain a sense of their distinctive brand image. After attending an event, 84% of participants believe they have a more favourable perception of a company, product, or service (EMI & MOSAIC, 2016) because events facilitate knowledge exchange and generate a kind of interaction between companies and consumers (Rowe, 2018), especially nowadays, when fake news increasingly penetrates traditional forms of advertisement. Live events account for 1.7 times the average marketing spend for most successful businesses (Brandon, 2017). This demonstrates the importance of conferences and events in influencing individuals. According to research commissioned by Set Creative, 73% of customers in the U.K. and U.S. are more inclined to buy a product after attending a live brand event (Fullard, 2019).

Word-of-mouth marketing (WOM) is when consumers recommend products and services to people with whom they have close relationships, such as family and friends' (Hayes, 2022). The majority of those who responded to the survey stated that their parents and friends inspired them to embrace a sustainable lifestyle. One of the responders who is aware of sustainability, for example, confirmed that his parents and friends inspired him to adopt a sustainable lifestyle and educated him about the benefits of doing so by addressing global concerns such as global warming. This person also added "people I know influenced me by telling me their reasons and listening to them, I know that we need to change our way of life for the future, the climate change is acute" (see Appendix 1 for total survey responses). Also, word-of-mouth recommendations has affected purchase decisions for ages (Kapadia, 2018). Furthermore, people frequently have trust in those who are close to them. "My family and my friends, even my co-workers influenced me to be sustainable in life" (See Appendix 1 for complete survey responses). Thus, whenever they recommend something, they believe in it and choose to adhere to it. Participant ID 20 also confirmed the same by saying "To be a sustainable person, I have been influenced by parents, friends, and a few social media influencers.". Furthermore, someone else said, "My husband and my parents influenced me too" (see Appendix 1 for total survey responses). As a result, word of mouth significantly impacts many people's decisions.

### *The SHIFT Framework*

The SHIFT marketing framework combines many tools marketers use to evaluate customer interactions (White & Habib, 2018). thus, SHIFT framework enables businesses and marketers to better understand the barriers influencing their potential customers' purchasing decisions, as well as to notify them about the additional value provided by their products or services (Autere, 2018). The elements of the SHIFT framework are: 1. social influence related to social norms, attractiveness, and group participation (Weingarden, 2019); 2. habit formation relating to both bad-breaking habits and forming positive ones (White & Habib, 2018); 3. individual self relating to a person's values, identity, and commitments; 4. feelings and cognition, which are positive and negative emotions; and finally, 5. tangibility, which is about making the impacts tangible (Nandish et al., 2021). As proved, when these factors are successfully utilized, consumers are more likely to change unwanted (and maintain good) sustainable consumption habits (White & Habib, 2018).

## **5. Findings and suggested solutions**

The transition from concerned to proactive customer is vital. In this context, in order to have efficient actions, first, companies should implement solutions pointing to the root causes. Second, to influence consumers, firms are advised to use the most trusted type of advertisement. Third, to achieve their goal, it is important for companies to implement the SHIFT framework. In fact, there is widespread agreement that understanding the context in which consumers' related behaviours are formed is necessary for developing more effective and sustainable lifestyle policies and practices (Akenji & Chen, 2016). Therefore, companies

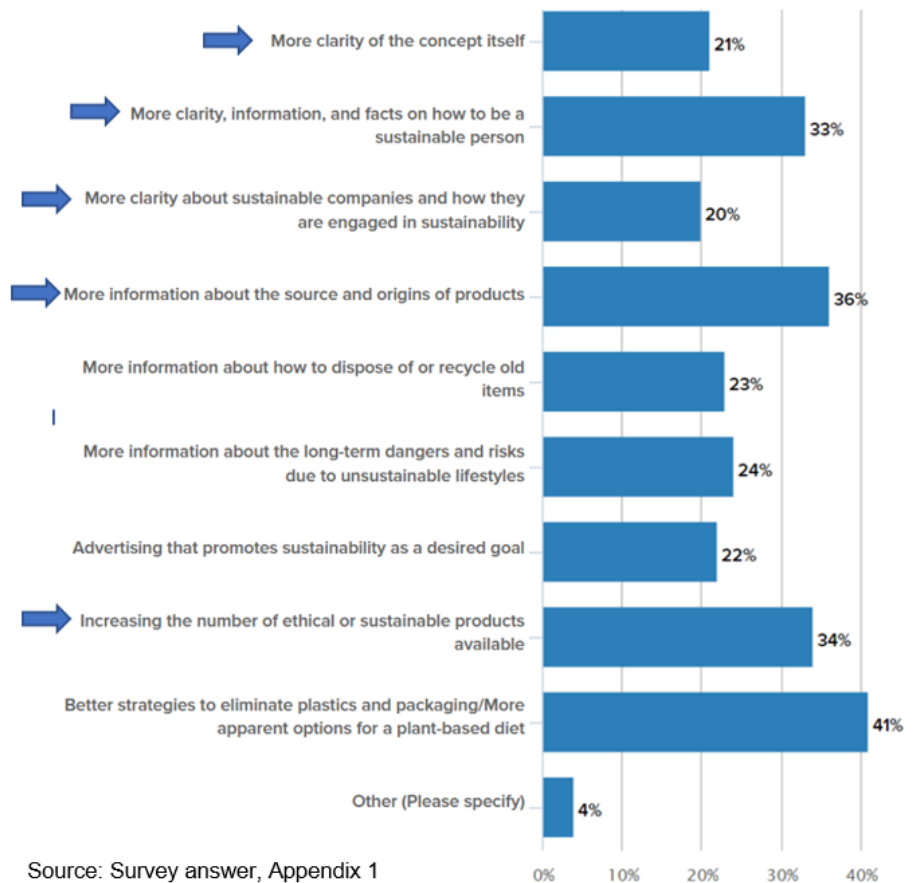


need to focus on changing consumer behaviour and not only on increasing awareness. Some of the actions that companies could implement to help increase the level of sustainability of consumers are as follows.

### 5.1. Suggested solutions using social influence

The first step in influencing sustainable consumer behaviour is using the SHIFT framework’s first element: social influence. Other people’s presence, behaviour, and expectations significantly impact customers. Social impacts are one of the most significant factors influencing consumer behaviour change over time (Abrahamse & Steg, 2013). Social influence could impact sustainable behaviours through, for example, social norms, as such influence has a powerful effect on the sustainability of customer behaviour (Cialdini et al., 1990; Peattie, 2010). Thanks to social norms, consumers could get influenced to practise litter avoidance (Cialdini et al., 1990), recycling (Oskamp et al., 1991; White & Simpson, 2013), and selecting food that is sourced in a sustainable manner (Dowd & Burke, 2013).

Which of the following, in your opinion, may help you adopt a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle?



Note: Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

Figure 8. Solutions to adopt a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle based on survey answers. Source: Survey answers. Author’s own.

In this context, companies can use one of the most reliable forms of advertising, such as conferences or events to address a sustainability issue or to spread awareness (See Appendix 1 for complete survey answers.) For example, 33% of survey participants agreed that companies should provide “more clarity, information, and facts on how to live sustainably” (Figure 8). Bearing this in mind, companies can hold conferences to address such issues as the ones many survey respondents mentioned in their answers to the question “How can companies help you in adopting a sustainable lifestyle?” participant ID 63 is an example, who said: “One way is to give more information about sustainability. I feel like there is a lack of

knowledge and information for people to take action.” Besides, participant ID 38 said that firms can help in adopting a sustainable lifestyle by providing detailed information about the concept of sustainability. Moreover, participant ID 24 declared “companies can provide education materials about sustainability and can arrange seminars to educate the public.” Likewise, participant ID 68 said: “By providing Information on how to do it.” This suggests that people need such information.

Alternatively, as Figure 8 shows, companies can organize conferences to provide enough information on the origin and source of items, as reflected by the votes of 36% of respondents. By doing so, people will be aware of sustainable products on the market. In a similar manner, participant ID 1 said companies need to provide more information about their products and what they are doing to achieve sustainability goals. While participant ID 69 mentioned that firms should use more sustainable materials. As a result, businesses may host events to provide individuals with greater clarity and information. Participant ID 73 shared that in the company he/she works, all employees, from top executives to assembly line workers, are engaged in day-to-day company sustainability activities. And he/she added “the company organizes sustainability meetings and conferences to spread awareness about sustainability”.

Nevertheless, what is vital in the meanwhile is using social norms to influence the consumers effectively, like mentioning the person’s name, shaking hands, and making eye contact. In one case, the descriptive norm indicated a group of people was participating in an energy conservation programme at a hotel. It was more successful than standard environmental communication (Goldstein et al., 2008).

Furthermore, Nuria, Araven’s sustainability specialist, conducts training with staff regularly to increase their knowledge about sustainability. These training activities align with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Some actions inside the firm raised awareness of waste recycling and of the carbon footprint and promoted digitization to minimize paper use. Nuria stated that training and conferences are practical and positively impact employees.

**Type:** events and conferences

**using** SHIFT framework

social influence. Example: social norms

**addressed root causes:**

- Lack of information
- Time-consuming
- Difficulty and complexity
- Lack of sustainable products in the market

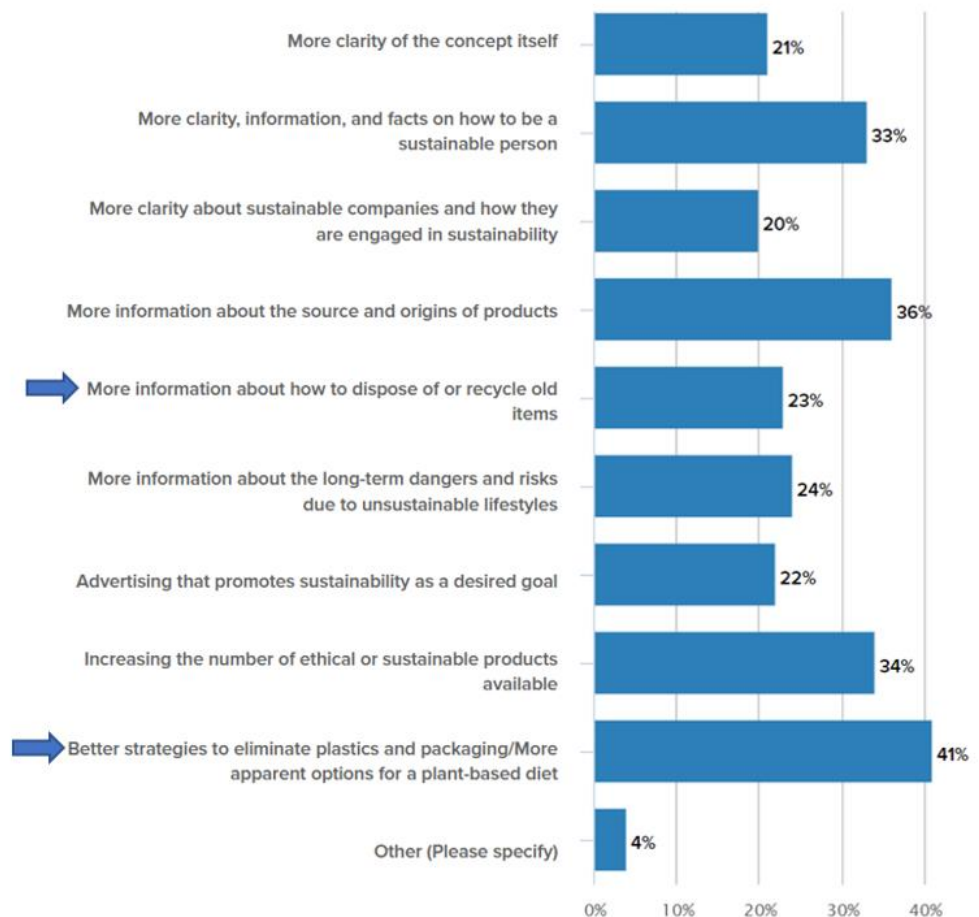
## ***5.2. Suggested solutions using Habit Formation***

Habit formation is the second component of the SHIFT framework. Habits are actions that continue over time due to frequent exposure to environmental signals (Kurz et al., 2015). While some sustainable behaviours (like installing an efficient showerhead) take a single action, others (such as taking shorter showers) require repeated activities and new habits. In this context, habit modification is vital to long-term behaviour change since many typical unsustainable behaviours (Verplanken, 2011), such as food intake, mode of transportation, energy, shopping, and product disposal, are deeply ingrained (Donald et al., 2014; Verplanken & Roy, 2016). By way of using suggestions, rewards, and feedback, positive behaviours can be strengthened through activities that promote repetition and make sustainable acts simple (White et al., 2019). In this context, companies can promote the use of social media, which is considered the most trusted source of advertisement according to the survey, and companies can also give more information about how to dispose of or recycle old items as 23% of the survey’ participants need such information (Figure 9).

Moreover, in the survey, and specifically in the question “How can companies help you in adopting a sustainable lifestyle?”, many participants indicated that companies should use recycled products, reduce products’ cost and use eco-friendly packages. Further, companies can give “better strategies to eliminate plastics and implement more apparent options for a plant-based diet” as voiced by 41% of respondents, who agreed as Figure 9 shows.

Nevertheless, some survey respondents claimed that firms might cause them to embrace a sustainable lifestyle by practicing fair trade, using renewable resources and plastic-free packaging, being attentive to harmful gas emissions, and purchasing eco-friendly products. In other words, if businesses adhere to sustainability principles and employ sustainable alternatives, many individuals will be inspired to live sustainably. However, it is critical to continue advertising sustainable products and habits so customers become habituated to them via repetition, and alter harmful behaviours since individuals adjust to change throughout time (Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999).

Which of the following, in your opinion, may help you adopt a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle?



Note: Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

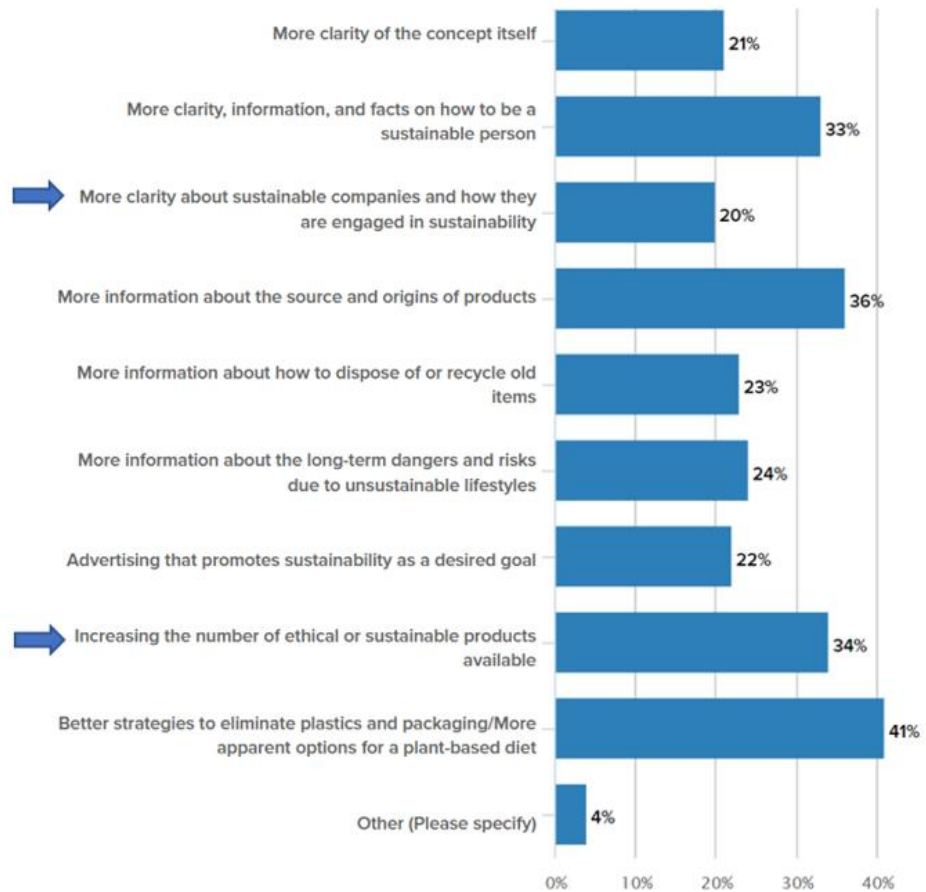
Figure 9. Solutions to adopt a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle based on survey answers. Source: Survey answers. Author's own.

The Araven sustainability specialist stated that when the firm Araven modified its waste treatment system, it began to require staff to separate different types of garbage and place them in distinct containers. There were many uncertainties at first, and the recycling quality was not 100% satisfactory based on their internal indicators, but it eventually improved owing to repetitions since people were accustomed to it. She added “I regularly check indicators, and they are improving”. It is an excellent example for companies to demonstrate to their employees that they lead by example first because many respondents want to see how companies are self-sustaining to be motivated and engage in sustainable practices as participant ID 21 said: “Present real evidence about taking actions towards being sustainable, like agreements conducted between organizations, etc..”. Additionally, participant ID 28 mentioned: “By being themselves more sustainable. Participant ID 43 shared that companies should demonstrate their investment in sustainable products and practices. And participant ID 64 agreed that firms must have a culture that promotes sustainability goals.

Furthermore, after a while, the staff at such companies will influence their family members, resulting in a circle of change from one person to another. In this case, word of

mouth will aid increasing the number of individuals living sustainably. So, companies need to keep in mind that specific actions that result in changing people’s habits require time and repetition to enable employees to embrace the new habit and stop the prior ones. Besides, companies can share and promote their new habits and cultures on social media platforms since consumers want to know what businesses are doing to assist them in achieving sustainability goals.

Which of the following, in your opinion, may help you adopt a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle?



Note: Because multiple answers per participant are possible, the total percentage may exceed 100%.

Figure 10. Solutions to adopt a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle based on survey answers. Source: Survey answers. Author’s own.

Furthermore, many sustainable actions are time-consuming, labour-intensive, or challenging to implement and this discourages people (McKenzie-Mohr 2000). As a result, making the activity easy to perform is one strategy for boosting long-term habit formation (Houten et al., 1981). Participant ID 52 stated that firms might assist him/her following sustainability by making it “less complicated and more available.” Companies can make sustainable behaviours easier to engage in by encouraging such activities as having recycling bins close by, necessitating less sophisticated recycling sorting, and installing sprinkler systems with “low-flow” choices (White et al., 2019). Moreover, rendering sustainable practices the standard is one way to simplify them (Frederiks et al., 2015; Theotokis & Manganari, 2015). In fact, customers’ cognitive resources are typically limited, simplifying the decision-making process might help them create more automatic, sustainable habits (Steg & Vlek, 2009). Another significant point to make sustainable lifestyle less complex and challenging for consumers is to sell sustainable products at the same price as unsustainable ones because cost is one of the vital root causes and could make sustainable habits difficult for consumers. Participant ID 15 said in the survey that in order to motivate him/her to be more sustainable companies should “offer organic products at the same price as the unsustainable ones”, and participant ID 27 recommended “selling sustainable products at a cheaper price”.

While participant ID 30 said: “Make more ecological products and make them cheaper than non-sustainable ones.”

Besides, firms must conclude their awareness activities with exercises or games to make them simple, easy, and memorable. In this regard, Nuria, the sustainability specialist at Araven, mentioned that the most effective activities are various exercises and games which are dynamics, stimulate staff engagement, and during which workers may apply theoretical and previous explanations. It is also necessary to incorporate some materials, particularly images, because visuals make it easier for people to understand the theoretical part of awareness workshops. Furthermore, providing consumers with specific feedback about their behaviour or task achievement is another strategy to boost long-term habit formation. Feedback can be provided concerning the person’s competency or the user’s previous behaviours, such as water and energy use (White et al., 2019). According to research, feedback given over a long period, in real-time, and in a straightforward manner is an effective way for increasing long-term habit formation (Chiang et al., 2014; Fischer, 2008; Karjalainen, 2011). Sharing group comments at home and at work may also be an excellent way to alter behaviour (De Leon & Fuqua, 1995; Schultz, 1999; Schultz et al., 2007; Siero et al., 1996).

The Araven sustainability specialist stated that their organization has indicators, such as the amount of hours staff devote to volunteer activities and other actions related to sustainability. Then, they measure indicators in each period and share information about improvements with the employees. As demonstrated, this method motivates workers to achieve better results. In addition, they give them feedback sheets to fill in after the sustainability training to see what worked well and what did not. Consequently, Araven gives employees the impression that the organization cares about their opinions. Also, thanks to feedback, Araven learns how to improve activities during the following training sessions.

**Type:** social media/word of mouth/workshops/conferences

**using SHIFT framework:** Habit formation. Example: discontinuity to change bad habits through repetition and simplicity

**addressed root causes:**

- Lack of practical information / Difficulty and complexity
  - Costly / time-consuming
- Lack of sustainable products in the market

### ***5.3. Suggested solutions using the Individual Self***

The Individual Self is the SHIFT framework’s third component. Consumption behaviours can be influenced significantly by factors related to the individual self: positive self-consistency, personality characteristics, consciousness, identity, and self-efficacy. Researchers propose that self-interest may induce pro-environmental behaviours (Griskevicius et al., 2012; Paavola, 2001). One technique to influence people is using individual self-elements is to draw attention to the identity of a particular sustainable product, service, or attitude (Green & Peloza, 2014; Nolan et al., 2008). According to research, if customers’ self-relevant objectives are met, sustainable features have a higher impact on them (Schuitema & de Groot, 2015). In addition, self-interests might surpass the environmental drive (Schwartz et al., 2015), particularly when sustainability arguments incorporate self-centred and ecological reasons for behaving sustainably (Edinger-Schons et al., 2018). In the same context, one survey participant who stated that he or she follows a sustainable lifestyle responded to the question “who influenced you to follow a sustainable lifestyle, what motivates you?” by saying: “The world becomes a better place if I influence it. Whatever I do, I need to have other people in mind, especially those who will come after me. They need to enjoy the same things I am enjoying. For this to happen, I have to sustain the environment and not destroy it” (see Appendix 1 for complete survey answers). So, while addressing individuals to be more sustainable, making them feel good about themselves and having a strong self-concept are critical since this will help them modify their unsustainable behaviours.

#### 5.4. Suggested solutions using the Feelings and Cognition

Consumers generally adopt two paths to action: one based on emotion or one based primarily on reasoning (Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999). This theory aligns with theories that say decision-making is controlled by choosing either an intuitive, emotional road or a more conscious, logical path (Epstein, 2003; Kahneman, 2003; Kahneman, 2011). This difference is significant in responding to information concerning environmental matters (Marx et al., 2007). On the one hand, consumers frequently consider the negative emotional implications of engaging in or being unwilling to participate in sustainable activities (White et al., 2019). Generally, it is crucial to avoid intensifying unfavourable emotional states (Kollmuss & Agyeman 2010). However, more moderate stimulation of negative emotions, on the other hand, can be helpful (Meng & Trudel, 2017; Pelozo et al., 2013).

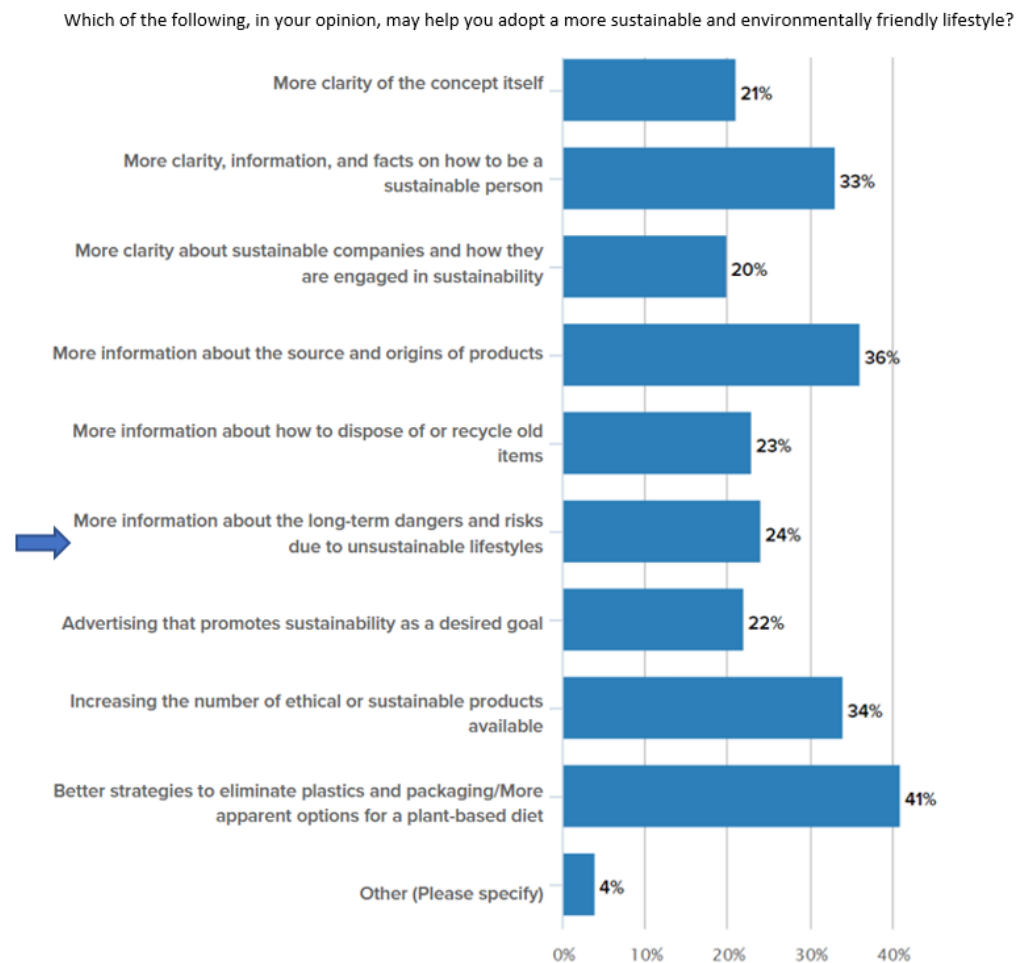


Figure 11. Solutions to adopt a more sustainable and environmentally friendly lifestyle based on survey answers. Source: Survey answers. Author's own.

For example, according to research, “anticipated guilt” can motivate people to engage in pro-environmental actions (White et al., 2019). Based on that, industries may use social media, text messaging, or email ads to instil expected guilt in consumers by educating them, for example, about “the long-term dangers and risks due to an unsustainable lifestyle” as 24% of people agreed about it in the survey. Education may be about topics like the impact of the ocean on microplastics. In addition, “collective guilt” can be a starting point for environmental actions (Ferguson et al., 2011). Companies can, for example, spread information about how their nation has a significant carbon footprint in newspapers or on TV; by being exposed to such information, consumers will experience a sense of collective guilt, which affects their willingness to support sustainable causes and behaviours (White et al., 2019). On the other hand, consumers are more likely to engage in pro-environmental conduct if this behaviour is

favourable for them (Corral-Verdugo et al., 2009). Taking sustainable acts has been demonstrated to provide a “warm glow” feeling that can spread and result in higher favourable service experience ratings. (Giebelhausen et al., 2016). Furthermore, participant ID 36 believes that firms may assist him/her engage in sustainability if they motivate and support him/her (See Appendix 1 for complete survey answers).

Positive feelings like excitement have influenced customer aspirations to reduce their use of plastic water bottles, and positivity may encourage the development of long-term behaviours (Peter & Honea, 2012). Studies have shown that consumers respond well to “cute” appeals (e.g., communications showcasing cute animals), especially when they have “approach” motivational preferences (Wang et al., 2017). Increased sensations of compassion in response to such requests drive this. For example, one survey respondent stated that the incentive for adopting a sustainable lifestyle is “just the true love of nature, rivers, forests, seas, fields, animals all around the world. So, if solutions can be developed to preserve all this, it must be applicable.” In this context, companies might employ happy emotions during awareness seminars or activities to better impact individuals. Participant ID 47 stated that in order to follow sustainability, he wants businesses to explain to him/her how beneficial their influence is on the world (See Appendix 1 for complete survey answers). Therefore, consumers believe that generating good emotions can positively influence their behaviours towards the environment. As a further example, based on the interview, the firm Araven provides its workers with advice and tools they may use in their personal lives at home, for example, concerning the use of energy and various resources. Sharing these suggestions with their families will create some pleasant feelings and will motivate them to continue practicing these sustainable tips.

**Type:** social media/ text messages

**using:** SHIFT framework

**Feelings and cognition. Examples:**

- Negative emotions: Anticipated guilt
  - Positive emotions

**addressed root causes:**

lack of knowledge about the potential risks of unsustainability

### ***5.5. Suggested solutions using Tangibility***

The last element of the SHIFT framework is tangibility. One aspect of sustainable purchasing which stands out is that environmentally friendly acts and effects might appear abstract, hazy, and far away from the individual (Reczek et al., 2018). It has been proved that consumers are unlikely to act on intangible concerns (Griskevicius et al., 2012; Paavola, 2001) because changes take time to manifest. Furthermore, issues and their solutions are surrounded by uncertainty. Pro-environmental effects are challenging to track and assess (White et al., 2019). The following are some solutions to raise sustainability awareness using the SHIFT framework’s tangibility element. First, Companies should try to match the sustainability benefits to people’s current focus, because consumers are frequently present-focused, but sustainability is typically future-focused. Second, as consumers consider a future environmental reward less appealing (White et al., 2019), it is essential to encourage them to think in more abstract terms and concentrate on the long-term advantages of sustainable action (Reczek et al., 2018).

Individuals’ present-focused biases can be reduced by asking them to think about future generations or their children’s futures (White et al., 2019). One of the environmentalists who took the survey, participant ID 40, said that her/his motivation behind being aware of sustainability is “I just want to think about my future, and future of my child’.” As a result, this attitude might be a solid motivator to start a sustainable lifestyle. Moreover, companies can do the same as Araven: they offer activities outside the company for workers and can advertise volunteer programmes connected to sustainability such as tree planting, in which the staff can participate with their families. Such initiatives will make it easier for them to develop happy

feelings with their families and to think about the long-term advantages of their actions. All of this will assist them in changing their behaviour.

All in all, companies should base their prospective solutions on the five SHIFT framework elements since they are particularly effective in altering customer habits.

## 5. Conclusions

In a nutshell, companies can help increase consumers' sustainability level of engagement. Moreover, it is essential to close the enormous gap between what consumers say and what they really do. Furthermore, it is important to shift consumers' behaviour from concerned to proactive so that they become more engaged in sustainability practices. Therefore, in order to make people believe they are part of the problem and solution simultaneously, businesses should focus on changing consumers' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. Businesses can do so by implementing actions that point to the root causes, particularly a lack of knowledge of adopting a sustainable lifestyle, its importance, and how to identify sustainable products.

Also, companies should use the most trusted types of advertisements like conferences, events, word of mouth, and social media to influence consumers effectively.

It is important for companies to incorporate the SHIFT framework into their strategy since, on the one hand, it assists in understanding customer behaviour, and, on the other hand, it helps influencing people's beliefs and attitudes to be more engaged in sustainable practices and activities. It is essential to consider the five aspects of the SHIFT framework. First and foremost, social influence is critical in influencing consumer behaviour. Second, habit formation helps modify long-term consumer unsustainable behaviours. Third, the individual self includes self-efficacy, recognition, and identity. Fourth, feelings and cognitions such as positive self-image and negative emotions, like expected or collective guilt, influence feelings. Finally, tangibility, through making customers long-term oriented in order to eliminate the problem of considering sustainability as abstract and intangible.

It is time to be aware of, respect, and adhere to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development goals to conserve our planet and its energy for us and for future generations. Otherwise, we will have to pay a high price and experience serious repercussions in the future.

Companies that assist clients in increasing their level of sustainability will profit in return. Their business may benefit from adopting sustainable practices and from providing sustainable products and services because they will gain clients' trust by demonstrating their concern for people and the environment. Individuals frequently trust those that support and inspire them to live a healthy lifestyle. Furthermore, when customers are interested in sustainability, they purchase more extensively from those companies that support sustainable development goals.

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